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### **Informal childcare and childcare choice in Wales**

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# **Informal Childcare and Childcare Choice in Wales**

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Social Policy PhD Thesis

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## Abstract

The importance of childcare as a field of study and for public policy has grown in recent times in response to an increase in women in the labour force and increasing evidence of the developmental importance of the early years. Following devolution in the UK childcare is now the responsibility of the devolved Governments. In Wales, some distinctive early childhood policies have been developed, but it is unclear whether or not there is a coherent approach which incorporates childcare. Anecdotally, one of the distinctive features of childcare often highlighted in Wales, is the importance of informal care, yet despite a body of UK research examining informal childcare from a number of perspectives, little is known about the practice in Wales. Whether the use of informal childcare in Wales is distinctive and, if so, why is it important, are key questions that are unanswered.

The aim of this research has been to examine the field of childcare in Wales and, within it, the choices that families make between formal and informal care. It utilises the theories of Pierre Bourdieu in the study of childcare as a social practice, using his key 'thinking tools' of *habitus*, *capitals* and *field*. The study also follows his methodological approach to researching the topic.

Three inter-related strands of research activity are presented in this thesis using mixed methods. First, is a structured analysis of policy and related texts. Secondly, data from the 2015 National Survey for Wales is subjected to quantitative examination to present a picture of informal childcare use in Wales, and thirdly, interviews with 45 parents from three areas of Wales are interpreted using thematic analysis.

The research finds that there are indeed distinctive aspects of childcare in Wales, including greater use of informal care and less use of formal childcare than in England. Informal childcare use is found to be less associated with economic *capital* than accumulations of cultural and social *capital*. Building on Bourdieu's theories, it finds that alongside unequal possession of *capital*, parental *habitus* including work and care dispositions are important in understanding the decisions that parents make about childcare. Also found are differences in the choices that parents make, and are able to make, according to where they live - as well as some distinctive practices related to Welsh language.

In conclusion, this research finds that the distinctiveness of the childcare *field* in Wales and the policy context are inter-related. The political and ideological framing of childcare in Wales along with the delivery model of formal childcare are found to be incoherent. This can be observed to result in many parents relying on informal childcare to accommodate work and caring responsibilities and preferences. Those parents without access to informal care are therefore considerably disadvantaged.

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## Preface

The growth in both the number of women in the labour force and the time they spend in the market has resulted in the emergence of non-parental childcare<sup>1</sup> as an activity that has become increasingly noticeable to policy makers and important to national accounts (Hansen, Joshi and Verropoulou, 2005, p.1). In conjunction with maternity leave and other family-focused welfare provisions, childcare assists in increasing the size of the female workforce, and sustains the productivity and increases the value of human capital by enabling women to attain and continue their career progression (ibid p.7). Freeing women's time to participate in the market on similar terms to men, however, is not the only reason for interest in the field. Ensuring and improving young children's well-being through developmental support and early learning has been shown to have long-term impacts on their future education and productivity. Childcare can therefore be set within the broader field of 'early childhood education and care'<sup>2</sup> (Bertram and Pascal, 2001), which has developed as a concept to take account of the dual functions of 'custody' and 'cultivation' (Hansen, Joshi and Verropoulou, 2005, p.1).

Most developed countries, including those belonging to the OECD, have sought to increase access to formal childcare and early learning within policies that incorporate to a greater or lesser extent both the *custody* and *cultivation* functions (Thévenon, 2011). First, as part of a *social integrationist / social investment* approach (Levitas, 1999), the provision of childcare is focused on *custody* and enabling parents to participate in the labour market. Access to paid work is as many, including Esping-Anderson (2000), point out, the single best guarantor of family welfare. Policies to increase the affordability and availability of childcare therefore aspire to alleviate child poverty, reduce welfare dependence and increase tax revenues. Secondly, with a focus on *cultivation*, is a *child development or pedagogical* approach, where the provision of good quality childcare and early education is seen to provide children with a valuable early years' experience which enhances development and gives them a head start before they enter school (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2004). This may also be seen within the context of *social investment* in that it may, in consequence, redress the effects of social and economic deprivation on children's life chances and, in the longer term, provide the productive base for a knowledge-intensive society (Esping-Andersen, 2000, p.2). Finally, and relating both to the *custody*

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this study "childcare" refers to all arrangements for non-parental daily care of children, but does not include longer-term substitute care such as foster care or adoption. A detailed discussion of the term is contained in Chapter Three.

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted however, that while the term Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is used widely internationally, in the UK, the policy area is complicated with split and sometimes overlapping policymaking responsibilities for childcare and early education.

and *cultivation* functions is early education and childcare as a driver for *gender equality* as, despite men's increased participation in child rearing, it is still a highly gendered activity, with women overwhelmingly taking responsibility for finding, choosing and managing childcare arrangements, resulting in practical and structural inequalities (Ball, Kemp and Vincent, 2004). There has been considerable attention focused on how different countries have approached childcare development (Bertram & Pascal 2001; Brennan & Cass 2012; Thévenon 2011; Kamerman 2000 and others), and the frameworks within which different welfare regimes have placed it have been shown to have a significant effect on how non-parental childcare has developed in different contexts (Mahon, 2002a; Penn, 2011b; Gornick and Meyers, 2006).

As well as the dual *custodial* and *cultivation* functions of childcare, and the policy contexts within which it can be placed, it also needs to be recognised that childcare is made up of a range of diverse and often over-lapping practices involving parents themselves, the wider family, the informal economy, the private market and public provision. Trying to explain and predict the extent of these practices is important in understanding childcare as a field; influences may include attitudes towards work and care, social norms, family economics and gendered family policies.

According to Vincent et al. (2008, p.2), in the past twenty years, childcare in the United Kingdom (UK) has been transformed from a political backwater to one central to the contemporary social policy agenda. This is no less true in Wales, where, since the Government of Wales Act in 1998 devolved a wide range of powers to the National Assembly for Wales, responsibility for childcare policy has been with Welsh Government. There has therefore been an opportunity in the intervening time to develop distinctive childcare policies that reflect not only the realities of life in Wales, but reflect a different Welsh perspective (Williams, 2011).

The increased policy focus on childcare, alongside the continuing change brought about by evolving devolution, makes this topic an interesting and potentially important area for study. There has been a small amount of academic investigation of the field in Wales (eg. Ball, 2013b; Chaney, 2015) that has examined it from particular perspectives, or has focused on specific aspects of childcare, but there is a large literature that can be drawn upon that has examined the topic from a wide range of angles internationally, across the UK and in England more specifically. While this study looks to investigate the field of childcare in Wales, it seeks to do so by examining the choices that families in Wales make about childcare, and the relationship between their choices and the wider social world. In particular, it focuses on choices related to the practice of 'informal' childcare as opposed to 'formal' childcare. While there is a lack of clarity around the two terms, which in themselves comprise a wide range of differentiated practices, formal care is most often referred to as visible arrangements involving the

employment of paid carers – either by parents or by the state – while informal care is seen as comprising private arrangements between individuals but most commonly family members. The rationale for studying informal care practice in detail is two-fold.

First, there is no clear picture of informal childcare use in Wales. It has been suggested in a number of reports and official documents (see page 99) that parents in Wales *prefer* and subsequently *choose* to use family members as carers for young children, and this has important implications for childcare policy approaches and development. While this view is supported by some UK studies (Wheelock and Jones, 2002a; Halliday and Little, 2001), it is contradicted by some Wales-specific data (Smith et al., 2009).

Secondly, as highlighted by Schober and Scott (2012), the use of informal childcare is associated with more traditional attitudes towards gender such as a belief in women's nurturing role and a lack of support for full-time female employment (see Crompton, 2001, p.268). Given evidence that mothers from families experiencing the highest levels of disadvantage are much less likely to be in paid employment (Speight, Smith, Lloyd and Coshall, 2010), and that deprivation in Wales is greater than in many other parts of the UK, there may be considerable benefit in a better understanding of informal care practices and the decision-making that leads to them.

## **Aims and research questions**

The aim of this research is to examine the childcare field in Wales and within it, the choices that families make between formal and informal care. In doing so, I will attempt to answer the following research questions:

- How is the practice of informal childcare in Wales accounted for?
- What are the common characteristics of families that practice informal childcare?
- Are there any distinctive aspects to informal childcare practice in Wales?
- What are the implications from this analysis for childcare and, more broadly, education and welfare policies in Wales?

## ***Analytical approach***

This thesis adopts Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical approach to the study of social practice. Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' of *field*, *habitus* and *capital* and the relationships between them provide the edifice within which childcare practices are examined. Bourdieu's theories provide a convincing and useful

way of linking ideas, institutions and societal concerns with the detailed examination of the kind of everyday negotiations that parents undertake when considering childcare options.

Bourdieu also provides the methodological framework for the study, comprising three distinct steps. First, is the need always to construct the research object afresh to scrutinise the research topic, to establish its key terms, and to identify the dominant explanations, concepts and theories, thereby reconceptualising it relationally. Secondly, the attributes of the *field* of study are constructed. This is achieved by an examination of the *field* in relation to other fields, mapping out the relations between the positions occupied by the agents or institutions in the *field*, and finally by analysing the dispositions of the actors within the *field* as determined by their social and economic conditions and the social arena in which they operate. The third step is a reflection on the position of the researcher, specifically his motives and responsibilities as a critical part of the reflexive account (Grenfell, 2014, p.22).

### ***Thesis content***

The structure of the thesis reflects the methodological approach. Chapter One discusses Bourdieu's theories and their relevance to the area of study. It describes Bourdieu's key theoretical concepts, and assesses the utility of a Bourdieusian approach in addressing the relationship between structure and agency that is implicit within the research questions. It also acknowledges alternative theories (such as Foucauldian and Feminist approaches) that have been used by other writers when approaching the topic and, in themselves, provide a critique of Bourdieusian theory. Rational Action Theory is also highlighted as a juxtaposition to Bourdieusian ideas.

Chapter Two sets out the methodological approach in detail and then describes and discusses the methods used in the study. Grenfell's (2014) structured approach based on Bourdieu's own methodology is discussed and related to the subsequent lines of enquiry within the thesis. The use of mixed-methods within the study is examined and justified within this context. The design of the study and the methods employed at each stage of the research are then set out.

In Chapter Three, the research topic is examined and reflected upon to assess its position within the social and academic worlds, and to investigate where, according to existing information, it might be situated in relation to other conceptual and structural groupings. The orthodoxies of the commonly held attitudes towards childcare are explored in order to reflect on whether these are the only and legitimate ways to think about and approach the topic. To achieve this, key terms related to the research questions are examined, re-conceptualised and, where appropriate, operationalised. Following this is an overview of what is already known about childcare in Wales, to examine its structure, function and practice, while making some comparisons with other parts of the UK.

Subsequently in the chapter, existing literature is reviewed to explore what factors might be common amongst those who use informal care, setting them within the context of Bourdieu's theories. Finally, what is known about how actors operate within the *field* of childcare – and informal childcare in particular – is discussed. It concludes that there is some indication of distinction in the childcare *field* in Wales, and evidence of distinctive practices that require further investigation.

Chapter Four focuses on the relationship between the state, institutions and individual actors to examine power dynamics within the childcare *field*. It includes a conceptual discussion around policy formation and policy actors within the context of Bourdieu's theories. An examination of the emergence of childcare (and early education) as a policy area in Wales follows to highlight the structures and power dynamics that are important in the *field*. The study of policy is informed by a mixed method approach of content analysis and policy framing techniques to interpret childcare policy development through the study of key public texts from government, political parties, third sector organisations and broader policy networks. A number of conclusions are drawn from the chapter's discussions, all of which can be seen to impact on practice within the informal childcare *field*.

In Chapter Five, data from the 2015 National Survey for Wales is subject to quantitative analysis in an attempt to 'boundary' the field of study. This large data set is analysed to provide an up-to-date picture of the childcare *field* in Wales and, by setting this against other evidence, establish whether or not childcare practice in Wales is distinctive, as suggested in Chapter Three. Further analysis in the Chapter looks at parents' decision-making to answer the question implicit within Bourdieu's theories about whether choices are made based on rationalities, or comprise dispositions that form a particular *habitus* that, combined with capitals, result in agents making particular childcare decisions. Evidence of differences in the use of childcare in Wales in relation to a range of economic, social and cultural factors are explored, while more complex analyses provide evidence of factors that are associated with the use of different forms of childcare and tests the statistical strength of variables that might be predictive of behaviour. The data shows that families' use of childcare is different in Wales than previous studies have reported, and is different from practice in other parts of the UK. In particular, parents are more inclined to use informal care, and much less likely to use formal care, while cultural and social *capitals* are found to be more important in predicting informal than in predicting formal childcare use. Some spatial factors that have been assumed to be important are not found to be significant in predicting childcare use.

Qualitative evidence is analysed in Chapter Six based on 45 narrative interviews with parents from Blaenau Gwent, Ceredigion and Wrexham. Thematic analysis is used as an inductive approach, allowing for immersion in the data to draw out patterns of experience prior to theorising. The

interviews provide a rich source of data that illuminate parents' ordinary childcaring practices, including the relationships and correspondences between individuals, groups and structures that operate within the *field* of childcare, but also intersect with the *fields* of child-rearing, family and work. A number of observations are made and conclusions drawn from the analysis. It can be seen that mothers' choices are limited by internal requirements such as work and care dispositions, by how they perceive themselves as mothers - and by external forces such as the availability of childcare of the right kind, of acceptable quality and that can be afforded. Informal care is found to be important, with particular patterns of use. Also found are differences in the choices that parents make, and are able to make, according to where they live - as well as some distinctive practices related to Welsh language.

In the final chapter, the three levels of methodological analysis are brought together and evidence used to answer the research questions. Reflections are made on the research process, with the limitations of the study set out and shortcomings acknowledged; recommendations are made for further research.

## Chapter 1 Theoretical context

This chapter examines Bourdieu's distinctive approach of '*field theory*' and, in particular, his concept of *habitus* as a conceptual tool for understanding the interplay of choice and necessity that may be experienced and made sense of by parents when making choices related to childcare. While discussion is focused on Bourdieu's theories and their relevance, it is acknowledged that other perspectives are taken which make a significant contribution to thinking and knowledge in this area.

In this study, the focus of interest is in accounting for the practice of informal childcare. The empirical data presented and discussed in Chapters Five and Six shows that a proportion of parents choose to use it and a proportion do not, and that parents in each cohort share specific characteristics or circumstances. While the relationship between the use of informal care and other concepts can be established through recognised methodological practice, understanding the relationship within the context of the wider social world requires a theoretical base. In particular, this study reflects upon the relationship between structure (the pre-given causes for how to behave, underlying a society) and agency (conscious choices of behaviour made by the individual). Utilising theory to reconcile structure and agency, and focusing on the relationship between them in this context, means understanding the choices that parents make in choosing childcare and, in turn, the extent to which as actors their actions reflect norms and social structures. Are parents' decisions best explained by their social position, by their moral values, by their discursive positions as subjects, or by external structural determinants? Implicit within this debate is also the power relationship between parents and public decision makers.

This chapter therefore examines social theory that has particular relevance within the discussion of childcare and childcare choice. The main context in which the investigation takes place is Pierre Bourdieu's theory of *habitus*<sup>3</sup>, which provides a theory through which the fundamental distinction between structure and agency implicit within the research question is transcended (Maton in Grenfell 2014, p.53).

*Habitus* can be described as a set of subjective dispositions or 'background understandings' that explain how individuals habitually know how they are expected to behave, think and even feel within the various social contexts of everyday life (Taylor, 1999 in McKeever & Miller 2004). What becomes apparent from interviews with parents (Chapter Six) about the decisions they make in relation to

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<sup>3</sup> Following Grenfell's lead (in Silva and Warde, 2010, p.27), Bourdieu's key concepts (with their implied epistemological bases) are put in italics to differentiate them from everyday uses of the words.



childcare, is how their values, positions and subsequent choices are situated. *Habitus* provides a concept capable of explaining people's situated progression through life, which Bourdieu described as a '...series of positions successfully occupied by the same agent (or same group) in a space itself in flux and undergoing incessant transformations' (1986a, p.71). That Bourdieu's theories have been used widely to examine the central issues of childcare choice and informal childcare by, among others, Braun et al. (2008) Ball et al. (2004), Vincent et al. (2008), Autto (2015), Reay (2004) and Brown & Baker (2011), provides support for the adoption of this theoretical approach and enables new data and concepts to be compared and contrasted with previous work. Bourdieu himself uses language and debate that is appropriate to the topic. He wrote about the importance of childhood as a stage where cultural and social repertoires are learnt from parents and wider social networks (Bourdieu, 1977). As an empirical researcher, he also has much to offer within his methodological approaches including his use of first quantitative and then subsequently qualitative methods in his attempt to overcome the subjectivist/objectivist divide. Finally, Bourdieu has value as a 'live' interlocutor for work in the *field*. As Silva writes, "Engagement with Bourdieu's work implies that, while using a notion of culture to get at meaningful human action, a particular conception of the relationality of the social is addressed, including cultural repertoires involving banal activities but also going beyond the description of everyday conduct of ordinary people" (2010, p.11).

That is not to say that Bourdieusian theories dominate investigation of childcare. Other writers, most notably Moss (including Moss and Lewis, 2006; Moss, 2002, 2007) have used Foucauldian ideas to provide a theoretical framework for critically examining childcare as a practice within discourses of parenting, motherhood and early childhood itself. For Foucault, "power is everywhere, diffused and embodied in discourse" (1980), and modern regimes of power function to create individuals who are both the objects and vehicles of power (Foucault, 1980, p.98); as Moss et al. write, the relationship between children, parents and society comes from a dominant discourse of childhood that has been qualified by those in power (2000, p.238). Yet, whereas Foucault suggests that historical processes produce a certain mode of thinking, Bourdieu finds that a certain mode of thinking is generated in a particular social context. It is beyond the scope of this study to indulge in detailed comparisons of the two theorists, but while Foucault's analysis of power and discourse clearly opens up a social process such as childcare to better understanding, he has been criticised by many - including Bourdieu - for ignoring the possibility of multiple histories and subjective interpretations. As Wacquant writes, "[Foucault] lacks the dispositional concept of *habitus* to link the objective structures bequeathed by history to the historical practices of agents and, therefore, a mechanism to account for the social patterning and objective meaning of strategies." (Wacquant, in Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992 p.25).

The adoption of a Bourdieusian theoretical approach also does not displace or devalue the considerable body of writing related to childcare and childcare choice from feminist perspectives. While feminist thinking has been strongly influenced by the academic theories of its time, especially Marxism, structuralism and post-structuralism, broadly feminist theories suppose that gender differences are socially produced and re-produced to maintain an ideology of male dominance that is intended to hide the political and social forces that create gender inequality (Seidman, 2012, p.206). According to Ferguson (1988), feminism has been the most influential movement affecting the development of childcare policies in Western industrialised countries and therefore needs consideration in any discussion of childcare. Feminism, it is claimed, provides an ideology to question the existing arrangements, and provides the social support for individuals to explore alternatives at institutional, cultural and individual levels (Seidman, 2012, p.206). Randall argues that within the context of feminism, women's *de facto* responsibility for childcare is a central determining factor in their social subordination (1996, p.486). According to this view, the provision of childcare therefore holds the key to further women's emancipation. That is not to say, however, that there is a single unified feminist theoretical approach to the issue. Jaggar (1983) outlined four feminist paradigms: liberal feminism, traditional Marxist feminism, radical (or separatist) feminism, and socialist feminism, each of which can be said to have distinct ideological positions in relation to childcare. Liberal feminism starts from the point of accepting the present economic and social structure in which a lack of childcare limits women's equality of opportunity. In contrast, socialist feminism highlights the importance that society places on the activity of labour associated with childcare, while Marxist and radical feminism stress the underlying determinism of class or gender (Ferguson, 1988, p.46). Randall (1995, p.330) makes a distinction between radical feminists and others. Radical feminists, she argues, adhere to the least compromising doctrine of anti-patriarchy in which male dominance is pervasive at all levels. The state, public bodies and childcare policy within the welfare system result in women becoming dependent on the state rather than on the men in their own families.

In offering views on caring (and childcare in particular) from the perspective of women as a socially disadvantaged group, feminist critique has much to offer in explaining broad concepts such as care within systems of oppression and privilege. Yet the breadth and diversity of feminist theoretical approaches can obfuscate the clarity of analysis. Indeed, according to Ferguson (1988, p.44) most critiques of feminist perspectives are internal, coming from other feminists who, whilst sharing the same broad views, have divergent perspectives around how society should be understood. More controversial is Hammersley's (1992) critique of feminist theory in which he questions feminism's privileging the significance of gender over other factors such as race and class, at the risk of marginalising other fields of study. As is further discussed in Chapter Three, to focus on childcare as a

solely women's issue is to ignore the role that it plays in other spheres of social, economic and cultural life, and to perpetuate its marginalisation. Childcare may be highly gendered, but it is not wholly gendered. There is some evidence that accompanying women's increased participation in paid work, men are taking a more active role in their families and contributing to the care of their children and homes (Goldscheider, Bernhardt and Lappegard, 2014), which makes childcare increasingly an issue for men.

There is, however, an important intersection between feminist and Bourdieusian theory. While in France, according to Bilge (2006), Bourdieu generated considerable criticism from second-wave feminists by almost entirely ignoring their work and by casually reprimanding them for converting their social problems as a dominated group into a sociological problem, more recently, feminist scholars such as Skeggs, Adkins (Adkins and Skeggs, 2004; Skeggs, 2004a) and Reay (2004) are increasingly looking to Bourdieu's work. The reasons for this are set out by Skeggs (2004a, p.21) who argues, first, that Bourdieu's unique explanatory power in relation to structure and agency provides a way of examining the social world that has proved problematic for feminists for some time. Secondly, the embodiment of capitals within Bourdieu's model of social space allows feminists to think through a variety of social topics and processes, including domination, social and cultural reproduction, ideology, agency, and practice. Finally, argues Skeggs (2004a, p.21), his methodological insights and the positionality of the researcher is something that has always been central to feminist research.

## **Bourdieu, *habitus* and childcare**

Given a research question that seeks to shed light on decision-making through investigation of the internal/external dynamic, in the context of literature which approaches the question from both structuralist and individualistic perspectives, the theoretical work of Pierre Bourdieu would seem to straddle the argument with an attempt to reconcile structure and agency. Bourdieu was fundamentally interested in individual choice and decision-making which, Grenfell (2014) suggests, was framed before Bourdieu in the opposing traditions of structuralism and existentialism. Based on his own experiences and empirical research examining social order in Algeria and the Béarn, he observed human behaviour that could not be explained by the existing dichotomous positions of objectivism and subjectivism (Grenfell, 2014). On the one hand was the structuralist view that individual behaviour is determined by social structures. Bourdieu saw this through the lens of his early anthropological work which sought to identify societal rules and cultural traditions which were thought to govern behaviour. As he repeatedly saw in his study of rural life in the Béarn, however, individual practice was rarely 'determined' according to specific rules, but was continuously adapted,

negotiated and modified according to individual circumstances (Baker, Brown and Williams, 2014, p.43). On the other hand, Bourdieu also observed that the existential/subjectivist view that focused on individual choice and internalised decision-making did not explain why people so often follow traditional practices when they were free to do otherwise. Bourdieu therefore developed his Outline of a Theory of Practice (Bourdieu, 1977), proposing a relationship between objective and internalised structures - "...a science of dialectical relations between objective structures...and the subjective dispositions within which these structures are actualised and which tend to reproduce them" (Bourdieu, 1977, p.3). Practice is not merely to do with an agent's thinking or beliefs, as there clearly are elements of social order which, according to Bourdieu, develop through social practice.

The term *habitus* is central in Bourdieu's work and is at the heart of his views on the development of social practice as part of his suite of 'thinking tools'. In *Distinction* (1984, p.101), Bourdieu sets out his conceptual framework as a formula: '(*Habitus* x *Capital*) + *Field* = *Practice*'. The equation describes how behaviour (*practices*) are the result of 'an unconscious relationship' (Bourdieu 1993 p.126) between one's dispositions (*habitus*) and one's position (*capital*) within the current status of a specific social arena (*field*). As Maton (2014) says, 'the social spaces we occupy are (like the *habitus*) structured, and it is the relation between these two structures or sets of organizing principles that gives rise to practices (in Grenfell, 2014, p.49).

Bourdieu describes *habitus* as practical knowledge which is a product of its agents' history. *Habitus* denotes the attitudes and dispositions developed by agents as a consequence of, and in reaction to an accumulation of their personal experiences (Bourdieu, 1977). *Habitus* therefore refers to a person's taken for granted, un-reflected— hence largely habitual—way of thinking and acting. It is acquired not through conscious learning or as the result of coercion or ideology, but through 'lived practice' (Baker, Brown and Williams, 2014, p.43). Bourdieu posits that people are born into particular social spaces and hence acquire a *habitus* in childhood that shapes their early experiences and strongly influences the way they behave in the future. As they move through life, agents' experiences are mediated by the circumstances in which they find themselves and, as a result, different people develop different moral codes, attitudes, common senses and rationalities. Consequently, what may seem like common sense to some parents may be viewed as bad parenting by others (Gillies 2006), and what may appear to be illogical or poor childcare decisions to some may appear to be perfectly logical and rational decisions to others. According to Bourdieu (1977), structures only exist in the regularity of human agency which forms the *habitus*.

Reay (2004, 434) further describes *habitus* as a multi-layered concept containing collective and individual trajectories. There is *habitus* at the level of society, of cultural groupings and, more

complexly, at an individual level, where each person's *habitus* is unique and specific to their personal and spatial circumstances. Where then is structure and structural inequality within society, one could ask? According to Crossley (2005, p.95), within Bourdieu's conception of *habitus* is the incorporation of structural disadvantages which are often manifested as inequalities, such as those associated with class, gender, and disability. These are incorporated into the *habitus*, and individuals adjust their behaviours and aspirations in a way dependent on their appreciation of the anticipated consequences, or 'life chances', ascribed by their 'class' or social positioning (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2013). As Crossley (2005) writes, "the starting point for Bourdieu's approach to class is the claim that all agents within a particular society have an objective position in "social space" in virtue of their portfolio of economic and cultural capital" (2005, p.86). Inequality, evident in an unequal distribution of power within society, derives not only from the uneven accumulation and possession of economic capital, but also from the irregular possession of cultural and social resources, as will be discussed.

Criticisms of *habitus* have included the reading of it as being latently deterministic and pessimistic, with individuals passively inheriting an institutionalised framework that drives their behaviour (Alexander in Couldry 2005, p.4). Many others (Reay, 2010; Camic, Parsons and Lash, 2010; Brown and Baker, 2011), however, contend that the concept of *habitus* can and should incorporate change. By accumulating and utilising various forms of *capital*, agents can improve their social positioning as demonstrated by Reay (in Silva & Warde 2010), in her analysis of the way in which the relationship between *habitus* and '*field*' can be used to understand different class experiences of higher education, as will be discussed further.

Although Bourdieu (1993) refers to a historical element that means that *habitus* is in part a collective history of family, gender, class, ethnicity etc., he is also clear that *habitus* is a product of early childhood socialisation within the family, and is continually restructured by encounters with the outside world through agencies such as schools, with the early years being particularly formative. Thus, while *habitus* is reflective of the social position in which it was created, it also develops creative responses capable of "transcending the social conditions in which it was produced" (Reay 2004). "Habitus is a kind of transforming machine that leads us to 'reproduce' the social conditions of our own production, but in a relatively unpredictable way, in such a way that one cannot move simply and mechanically from knowledge of the conditions of production to knowledge of the products." (Bourdieu 1993). As Crossley (2005, p.85) writes, Bourdieu is distinctive in having maintained a balance in the focus of his work between culture and lifestyle on the one hand, and social class on the other; this is perhaps why Bourdieu's (1977) concept of *habitus* is recurrently seen as a useful tool for understanding the social context of childcare choice.

While not referring explicitly to childcare choice-making, Sayer (2004) discusses the way in which parents modify their *habitus* to feel comfortable in contexts in which they might not have been comfortable before. New parents, he says, using a favourite metaphor of Bourdieu's, gradually develop a changing *habitus* and feel for the game (the *field*) of parenting as they get used to caring for a child. "Their habitus will have been grounded in their own childhood experiences, but formulated in their contemporary social field as values" (Sayer, 2005, p.127). Parents may be influenced in their choice of childcare by inherited values, but those choices may be mitigated or impacted upon by acquired values or moral positions. This links with epistemological discussions in recognising the importance of belief and justification in understanding the decisions that people make in their lives. Values, Sayer (2011) writes, are not just *a priori* despite being discursively and culturally influenced; they are to some extent the *reflexive* product of interactions and experiences. From the outside, we tend to analyse human behaviour in terms of what explains it, usually by reference to a person's circumstances and meanings, but, as participants, people justify what they do and implicitly invite others to accept or reject their justification (2011). This is illustrated in Himmelweit and Sigala's (2004) work examining mothers' identities and childcare choice. They found that when mothers were forced to make childcare choices that were at odds with their beliefs because of external constraints, such as family finances, they adjusted their values and identities accordingly (2004). Because the *habitus* is formed through a variety of relations and influences that intersect, *habitus* can therefore be contradictory, leading to identities becoming modified (Sayer, 2005, p.51).

### ***Childcare and class***

*Habitus* allows Bourdieu's theory of cultural *capital*, which he developed to explain "the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from the different social classes" (Bourdieu in Levitas 2004), to transcend the objective-subjective dualism implicit in any society where there is social movement. Ball, Vincent and Braun's work on childcare choice (Ball, Kemp and Vincent, 2004; Braun, Vincent and Ball, 2008; Vincent, Braun and Ball, 2008), explores how Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* illuminates the pervasiveness of class, at a time when many avoid class analysis and labels. They say that Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* explicates class as a process not a category. Referencing Savage (2000), they describe how class is therefore seen not as 'heroic collective agency', but rather as explicitly 'encoded in people's sense of self-worth and in their attitudes to and awareness of others – in how they carry themselves as individuals.' (Vincent, Braun and Ball, 2008). This view is echoed by Skeggs (2004b), who argues that there is an intimate link between economic and moral value within Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*. The cultural education of a middle class child, she says, includes exposure to 'high' culture through visits to art galleries, theatres, music lessons etc., which are all assumed to be 'morally' good for the person, but will also have an economic exchange potential in

later life as the cultural *capital* necessary for employability, social networking and the formulation of the self (2004a, p.22). By extension, this view can be applied to private education, and even private daycare, where parents place a value on buying additional social and cultural *capital* that will enhance their children's potential. Choice of childcare can be seen as a factor in class reproduction.

One of the key elements of Bourdieu's argument is that class differences in cultural *capital* and *habitus* begin at birth, and increase throughout childhood - "...the initial accumulation of cultural *capital*, the precondition for the fast, easy accumulation of every kind of useful cultural *capital*, starts at the outset, without delay, without wasted time, only for the offspring of families endowed with strong cultural *capital*; in this case, the accumulation period covers the whole period of socialization" (Bourdieu in Karabel and Halsey, 1977, p.49).

The *habitus* of class would therefore seem to be implicated, as part of their wider understanding of their own identity and their location within the social world, in how parents make arrangements to care for their children. Yet there are alternative views. Giddens suggests that *habitus* is the 'individualisation' of class (1991). Giddens sees a post-traditional world which changes brought on by globalisation and the reflexivity of the social order, result in traditions, cultures and communal ties that were at the heart of social class being supplanted by 'a context of multiple choice', in which individuals must actively choose, sustain and revise their narrative of identity as 'lifestyle' (Giddens 1990 in Atkinson 2007, p.538). In this world of modernity, Giddens asserts that agents are free to select a lifestyle that informs their choices, behaviours and (to some extent) their attitudes and beliefs (1991, p.81). Yet, as Atkinson asks, "...why, exactly, would different individuals and groups choose different lifestyles?" (2007, p.542), claiming that Giddens has no answer other than resorting to Bourdieu and the concept of *habitus* that defines the dispositions, tastes and values that might lead them to choose different lifestyles. Similarly, Beck (1992) suggests that, as a result of social changes, actors can no longer rely on the traditions of old to supply their biographies but must now reflexively construct them themselves through a process of 'individualisation'. Beck and Giddens' argument for individualisation can seem logical in a society where strong collective class solidarities seem no longer to exist, but it casts the individual as a lonely figure existing in the postmodern world. Their argument would seem to be deficient without Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*.

Duncan *et al.* (2003) discuss this in relation to childcare choice-making. They identify individualisation and reflexivity as the theoretical underpinning for New Labour's childcare policy as it developed from 1997. According to Beck (1992), increasing gender equality and labour market participation should allow women to choose between 'lifestyles'. Individualisation therefore gives women, in particular, greater choice in domestic and career trajectories as opposed to following predetermined gender

roles. As Duncan *et al.* (2004, p.9) write, “women thereby see an identity as a paid worker as part of a development of their ‘self’”. However, as they found in their research, individualisation was subservient to mothers’ strong moral norms about childcare, and a strong emphasis on putting their children’s needs above their own. Duncan *et al.* (2004) align individualisation with reflexive, rational choice, but found in their empirical research that, while some mothers will choose childcare to develop their individualised ‘self’ or dispassionately balance the economic cost-benefits, for the majority, the importance of social ties and socially negotiated moral and emotional responsibilities are far more important in driving choice.

Archer (2010) discusses this further and suggests that there is incompatibility between individualisation or reflexivity in decision-making, and Bourdieu’s *habitus*. In the postmodern world, habitual forms, she argues, prove incapable of providing guidelines for people’s lives and thus make reflexivity imperative. She maintains that *habitus* and reflexivity are incompatible. Either, she says, decision-making is influenced largely through socialisation (of habit, hence *habitus*), or through the exercise of reflexivity, entailing deliberation about the appropriate course of action (Archer 2010). Socialisation, and therefore *habitus*, she contests, is of declining importance in the 21st century where the jobs and roles available to young people did not exist in their parents’ days:

“...socialization has been decreasingly able to prepare for occupational and lifestyle opportunities that had not existed for the parental generation: for social skills that could not become embodied (stock-market trading or computer programming) or needed continuous upgrading, and readiness to relocate, retrain, and re-evaluate shifting *modi vivendi*.” (Archer, 2010, p.297)

Parental culture, according to Archer (2010), is ceasing to be a *capital* good and she suggests that middle class and upper class parents who traditionally bought advantage through private schooling, now face offspring who are embarrassed by their background and “...blur their accents, abuse their past participles, make out they had never met Latin” (Ibid, 298).

Archer’s ideas, however, are seemingly founded on the premise that society is becoming less class-bound when there is significant evidence to the contrary (Savage, 2015). In response to Archer’s criticism of *habitus*, Devine and Savage (in Devine 2005) argue, to the contrary, that Bourdieu’s work offers a distinctive paradox of reflexivity. As people move between *fields*, they become aware of the options that exist in different *fields*, and therefore become more reflexive about the practices they can pursue and the choices they can make (2005, p.142).



### ***Spatial habitus***

Important for this study is also an understanding of the socio-spatial aspects that can result in behaviours defined by locality and landscape. Savage et al. (in Devine, 2005) suggest that space and place have become more important in understanding the social world as a consequence of weakening social stratification - and class in particular - in a post-industrial world. In their interviews with individuals in Cheadle, Manchester in the late 1990s, they found that residential space plays a particularly important role in spatial and social structures and, as such, can be seen as a local *habitus*. In an unregulated housing market, they say, where individuals are free to choose where they live, people tend to populate places in which they feel comfortable (in 2005, p.119). The substantiation for social clustering as *habitus* is evident, say Savage *et al.*, in the persistence of ethnic segregation in towns and cities, and geographical variations in the health, poverty and deprivation indices widely used by governments. That is not to say, however, that an individual's spatial *habitus* is linked to physical social interaction. Indeed, for some people to feel comfortable, the avoidance of social interaction is important; hence, the reason why many city dwellers feel uncomfortable when moving to rural communities 'where everyone knows your business'. Savage *et al.*'s study of people living on a typical inter-war suburban estate found that few had a clear sense of class consciousness. They found an ambiguity in notions of class and a disassociation between the language of class and people's identities. They concluded that, despite many of the trappings indicating a practical middle class *habitus* (home-ownership, cars, consumer durables etc.) and even middle class occupations, there was scant evidence of the possession of middle class cultural *capital*. They concluded that a 'practical' *habitus* exists that can be at odds with people's practical feelings and values and the *habitus* of community (2005, p.121). This, they suggest, can explain why people choose to live together with others who share their ideas and values - despite the decline of class consciousness and class identity promulgated by the likes of Beck and Giddens. Class, in a postmodern world, is relational rather than positional, with identities and distinctions involving a sense of belonging to a group, and a sense of differentiation from others both socially and spatially (Savage 2000). This is exactly what Ball *et al.* (2004b) found in their study of childcare within middle class 'fractions' in London where parents had shared childcare values within well-bounded spaces related to 'circuits of [primary] schooling' - state or private. The childcare choices made by parents who were stratified similarly by income and occupation, but lived in diverse social spaces, reflected differently prevailing child-rearing values and sociality. Ball *et al.* (ibid) concluded that different localities attract and reproduce different class lifestyles and cultures based upon the use of differently available forms and volumes of *capital*, and therefore demonstrate how class is mediated by space.

### ***Childcare as a 'field'***

With regard to childcare and parental decision-making, the relationship between *habitus* and forms of *capital* are clearly enmeshed. Yet the concept of '*field*' is equally important, if less obvious. Whilst primarily concerned with literature and art, Bourdieu's conception of a *field* of cultural production can be applied to any social phenomenon. A '*field*' structures the *habitus*, placing it within the surroundings of power and social relationships. In possibly his most well-known quote, Bourdieu says,

*"...when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it finds itself as 'a fish in water', it does not feel the weight of water and takes the world about itself for granted"*  
(Bourdieu, 1989b, p.43).

*Field* is the social world of which *habitus* is the product and can therefore be any area or domain of social interaction. A *field* is distinguished by a number of factors. A *field* has implicit and explicit rules of behaviour; it develops its own valuation of what constitutes power and, importantly, is defined by what counts as '*capital*' in all or any of its forms (Leander 2010). While *field* is coterminous with class, it differs in that it can also be used to account for other social hierarchies and forms of domination. Childcare itself can be seen as a *field*, made up of identifiable interconnecting relations. It is governed by overarching principles, such as the safeguarding of children and principles of early learning. Power is evident in the interplay between authority's controlling principles and practice through, for example, minimum standards of care and childcare providers' acceptance of these, while, as previously discussed, *capital* is accounted for in economic, social and cultural terms. Also helpful is the ability to break a *field* down into sub-*fields*, such as formal and informal childcare, which, while they share the principles of the superordinate *field*, have their own individual characteristics, including rules, assumptions and beliefs (Grenfell, James 1998). One of the most powerful ways in which Bourdieu's conceptual framework can be applied to an understanding of parental decision-making, is in placing the *field* of childcare amongst other inter-related and interconnecting *fields*. *Fields* such as family, work, school, friends and community sit alongside the childcare *field*, each with its own rules, power structure and attached *capital*. Parents' decision-making (practice) can be seen as a struggle for dominance between the competing claims of each *field* from which the *habitus* may be modified. According to Bourdieu, choices made will in turn shape future possibilities, for any choice involves foregoing alternatives and sets individuals on a specific route that further shapes their understanding of themselves and of the world around them. The structures of the *habitus* are thus neither fixed nor in constant flux (1991b, pp.37–42).

### ***Childcare and capitals***

Bourdieu uses the concept of *capital* more broadly than in its normal association with economics and ‘mercantile exchange’ (Bourdieu, 1986b) to represent the resources, goods and values available to agents occupying various positions in various *fields*. He describes four generic types of *capital*: economic (eg. inherited or generated wealth), cultural (eg. educational qualifications, aesthetic preferences, bodily characteristics and comportment, speech and dialect), social (eg. networks, group membership) and symbolic (eg. role, legitimacy, authority, prestige). Each type of *capital* can be represented in either material or symbolic form and its value is determined by the characteristics of particular *fields* at specific times. In the context of childcare, a married mother who stays at home to care for her young child may be seen as the transformation of her husband’s economic *capital* into symbolic and cultural *capital*. On the other hand, a single mother who has no choice but to stay at home with her child can be seen as representing an inability to translate cultural or social *capital* into economic *capital*. According to Moore (in Grenfell 2014, p.99), while economic *capital* is the most fundamental, the remaining three forms of *capital* be seen as ‘transubstantiated’ forms of economic *capital* – in other words, the social advantages they confer can be translated into power, or become proxies for economic *capital*. Moore (ibid) goes on to make an important distinction regarding capitals, and symbolic and cultural capitals in particular. In the example above, parents might seem to be engaged in different practices within the *field* of childcare by virtue of differing degrees of cultural *capital* associated with *class habitus*. There is a danger in this analysis of cultural *capital* becoming a synonym for ‘status’ and *habitus* for ‘socialisation’, thereby reducing agency to class determinism. In our example, the married – middle-class - mother does what other middle-class mothers do. Where Bourdieu’s theories stand apart, however, is in helping us to understand the actions of either mother in the example deciding not to stay at home, and to use non-maternal childcare, despite this being the norm within their *class habitus*. Forms of *capital*, such as cultural *capital*, therefore need to be set within *class fractions* where *habitus* is a specialisation involving a sense of belonging to one group and a sense of differentiation from others (Savage, 2000, p.115). Wacquant (1991) refers to this as the “self-production of class collectivities” achieved “through struggles which simultaneously involve relationships between and within classes and determine the actual demarcation of new frontiers” (Wacquant 1991 in Ball 2004, p.24). The mothers can belong to different social classes, but also belong to a class fraction (of stay-at-home mothers) within their own classes that have similar values and dispositions. However, the membership of such a status group does not necessarily provide them with symbolic *capital* in a uniform way (Grenfell, 2014).

Much of the research relating to parental choice acknowledges the role of families’ conditions in controlling, influencing and justifying their selection of childcare. This can be seen to engage all of

Bourdieu's forms of *capital*. Families' decisions about whether to use childcare is usually linked to parental work patterns, and has been seen to be driven by financial necessity based upon their *economic capital* (Duncan and Irwin, 2004). Use of informal childcare has been shown by some research (Bryson, Brewer, Sibieta and Butt, 2012) to be affected by the education level of a child's mother, suggesting that childcare choice is also linked to Bourdieu's element of institutionalised *cultural capital*. Other studies have linked class fractions with the notion of embodied *cultural capital* (Ball, Kemp and Vincent, 2004), while a strand of research highlights the extent to which middle class parents use high levels of *social capital* born out of formal and informal social networks (Evans and Rutter, 2012). In Wales, it has been argued that childcare can be cultural and even symbolic *capital* as parents make childcare choices to enhance both cultural and linguistic transmission with the objective of maintaining status within society (Morris and Jones, 2007; Hodges, 2012a). Hodges (2012) found, in her study of the Rhymney Valley, that some parents chose Welsh-medium education to transmit a unique Welsh-language *cultural capital* to their children, while others used the Welsh-medium education system in the belief that it would deliver higher social mobility for their children.

All forms of *capital* therefore find expression in childcare. Their reproductions can account for structural inequality and behavioural differences amongst classes and class fractions that result in choices being made between different types of childcare. The notion of a constantly evolving and modifying *habitus*, on the other hand, can explain why parents' behaviour is not uniform in the way that rational choice suggests it should be, and how interactions and experiences can modify values and consequently impact on behaviour. Nonetheless, the way in which the *habitus* reproduces social class can be evident in the stratification of value-based childcare choices. Bourdieu's notion of *field* further allows analysis of parents' *habitus*, which is both reflexive and reflective of the childcare institutions with which they engage, and sets them within the wider structures of power and social relations.

Bourdieu's assertion that any individual *habitus* acts 'rationally', or at least reasonably, when in possession of economic and cultural *capital* appropriate to a particular time and space should not, writes Grenfell (2014, p.161), be mistaken for the economic rational action theory (RAT) or rational choice theory (RCT) to which he was 'vehemently opposed' (Brown and Szeman, 2000, p.21). In *Forms of Capital* (Bourdieu, 1973), he expresses particular disdain for Becker's 'human capital' theory which he says always 'reduces the universe of exchanges to mercantile exchange' (1973, p.242). Becker's ideas have particular relevance for childcare choice, and given that a number of writers have discussed RAT and RCT within this context, it is worth examining in more detail.

Becker (1993) makes the assumption that all family decisions – such as deciding to marry, to have children, to divorce - are made in an attempt to raise the welfare of the family by weighing the advantages and disadvantages of alternative actions and, in economic terms, comparing costs and benefits (1993, p.17). Becker (1974) had previously written about women's participation in the labour market, suggesting that it was lower because families made rational economic choices based on 'innate differences' between men and women – especially in their capacities to 'rear children' (Becker, 1993, p.14). A woman's economic value, argues Becker was lower because her non-market value as a child-carer was greater than her market-value as a worker (Becker, 1974, p.318). In making childcare choices, heterosexual couples therefore rationally trade their relevant specialisms – women as child carers, men as workers in the labour market - within the overall household budget (Duncan et al., 2004, p.262). According to RAT, if a woman's labour-market value is less, or not much more than the cost of childcare, then the rational choice is for her to care and not work outside the home. This might suggest, for example, that if informal childcare is available, then there is greater choice with increased opportunity, but the number of variables involved in rationality increase with consideration of the informal carers' gender and labour-market value.

The literature, however, and further evidence in this study, includes many examples of parents who would not use informal childcare, and who make the choice not to work and to care for children themselves despite the economic penalties that this may bring, based on subjectivities, values and dispositions. While Goldthorpe (1998), in his discussion of RAT, acknowledges the role that beliefs have, he maintains that economics provide the stronger impetus. Where economic rational choice breaks down, he suggests, is not the relation of beliefs to action, but that it is grounded on the assumption that actors have 'perfect knowledge' and use it in the most effective way to achieve their goals and maximise their utility (Goldthorpe, 1998, p.170). This is discussed in the context of childcare by Chaudry (2010), who suggests that parents may have incomplete information when they are making choices about childcare, reiterating Pungello and Kutz-Costes' (1999) findings that mothers take decisions founded on a weak understanding of the childcare environment. Yet even when actors have imperfect knowledge, and their decision-making therefore involves risk and uncertainty, rational choice supposes that they make calculations that will maximise the expected utility.

In much of the analysis of childcare, economic approaches are taken that are consistent with RAT and RCT. Duncan and Irwin (2004, p.254) suggest that in the UK, government expansion of childcare services is based on the assumption that in two-parent-worker families, childcare decision-making is based on making rational cost-benefit calculations. As discussed in Chapter One, a number of studies (such as Arpino et al. 2010; Damaris 1990; D. M. Blau 2001) have used large quantitative data sets to

predict likely behaviour in varying guises of rational choice with research providing accounts of parental decision-making within the context of financial, market and social constraints while following the 'bounded rationalities' approach Pescosolido (1992, p.1098).

Rational choice as a wholly deterministic model of childcare decision-making is commonly rejected by those investigating the field (Chaudry, Henly and Meyers, 2010; Forry et al., 2013; Duncan et al., 2004; Weber, 2011), Nonetheless, others acknowledge that rational, or consumer choice has some part to play. Empirical testing of rational choice against childcare decisions has been shown to be able to predict behaviour based on some narrow factors – such as how the price or availability of childcare affects behaviour (Blau 2001). Yet as Chaudry et al (2010) note, choice models are less effective at explaining the influence of other variables – such as ethnicity – on how parents behave.

Bourdieu placed the interest of agents over calculation as the prime motivator in decision-making. For Bourdieu, rational choice ignores the fact that individual *habitus* drives what the actor believes to be 'rational' or at least reasonable. Bourdieu argued that rational choice was a 'well founded illusion' in which proponents identify a rational choice as something true, but are providing a false interpretation of it (Bourdieu, 1992, p.119).

## Conclusions

Bourdieu's thinking tools of *habitus*, *capital* and *field* and the relationships between them provide an edifice within which childcare and childcare choices can be examined. In particular, within this thesis is the need to understand the practices of childcare not as a dichotomy between the dimensions of either the individual or the social, but in the interplay between structure and agency. The relational notion of *habitus* in describing attitudes and dispositions that then interact with capitals and *field* within a social arena such as childcare, assist not only in explaining practices, but also presenting a framework within which practices can be deconstructed and analysed. The theoretical frame therefore provides a construct in which empirical work can take place (Bourdieu, 1989b, p.50).

*Habitus* as denoting the attitudes and dispositions of individuals is a particularly valuable concept within this thesis in both the analysis of existing evidence and new empirical data. In Chapter Five, individual practice within the *field* of childcare is examined to investigate the relationship between the *field* and the *habitus* of those who inhabit it, as expressed in terms of capitals and their configurations. In Chapter Six, biographies and life histories are examined to build a picture of the dispositions and practices that parents acquire from early childhood onwards that form their *habitus*.

Such detailed information is used in understanding the logic and motivation underlying how parents then practice within the *field* of childcare.

Bourdieu's thinking tools are also helpful in contextualising the work of others, as in Chapter Three. For example, Forry et al (2013, p.27) discuss, in their synthesis of childcare decision-making research, a wide range of 'beliefs' around issues such as work, family roles, education and household economics all playing a part in how parents make childcare choices that would indicate *habitus*. They also describe other factors in decisions such as the unique situations that families find themselves in and the constraints (such as low income, lack of information) that parents face (2013, p.27). Forry et al (2013) therefore highlight the interplay between *habitus*, *capital* and *field* very neatly. They describe dispositions of parents along with the concept of social space or arena in which *habitus* is set; they highlight the range of choices that parents have at any one time as defined by the events that have shaped their pasts (*capital*), while also highlighting the fact that the operation of the *field* restricts choices to those that are visible and viable (Maton in Grenfell, 2014, p.51).

The central role of not only economic power, but cultural *capital*, in societal power relations and the formation of class, is a further key analytical tool that Bourdieu provides and which is helpful in examining childcare. The description of policy in Chapter Four focuses on how power is deployed to constrain or empower practices within the childcare *field*, while the proposition that classes distinguish themselves by taste and not just economic means, and that non-economic capitals can be transformed (Navarro, 2006, p.17), is important in examining a childcare *field* that is distinguished, as it is in the UK, by marketization.

In this Chapter, references have also been made to other theories which are referred to in this thesis at various points and their position and relationship to Bourdieu's ideas. Like Bourdieu, Foucault (1988, p.148) argues that all human beings are historically structured agents, and both Bourdieu (1993, p.176) and Foucault (1980) observe that by living in the world, people are also involved in structuring the world. Where Foucault offers a different focus is in his emphasis on discourses and the source of power. For Foucault, "power is everywhere, diffused and embodied in discourse" (Foucault, 1980) and, in this context, other writers' Foucauldian analyses are referred to in the examination of the discourses of childhood and childcare that emerge from policy analysis in Chapter Four. Foucault's work on sexuality is also important to acknowledge in discussion of any gendered topic. His challenge to traditional ways of thinking about power, the body and sexuality has stimulated extensive feminist interest and, as Deveaux (1994) writes, few theorists have had more influence on contemporary feminist scholarship. While only discussed briefly, feminist thinking on childcare issues has also been highlighted, and its importance in offering a critical interpretation of the social relationships in which

childcare takes place is reflected in the research and writing of a number of authors throughout this thesis.

Bourdieu's theories also provide the basis of the methodological framework for the questions that need to be asked and the analytical tasks that are needed to answer them, as is set out in the next chapter.

The opportunity to confirm, endorse, supplement and critique some of the above in the light of the empirical evidence is taken in the final chapter of this thesis, where Bourdieu's theories are tested against research findings. Furthermore, opportunities are taken throughout the study to participate in reflexive sociology (Bourdieu, 1992) by questioning the construction of knowledge and the use that can be made of it.



## Chapter 2 Methodology

To fully investigate childcare and the choices that families make, it is necessary to collect and analyse empirical data in order to obtain a picture of how the *field* of study is constructed and how it operates, but also to contextualise findings with theory to provide explanations for the functioning of the world in which the *field* of study exists. In this chapter, the use of a structured methodology is proposed, where the theory and methodology are brought together in theoretical construction and practical research operations - "...a theory of practice, which is at one and the same time a practice of theory" (Silva and Warde, 2010, p.18). In the context of the methodological approach, this chapter then sets out in detail the methods and study designs used in this research. This includes methods appropriate to separate but inter-related research activities including an analysis of policy, a quantitative study of survey data and an exploration of qualitative interview data.

### Methodological framework

In approaching the research question, Grenfell's (2014) structured methodological approach, based on Bourdieu's own methodology used in *field* analyses (Bourdieu, 1992, pp.104–7), is used. Grenfell offers a three-level methodology to research but with the proviso that to 'omit any one part impoverishes the whole' (2014, p.22).

The first step is the need always to construct the research object afresh '...making the normal conspicuous by reconceptualising it in relational terms' (Grenfell, 2014, p.22). Bourdieu describes the responsibility of the social researcher to 'begin again' - to scrutinise the research topic to establish its key terms, identify the dominant explanations, concepts and theories and thereby reconceptualise it relationally (Bourdieu 1989 in Silva and Warde, 2010, p.20). The research object is not analysed of and for itself, but is a representation of it constructed by identifying the relationships associated with the topic, its participants, institutions and the broader social space which is its context (Hardy, 2009, p.241).

Secondly, the attributes of the *field* are constructed through an examination of the relation of the *field* to other *fields*, identifying and quantifying the various forms of *capital*, and the analysis of the *habitus* of the agents in the *field*. This step involves two stages. First, mapping out the objective structures of relations between the positions occupied by the agents or institutions who compete for the legitimate forms of specific authority of which the *field* is a site (Grenfell, 2014, p.22), and secondly to '...analyse the *habitus* of agents, the different systems of dispositions they have acquired by internalising a

determinate type of social and economic condition, and which find in a definite trajectory within the *field* a more or less favorable opportunity to become actualized' (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992a: 104–5).

Thirdly, is a stage of participant objectification, a reflection on the position of the researcher and his motives and responsibilities as a critical part of the reflexive account, which is particularly important for the ongoing practice of research.

Grenfell's structured methodological approach is deployed in the discussions and analysis in this thesis as follows.

In Chapter Three, the research topic – childcare, and specifically informal childcare within Wales – is examined and reflected upon to assess its position within the social and academic worlds. It is studied to investigate where, according to existing information, it might be situated in relation to other conceptual and structural groupings. The literature relating to informal childcare is reviewed to both examine the childcare *field* as defined, bounded and investigated by others, and to 'reconceptualise' the topic. Important within this endeavour is to identify, analyse and criticise the key concepts employed, and to arrive at a point of understanding around the terminology deployed and the contested positions in which concepts are set and through which the object of research is therefore constructed.

In Chapter Four, the *field* of childcare is further investigated in relation to policy and the association between the state and society. Here, Bourdieu's analysis provides a way of investigating the *field* of childcare policy in a theoretically informed way. Social policy forms a part of the relationship between structure and agency, attempting to modify (constrain or empower) actors' practice between *habitus* and the *field*. Bourdieu stresses the power of the state, cultural, economic and political elites, to shape the *habitus* of society, defining the state as 'the culmination of a process of concentration of the different species of *capital*' (Bourdieu, 1998, p.41). Yet how effective the state is in creating policy through which the *habitus* of actors is modified to achieve political or ideological aims needs to be discussed. A further key question related to childcare policy is the extent of actors' agency. According to Bourdieu, they are most likely to behave in an instinctive manner based on their practice or their 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu 1997 in Greener, 2002, p.694), yet the rules of the game, and in many cases the boundaries of the *field*, are structurally defined and not always fully and equally known to all, while inequality in capitals restricts agents in their ability to play the game.

Chapters Five and Six are focused on agents, investigating how they operate within the *field* of childcare. Chapter Five utilises a large quantitative data set to map the 'structural topography'

(Grenfell, 2014) of the *field* of childcare in Wales, including the positions of those who inhabit it – as evident in their *habitus* and the dispositions that they have acquired, along with their accumulation of each type of *capital*. Also in Chapter Five is an analysis of the agents (parents) as they operate within the *field*. This utilises data relating to individual features of the characteristics of the actors through which the relationships and correspondences between individuals, groups and structures can be seen to intersect and operate within the *field*. Chapter Six acknowledges that a deeper understanding of the agents and their relationship with the *field* requires qualitative investigation. Using narrative interview data greater attention is paid to aspects such as biography, life history and detailed information about the logic and motivation underlying how they practice within the *field*, and how this resonates with official or other common discourses.

The final chapter provides a discussion of findings within the context of Bourdieu's method, and with the tools he provides for understanding the relationship between structure and agency. What comes from the approach, however, is a greater understanding of some of the complexities of actors in the social world and their situation within the political world. Within the final section of this study is also a reflexive account of the research, objectifying the researcher's place within it. In '*An invitation to reflexive sociology*' (Bourdieu, 1992), Bourdieu stresses the importance of the researcher being implicated within his own research, suggesting, therefore, that sociological research is neither objective nor subjective.

### ***Mixed methods***

According to Grenfell (2014), adopting a Bourdieusian approach to analysing the *field* of practice makes the traditional dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative research methods less important. While this might raise issues of epistemological positioning, it supports my own position of rationalising mixed-methods as complimentary, where a broad research question such as this Thesis contains, can be explored from different angles. Quantitative enquiry therefore provides external validity while qualitative research can be used to provide the 'thick' internally valid descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of human behaviour that arise through ethnography.

Implicit in gathering accounts in which *habitus* becomes visible is biographical investigation. This requires the gathering of personal accounts as a way of building up an ethnography of *field* participants which can subsequently be analysed with respect to *field* positions, structures, and their 'underlying logic of practice' (Bourdieu, 1990). Yet biographical data are not sufficient on their own. Individual ethnographies need to be analysed within the context of data that indicate *field* positions, structures and the social space in which they operate, and crucially, within the relationship between

*field* and *habitus*. Large scale quantitative data sets that are representative of all agents and organisations active in the *field* can therefore provide good representation of the research object if the sampling process reflects the whole population (Hardy in Grenfell, 2014, p.240). Data therefore serves two functions. On one hand is information about individuals' practices, attitudes and dispositions collected through qualitative methods, while, on the other, quantitative data measures and collates participants' characteristics such as the cultural and economic *capital* they have accumulated which, alongside *habitus*, positions them within the *field*. In works such as *The Love of Art* (1991, p.37), Bourdieu sets out the kinds of analytical categories, including gender, age, occupation, residence and highest qualification, that he uses to measure the possession of cultural and economic capitals. He combines this with data regarding attitudes about, and visits to, museums and galleries, to investigate the *habitus* of individuals. Bourdieu describes similar data collection in *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 1984).

## **Study design**

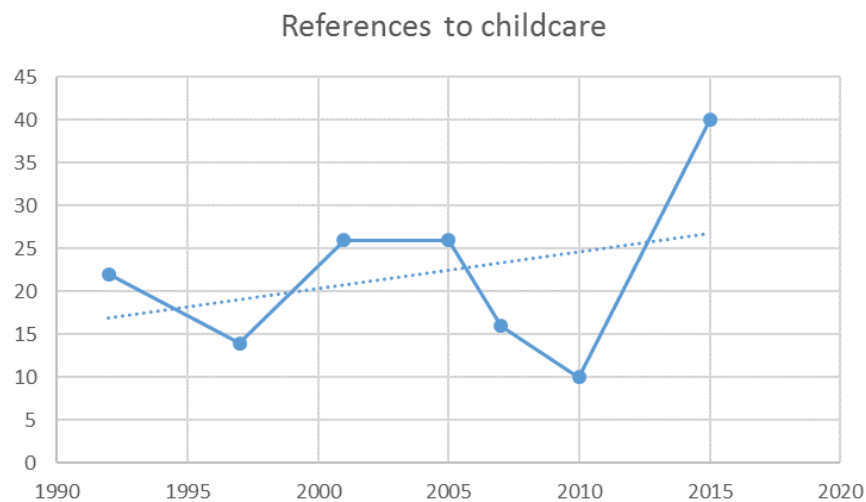
This thesis therefore employs a number of methods appropriate to three separate but inter-related research activities. First, in examining childcare policy in Wales and to a lesser extent other parts of the UK, public policy texts are examined using a mixed method of content and critical discourse analysis, complemented by qualitative frame analysis. Secondly, quantitative data from the National Survey for Wales is subject to analysis using a range of appropriate statistical tools. Thirdly is a qualitative analysis of interview data from 45 narrative interviews with parents from three localities in Wales.

### ***Policy analysis***

Following the approach of a number of authors (White, 2011; Ball, 2013b; Wincott, 2006a; Mahon, 2005; Gornick and Meyers, 2006; Chaney, 2015), this study employs policy framing techniques (Fischer, 2003; Keeney, 2004) to interpret childcare policy through the analysis of public texts. As originally conceived by Goffman, a frame is a 'schemata of interpretation that allows its user to locate, perceive, identify and label' (1974, p.21). According to Goffman, *Frame Analysis* starts with any 'strip of activity' – such as the practice of childcare – where applying the relevant frame provides the solution to the question of 'what is going on here?' (1974, p.8). Framing starts from the point of view that language matters politically (Forester, 1993, p.7). A frame is cognitive ordering that represents a way of talking or thinking. Yet it is not an ideology nor is it a developed discourse (Ferree and Merrill, 2000, p.456) and, as Chaney (2015, p.3) suggests, can therefore be used within multiple ideologies or may contain a number of discourses to make sense of the *field*. Hall (1993) makes a clear distinction

between policy paradigms and policy frames. Policy paradigms, she says, are a taken-for-granted set of ideas and terminology that specify not only policy goals and policy instruments, but the nature of the problems that they are meant to address. Framing, on the other hand, is a useful tool when examining areas of public policy debate which have not yet formed paradigmatic views or over-arching sets of ideas (Hall, 1993, p.276). As childcare policies are arguably still developing in Wales and the rest of the UK, White sees policy framing as a way of collating perspectives that have a coherent underlying logic within a contested policy area (2011, p.287).

A mixed-method approach to examining policy is suggested by Baker et al. (2008) involving both content and critical discourse analysis. They suggest a quantitative approach to highlight *issue salience* through content analysis, applied by recording the number of times key words, ideas and meanings are presented in policy texts (Chaney, 2015). This can be complemented by qualitative frame analysis which examines the discourse by identifying specific values, facts and other considerations, taking into account the social, political, historical and intertextual contexts (Baker, Gabrielatos and Khosravini, 2008, p.278). In this study, 52 political and policy texts were analysed and coded deductively (using Nvivo Version 11) qualitative data analysis software, for incidences of key words and phrases - such as 'childcare' and 'early education' - along with their stems, similes and the key concepts that the literature suggests are important, including informal care, Welsh language, affordability and economies of provision. Furthermore, phrases, sections and arguments within documents were coded using the policy frames as primary nodes (Silver and Lewins, 2014, p.19) based on the key discursive themes derived from the academic literature as set out in Table 5. The mixed method approach provides evidence regarding the prevalence of the key words, phrases and expressions of ideas within political and policy texts (salience) alongside an interpretation of childcare policy (Chaney, 2015, p.3). For example, Figure 1 illustrates how increasing references to childcare within UK general election manifestos between 1992 and 2015, shows a growing salience of childcare as a political issue.

**Figure 1: UK Election Political Manifestos: Childcare salience (n=216)**

### ***Quantitative enquiry***

Secondary analysis of data provides a cost-effective, time-efficient and valid method of examining research phenomena (Bryman, 2008). In the case of this research, it provided opportunities to use the results of a large contemporary survey that contained a large amount of data relating to both childcare and a wide range of related topics including social, demographic and cultural indicators. These were analysed to provide specific information and test theories about the nature and extent of informal childcare and the role that it plays in families' lives, while examining factors which are common amongst families that use informal care. Survey data is less useful in establishing causation, but it can be effective in making links between behaviour and an individual's resources and pre-dispositions. It is thus helpful for subsequent qualitative analysis to be framed within the context of quantitative data - in this case, data which indicated the extent to which resources and pre-dispositions could be seen to influence behaviour.

### **The National Survey for Wales**

The National Survey Wales (NSW) is a repeat cross-sectional survey which, through face-to-face interviews with a randomly selected sample of people over the age of 16 across Wales, collects data from around 12,000 respondents each year. The survey began in January 2012, and the 2015 survey data is the fourth release, and the only wave to date to have contained questions about childcare.

The NSW has significant benefits in the study of childcare issues over previous surveys (eg. Smith et al. 2009; Rutter & Evans 2012). The principal advantage is in its focus on Wales, with a large sample size allowing analysis by geographical area and significant sub-groupings (eg. lone parents). Having a randomly selected sample with a high response rate (62% to 70%) annually, results are as

representative as possible of all people in Wales, including harder-to-reach groups such as younger working people (Welsh Government, 2015a). Weighting for non-response also helps the results to be representative. Because the survey is carried out face-to-face it avoids non-response and comprehension issues that may be encountered with self-completion and even telephone surveys (Dillman, 2011, p.7). The NSW covers a wide range of topics; this allows for cross-analysis between topics, as well as between a full set of social and demographic questions. These include questions around Welsh language which were absent in the Childcare Survey Wales (Smith et al., 2009). The NSW was designed using either questions that had been used in other major face-to-face surveys and were therefore tried and tested, or were cognitively tested, thereby increasing the external validity of the findings. Finally, the purpose of the NSW is to generate data to inform Welsh Government and Welsh policy-making. The evidence provided by the NWS is Wales specific, and therefore has a higher value within the frame of reference of this study than other UK-wide or UK country-specific evidence.

The specification for the survey demands that the sample should be representative of the population of all adults aged 16 years or over living in private households in Wales, with a minimum sample size of 600 people in each of the 22 local authority areas. The annual sample for interview is drawn from a stratified random selection of addresses drawn from the ONS Postcode Address File. The only, or a randomly selected adult is chosen to be interviewed from each address with each interview lasting around 45 minutes (Hanson, Sullivan and McGowan, 2014). The 2014-15 data set contains 14,285 records with an average of 649 records in each local authority.

In the analysis of the NSW data undertaken for this thesis, recommended weights have been applied (Hanson, Sullivan and McGowan, 2014). These have been calculated to take account of unequal selection probabilities as a result of random sampling, and are therefore applied to SPSS calculations to ensure that the age and gender distribution of the sampling matches the population as a whole.

Only respondents who were parents or guardians of one or more children aged 0 to 14 years were asked to complete the 2014-15 NSW childcare module. If there was more than one child in the household, then a specific child was randomly selected and the childcare questions were asked about that child. Of the 14,285 people interviewed for the NSW, 3,441 were asked about childcare. The sample is therefore much larger than the previous 2009 Welsh Government commissioned Childcare Survey (Smith et al., 2009) of 592 parents. Set against the total estimated population of families with children aged 0 to 14 in Wales of 308,245 (StatsWales, 2015), this provides a confidence interval of 1.71 for a worst-case 50% response to any specific question.

The data were downloaded from the UK Data Service and analysed using SPSS (version 22). The data were checked and cleaned and a subset of 3,441 records identified where respondents were asked about childcare. On examination of the data, twelve records were found to have been incorrectly coded, bringing the total down to 3,429.

As most variables being analysed are categorical, strengths of associations were measured using Cramér's  $V$  (represented as  $\Phi_c$ ) or, where nominal variables are analysed, Pearson's correlation coefficient (represented as  $\rho$ ) (Fielding and Gilbert, 2006, p.213).

This analysis of the data utilises dependent variables against which a range of other factors are tested. The dependent variables are based on two questions from the NSW. The first asked respondents: "Do you ever need to arrange for [child] to be looked after so you can work, study or go on training?" This question enables the propensity of childcare 'need' amongst households with children (aged 0 to 14) in Wales to be measured. However, it is known from other research (Smith et al., 2009; Huskinson et al., 2014, 2016; Hinds and Park, 2000) that the most significant influence on childcare need and subsequent use, is the employment status within the household. The NSW enables a distinction to be made between those households where all adults are in work (or are looking for work, or in training), and those that are not. This variable is used to filter results and therefore examine both households that need childcare because parents are working (or looking for work or training), and those households where childcare may be used for other reasons, for example to support child development. There is, however, opportunity for ambiguity within this question. Whether parents<sup>4</sup> 'need' to use childcare does not necessarily mean that they actually use it. The follow-up question in the NSW allows for some clarity by asking "IF YES: Who looks after [child]?" with a 'no-one' option for respondents. This second question is used as the other main dependent variable in this analysis, as it distinguishes between childcare types. Filtering responses enables three cohorts to be identified from within this variable; all households that use all types of childcare; households that use formal childcare; and households that use informal childcare. The characteristics of these three groups can be compared when a range of independent variables are then tested for association.

As with any sample survey, data from the NSW will be subject to sampling and non-sampling error and a range of other methodological limitations due to the design of the survey. Sampling errors occur because analysis is based on a sample of the population rather than the whole, while non-sampling errors include all other differences between the survey estimates and the true population. In

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<sup>4</sup> Based on Census data (ONS 2011) relating to household composition, it is known that the great majority of children in Wales are in households where they are being cared for by one or more parents. There is justification, therefore, in using the term 'parent' when referring to the adult respondent of the childcare module within the NSW survey.



particular, because the NSW has sampling targets at local authority level, the probabilities for selection will be greater in local authorities with smaller populations. This results in standard errors being higher than if the survey had been truly random across the population. Standard errors have been used to calculate confidence intervals and are published in a technical report (Hanson, Sullivan and McGowan, 2014), with 95% confidence intervals calculated for each variable. These have been taken into account in this analysis to assess the accuracy of estimates, and therefore make judgements about whether there is a real difference between two groups being compared. To ensure that estimates based on the NSW data are robust, and to provide consistency with the basic analysis of survey data produced by the Welsh Government Knowledge and Analytical Service, the coefficient of variation (CV) has been calculated to provide interpretation of the standard deviation for the main variables analysed.

### **Localities**

Part of the rationale for this research was to investigate anecdotal (and therefore reflexive) accounts of the levels and distribution of informal childcare use in Wales that have consistently been seen as a major factor in childcare policy development (see Chapter Four). In selecting samples for research, it was therefore important to employ a probabilistic approach to sampling (Davies, 2008, p.174) to reflect the cultural, economic and social diversity of Wales as well as a range of childcare provision. Hakim (1986) terms this *focused sampling* in that localities are selected to provide illuminating examples of a type of case. The areas of Blaenau Gwent, Ceredigion and Wrexham were chosen to reflect localities in which it was known that there were different levels of childcare use and provision, but also as areas that are linguistically, geographically, economically and socially diverse. The choice of areas was not, however, intended to be reflective of Welsh identity or political behaviour paradigms such as Balsom's 'Three Wales model' (1985). The following tables set out some of the contrasting statistical variables between the three areas that set the comparative study in context, and highlight factors that might be important in contextualising the analysis of narrative interview data.

**Table 1: Socio-demographic locality profile<sup>5</sup>**

	Socio-economic Factors						
	Working households with dependent children (2013)	Job density (2013)	Lone parent households (2011)	Deprivation (Child Deprivation Rank / 22 Councils) (2014)	LSOAs in most deprived 10%	% of adults with low or no qualifications	Welsh speakers in population (2011)
<b>Blaenau Gwent</b>	36.2%	0.44	14.0%	2	23.0%	65%	7.8%
<b>Ceredigion</b>	48.0%	0.73	8.0%	16	0.0%	37%	47.3%
<b>Wrexham</b>	44.8%	0.71	11.0%	17	6.0%	51%	12.9%

<sup>5</sup> Jobs: NomisWeb 2013; Children and Lone Parents: ONS Census 2011; Deprivation: Wales IMD 2011. Education: National Survey Wales 2015

The socio-demographic profile (Table 1) of the three localities areas highlights differences between the areas that the literature suggests might be significant in study of childcare use and choices (Bryson et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2009; Huskinson et al., 2016). The proportion of households where both parents work is consistently shown to be a predictor of childcare use by families, which across the three areas can be seen to be highest in Ceredigion and lowest in Blaenau Gwent. Yet the differences are not as wide as other related data might suggest, including the job density in the local area (as measured against the adult working population – Nomis 2011) and deprivation data. The educational level of parents has been suggested as being significant in childcare use and choices (Hansen & Hawkes 2009; Bryson et al. 2012), and there are large differences between the localities that might illuminate different practices. Different patterns of childcare use by lone parents has been highlighted as being significant in previous research (Bell et al. 2005; Smith et al. 2009; Skinner & Finch 2006; Rafferty & Wiggan 2011; Himmelweit & Sigala 2003 and others) therefore the proportion of lone parents across the localities is important to consider when drawing conclusions. Finally, the proportion of Welsh speakers is an important consideration in framing the qualitative research examining links between childcare and language within some communities that other research has suggested is important but has not been fully investigated (Morris and Jones, 2007).

**Table 2: Childcare in localities<sup>6</sup>**

	Childcare				
	Childcare places per 100 children (2015)	Working families using informal childcare (2015)	Working families using formal childcare (2015)	All families using childcare (2015)	Proportion of Welsh medium childcare settings (2010)
<b>Blaenau Gwent</b>	7.3	34.8%	6.1%	37.9%	6.0%
<b>Ceredigion</b>	18.2	33.3%	23.9%	45.8%	94.0%
<b>Wrexham</b>	20.3	35.9%	25.4%	46.4%	3.0%

As can be seen in Table 2, there are large differences between the localities in both the supply and consumption of childcare. Wrexham has the highest amount of childcare set against the population of children in the authority aged 0 to 14, with almost three times as much as Blaenau Gwent and set against an average across Wales of 14.7 per 100 children (CSSIW 2013 and ONS 2013). The 2014 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (Blaenau Gwent CBC, 2014, p.17) attributed the low rate to the limited availability of formal childcare and structural factors such as employment rates, family incomes and deprivation, but further analysis is needed to investigate causal links. There is more formal

<sup>6</sup> Childcare Places: CSSIW 2013 and ONS 2013; Childcare use: National Survey for Wales 2015; Welsh Medium Childcare: Childcare Sufficiency Assessments 2014

childcare in Ceredigion, but less than in Wrexham. An important consideration in examining this statistic, however, is that it is based on the overall number of registered childcare places, which includes part-time provision in playgroups and *cylch meithrin*. These are not usually equivalent to full-time daycare places as provided by most day nurseries and childminders. Therefore, as reported in the most recent Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (Ceredigion County Council, 2015, p.38), the amount of formal care in Ceredigion that might be available to parents requiring full-time care is much less. Linked, is the availability of Welsh Medium childcare, which is only available to any great extent in Ceredigion. The extent to which these statistics reflect parents lived experiences requires investigation across the three areas.

Analysis of National Survey for Wales (see Chapter Five) data provides an indication as to the relative proportions of working families that use informal and formal care in each locality. As shown in Table 2, the number of families using informal care is similar across all three areas and the importance of this is discussed in Chapter Five. Unsurprisingly, given the supply, the proportion of families using formal childcare in Blaenau Gwent is a quarter of that in the other areas and the lowest in Wales (average 20%). The overall proportion of working families using all types of childcare – including combinations of formal and informal care - is less dissimilar across the three areas. While analysis of quantitative data in Chapter Five provides some evidence that certain factors might be more important than others in predicting the use of types of childcare, the differences between the localities is important in contextualising evidence from qualitative investigation.

### ***Qualitative enquiry***

The qualitative element in this research consisted of narrative interviews with parents using both formal and informal childcare in each of the three locality areas (Blaenau Gwent, Ceredigion and Wrexham), with participants chosen from a screening survey that was distributed to parents with young children via Family Information Services, Genesis Projects and Integrated Children's Centres. In total, 600 screening surveys were printed and sent via gatekeepers; a total of 190 were returned.

### **Case selection**

As De Vaus (2001) points out, since cases for interview are to be used for theoretical rather than statistical generalisation, there is no need to select interviewees because they are in any way representative of the population as a whole. However, that is not to say that interviewees need not be selected strategically in order that propositions can be investigated and theories tested. For this research, this involved selecting cases that had particular characteristics relevant to the research questions. The *Screening Survey* focused on collecting information about a range of factors identified

in the literature as potentially affecting parental choice of childcare – such as geography, family, social class, economic circumstances, working patterns etc. In addition, the screening survey was used to filter potential participants and seek their informed consent for subsequent interview as set out in the ‘*Participant Information Sheet*’ (Appendix 2) which was distributed alongside the screening survey form.

The *Screening Survey* (Appendix 1) and accompanying *Participant Information Sheet* was distributed in both Welsh and English via gatekeepers in each of the three local authority areas; the process was managed in each case by the local Family Information Service (FIS). Formal discussions took place with the FISs in each area and all agreed to support the research wholeheartedly. As informal childcare is a significant issue in all three areas, it is hoped that this research may provide valuable information for local policy and planning purposes. The local authority logo was used on the survey forms and information sheets, and provided both a local endorsement and point of reference for participants. Each FIS also agreed to its contact details being placed on the literature (alongside those of the researcher and the University) and was willing to respond to any queries. A pilot of ten screening surveys was undertaken in each of the three areas to test both the distribution method and the survey data collection efficacy. On their return, a number of small amendments were made to the format of the survey.

### ***Narrative interviews***

A series of interviews with 15 parents in each of the three case study areas was undertaken. Interviews were focused on individuals’ experiences of growing up, having children, using childcare and their relationship with other *fields* such as family, community and the world of work. Elliott (2005) suggests that, in such cases, in-depth or narrative interviewing is a highly appropriate approach for researching and understanding individuals’ lives in a social context, allowing respondents to tell stories of their lives and experiences and, in doing so, provide evidence of the subjects and meanings they attach to their experiences (2005, p.26). The interview topic guide is attached as Appendix 5.

Potential participants were recruited from the 190 responses to the Screening Survey. Participants were selected to represent specific cases or circumstances and contacted to ascertain their willingness and consent to be interviewed. All of the screening surveys were completed and returned by mothers. While this was not an objective of the research, it reflects other research (Arpino, Pronzato et al. 2010, Doucet 1995, Beaujot 1997) showing that mothers are most often the primary carers and overwhelmingly take responsibility for childcare arrangements. Subjects were then chosen to reflect the local variety of family structures, employment arrangements, language and childcare arrangements. Those selected to be interviewed were contacted by telephone or text message and

then formally invited by a letter which outlined the research in more detail, set out the researchers' responsibilities to them and described the interview process. Those participants that were willing were offered the choice of being interviewed either in the home or at a neutral location acceptable to the participant, or by telephone. Local authorities in all three areas were contacted and supported the research enterprise by allowing the use of neutral venues such as Integrated Children's Centres. Where parents had young children, crèche care at these venues was offered to allow parents to fully engage with the interview process, although none took this up. All parents were offered interviews in either Welsh or English. Of the participants interviewed, eleven were interviewed in Welsh and 34 in English.

Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and an hour and a quarter; several authors suggest that this is the optimum length for a qualitative research interview (Elliot 2005, Hermanowicz 2002). Interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. This allowed the interviewer to give full attention to the subject and capture elements of the narrative – such as pauses, intonation and laughter - that otherwise would be lost. A life history approach was taken to data collection (Davies, 2008, p.210) that started with questions about the participant's own childhood, progressing to their past and present circumstances and decisions made about work, home and childcare, and then to plans for the future. Interviewing retrospectively allowed participants to give their evaluations of both the process of decision-making and its outcomes. Questions were open-ended and flexible to accommodate the diversity of people's lives. Probing was used to encourage clarification and elaboration.

### ***Thematic analysis***

The methodology for linking the mothers' narratives to a wider theoretical exploration and to an assessment of policy is through the deployment of a thematic analysis to the examination of the ethnographic data. Aronson (1994, p.2) describes the process as firstly collecting data in the form of conversations which are subsequently transcribed and from which patterns of experiences can be listed. In this case, interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were anonymised with pseudonyms given to participants before being loaded into the qualitative software package, NVivo (version 11). The interviews were then read to identify patterns of experience in the form of words, phrases or ideas. Patterns of experience often began with parents' own childhoods and their stories of family life, before moving biographically through to their own experiences of parenthood. Numerous patterns of experience emerged inductively from the narratives and identified patterns that formed experimental codes (see Appendix 9). The next step in thematic analysis was to combine and catalogue related patterns of experience into themes using Nodes and Sub-Nodes as labels.

Themes are defined as units derived from patterned responses or meanings (Davies, 2008, p.51) and identified by "bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which often are meaningless when viewed alone" (Leininger 1985 in Aronson 1994, p.5). Most importantly, the themes that emerged from parents' stories were pieced together to form a picture of their collective experience. This provided the basis for analytical reflection where the themes were used to explain life trajectories, causal events and moral positions (Silver and Lewins, 2014, p.81). Once themes were identified and theories developed, the data was searched for evidence that supported or refuted the propositions. At this point, over-lapping themes were combined or else provided new patterns that might form additional themes (Davies, 2008, p.207). After this phase, it was important to identify what was interesting about the themes and what new insights they might provide around the topic, and to reflect on whether the insights might be true. Finally, themes were developed into a story line which, when interwoven with the background literature and set in the context of theory, provided new data and analyses (Lofland, 1995, p.30).

To provide recompense for participants' time, and in gratitude for their participation, those who were interviewed were given a £10 shopping voucher. A budget of £450 for this (based on a maximum of 45 interviews) was set aside from the Anniversary Scholarship awarded for this research.

## **Ethics**

As a part of the research involved interviews, it was designed to fully adhere to the Bangor University Ethics Policy in which the consent, dignity, rights and safety of participants is the primary consideration. This was maintained through the following actions:

### ***Screening survey***

The initial *Screening Survey* (Appendix 1) was an 'opt-in' whereby potential participants were provided with a *Participant Information Sheet* (Appendix 2) regarding the research, from which they were able to make an informed choice as to whether or not to participate. The gatekeepers (eg. parent support workers, health visitors) involved in the distribution of the surveys were briefed about the research and were able to assist participants in making an informed choice, in some cases assisting those who had poor literacy or other linguistic or cognitive issues.

### ***Consent to interview***

Following the screening survey, selected participants were contacted by telephone and then formally by letter (Appendix 3) inviting them to be interviewed. The letter contained details of the interview

and reinforced the message that their confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained through the process. No pressure was put on participants and it was made clear that there would be no adverse consequences of any kind if they refused to take part. Participants were also sent an *Interview Consent Form* (Appendix 4) through which to confirm that they were willing participants in the research and that they fully understood the research purpose and process. This form also asked for consent for the interview to be recorded. Interviews did not go ahead unless an *Interview Consent Form* was completed and signed by a participant prior to their interview.

Individuals have not been identified in any of the reports or papers published, and all personal information provided during the interview (names, organisations, places) has been made anonymous. All information collected about individuals has been kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations) and confidentiality, privacy and anonymity have been ensured in the collection, storage and publication of research material.

### ***Child protection protocol***

In the course of interviews, people may share information that is suggestive of risk/harm to themselves or to a child. This research followed the Code of Ethics established by Bostock (2002), informed by both the British Sociological Association's Statement of Ethical Practice and the Child Protection Procedures produced by Barnardos (1994). The Code deals specifically with ethical issues relating to narrative research with parents, during which they may disclose that a child is at risk of harm, and has been adapted for this project.

The child protection protocol for this research involved the following three steps:

- First, if information was disclosed or a situation observed that suggested a child was at risk of harm, the researcher would discuss concerns with the parent at the end of the interview (unless this was thought to put the child at risk), and tell them that colleagues linked to the project would have to be informed.
- Secondly, the researcher would discuss any child protection concerns raised by colleagues with a named person nominated by the local Family Information Service and who had consented to contact Social Services if further child protection action was deemed necessary according to local safeguarding procedures. This action would be taken within 24 hours of the interview. It is important to note that these persons were experienced in child protection issues, and would make the final judgement about the necessity of contacting Social Services.
- Finally, if action was going to be taken, the parent would be contacted, preferably by visiting, but by phone, where available, if visiting would delay contact.

All participants in the study were informed of the existence of the child protection protocol in the pre-interview literature. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher started by telling the participant that everything that they said would be confidential unless they made it clear that a child was at risk of harm. The same procedure would be followed should the participant reveal risk of harm to themselves.

### ***Incentives***

There is an ethical dimension to the offering of incentives to research participants as they can be seen to be a form of undue influence, coercive offer, or corruption of judgment. However, as Grant found (Grant, Sugarman 2004), the use of incentives to recruit and retain research subjects is generally innocuous unless the subject is in a dependency relationship with the researcher, where the risks are particularly high, where the research is degrading, where the participant will only consent if the incentive is relatively large because the participant's aversion to the study is strong, and where the aversion is a principled one. This was judged not to be the case in this research, with the amount significant as a reward but not at a level that could induce unwilling participation.



## Chapter 3 The construction of the research object

Bourdieu refers to the “construction of the research object” as a “summum of the art” of social science research (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1989d: 51) whereby he describes the responsibility of the researcher to start afresh by examining the research topic to establish its key terms, identify the dominant explanations, concepts and theories, and reconceptualise it (Silva and Warde, 2010, p.20). In this chapter, the research topic – childcare, and specifically informal childcare within Wales – is examined and reflected upon to assess its position within the social and academic worlds, and to investigate where, according to existing information, it might be situated in relation to other conceptual and structural groupings. In the first section, key terms related to the research questions are examined, re-conceptualised and where appropriate, operationalised. The second part of this chapter contains an overview of what is already known about the childcare *field* in Wales to examine the structure, function and practice of childcare and early education while making some comparisons with other parts of the UK. In the third section, the existing literature is reviewed to examine what factors might be common amongst those that use informal care, setting them within a frame of Bourdieu’s capitals, while in the final part, what is known about how actors operate within the *field* of childcare – and informal childcare in particular - is discussed.

### Key concepts

In ‘constructing afresh’ the research object, the key concepts that form the basis of study need to be re-examined therefore ‘...making the normal conspicuous by reconceptualising it in relational terms’ (Grenfell, 2014). Terms are examined to assess how they are viewed and understood by others; they are re-conceptualised to ensure that the meaning ascribed to them is clarified for subsequent discussion and analysis; and, where measurement is required, they are operationalised to ensure that everyday or abstract concepts which are inherently difficult to measure, can be tested empirically (Jonker and Pennink, 2010, p.123). This requires some questioning of both the researcher’s and common conceptions of the language and terminology being used.

### *Family, parents, mothers and fathers*

Thus far, the term ‘parent’ has been used both in the research questions and discussion, but it must be recognised that it is not a value-free term and can be problematic. It is the term that is most widely used in official references to those with ‘responsibility for children’. In England and Wales, the Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of parental responsibility and defines it as “all the rights, duties,

powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his property.” (1989, c.41). In addition, the guidance to the 1989 Act states that parental responsibility is concerned with “...bringing the child up, caring for him and making decisions about him, but does not affect the relationship of parent and child for other purposes. Thus, whether or not a parent has parental responsibility for a child does not affect any obligations towards the child, such as a statutory duty to maintain him.” The definition is further used in the underpinning legislation for childcare in Wales, the Children and Families (Wales) Measure (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010b). However, with changes in gender relationships of same-sex partnerships and marriage, the notion of parental responsibility – biologically-driven or otherwise - is not without its complications (see *T v B* 2010 England and Wales High Court 1444).

In reflecting the diverse nature of families, the term ‘parent’ rather than the gendered terminology of ‘mother’ and ‘father’ may be more appropriate in discussions around childcare. However, this leads away from lexicographical or legal interpretations towards stipulative definitions based on theoretical dispositions as discussed in Chapter Six. For example, it can be argued that ‘mother’ and ‘father’ are particularly loaded ideological constructs which, according to Berger and Luckman (1991), have been established, adopted, and institutionalized by participants who act together within a social framework following a set of rules and behaving as if the rules have been agreed upon and are immutable (Berger and Luckmann, 1991). Hacking (1999, p.2) expands this saying that motherhood and fatherhood are not fixed concepts and inevitable - purely the consequence of child-bearing and child-rearing - but are the products of historical events, social forces and ideologies. Similarly, most contemporary studies of kinship regard the concept of family as a construct in which biology may have some part, but through which individualisation has created what Giddens (1992) calls democratic forms of family. Clarke & Popay (2002) contends that the terms motherhood and fatherhood make assumptions about the division and value of labour, domestic responsibilities and cultural meanings. In the context of childcare, the long history in Western societies of the ‘full-time motherhood’ ideal is still being challenged in many countries with the claim made that childcare policies directly or indirectly reinforce social constructs of gender (Kremer, 2007).

Yet, in the context of this thesis, the empirical evidence continues to point overwhelmingly to women, and mothers in particular, as being those who spend the most time caring for children (Lyonette and Crompton, 2014; Crompton and Lyonette, 2009; Berk, 1985; Craig and Mullan, 2011; Craig, 2012) and taking responsibility for childcare issues. Even in households where both parents are employed, while men do take more responsibility for childcare, both men and women identify the mother as the main carer (Chambers, 2012, p.65). Accordingly, Clarke & Popay (2002) suggest that the term ‘parent’ can

therefore 'render invisible the gendered nature of childcare in the domestic sphere' (2002, p.196). This is implicit within policy, argues Lewis (2003, p.221), when government documents tend to use the gender-neutral language of 'parent', while in reality discussing the behaviour of mothers. The gendered nature of childcare is most commonly portrayed in the gap in the division of domestic labour, but reasons given for the gap can often be founded on polychotomous positions. The 'economistic' views of theorists such as Becker (1974), suggest that the unequal division of labour is based on the 'intrinsic' productivity of women in the domestic sphere and particularly in childcare (1974, p.319). While he suggests that women can be as productive as men in the workforce, because of differing aptitudes they are more productive in non-market 'domestic' activities. Therefore, in a normative conjugal family structure it makes economic sense for women to spend their time on domestic labour while men participate in the market. At the heart of this view is the proposition that to a lesser or greater extent biological differences explain why mothers take care of children at home, while fathers go out to work. The opposing view, long argued by feminist sociologists, is that the gendered division of domestic labour reflects the social constructs of masculinity and femininity which are deeply embedded in society (West and Zimmerman, 1987). They argue that the sex differences between men and women are presented as being fundamental and enduring gender dispositions which result in the social order supporting what is seen as the natural order (1987, p.146). Clarke (2006a) argues that use of the gender-neutral language of 'parenting' fails to differentiate between mothers and fathers and recognising that there may be different parenting issues that affect them. This, she says, reinforces gender roles within the family and particularly maternal responsibility for child well-being (2006a, p.716). In this study, the terms parents, mothers and fathers are all used in particular contexts. In most cases, the term 'parents' is used commonly in this study to describe those adults with parental responsibilities for children. The terms 'mothers' and 'fathers' are generally used contextually reflecting source material but, in some cases, where the data or focus of investigation requires a specific analytical approach, gendered terms are used to reflect the social constructs within the theoretical context in which the study takes place.

### ***The meaning of childcare***

Here, the concept of childcare is examined to make clear the precise aspects of society and social behaviour that relate to the research questions. First, the concept is examined by *function*, examining how childcare can be differentiated according to the purpose for which it is seen. Secondly, the *position* of childcare within society is discussed, while, finally, the differentiation in childcare *practices* is deliberated.

According to Therborn, the family is the most ancient and the most widespread of institutions, and despite some family arrangements deviating from norms, the principle of a normative conjugal family structure founded on affection and intimacy is still the most widespread societal structure on the planet (2003, p.87). The care of young children is a defining element in the relationship between child and parent and can be seen as the essence of family life. Nonetheless, definitions of what constitutes a family are informed by social contexts that differ across history and geography and therefore what constitutes 'child care' varies similarly (Budig in Scott, Treas and Richards, 2007, p.417). As Therborn observes, caring for children is something that happens to a greater or lesser extent in all societies (2003, p.87), yet who cares, how they care and the boundaries of when, where and for how long children are cared for, are relative between cultures and across time (Penn, 2011b, p.1). Given the research question, further discussion is focused on conceptualising childcare within the context of the United Kingdom and, where appropriate, to Wales in particular.

Caring for children, making sure they are safe, healthy and developing is, in most societies, rarely the sole responsibility of parents (2003, p.324). In practice, the care of children is provided from various sources: the family and broader social networks; the informal economy, the private market and public provision (Hansen, Joshi and Verropoulou, 2005). Caring for children also has both *custodial* and *cultivation* functions (ibid p.1). In one sense childcare is seen as replacing parental care while, in the other, it supports and enhances child development (2005, p.1). The extent to which these concepts form a conceptual, if opaque divide is discussed.

The custodial function of childcare is often expressed as the processes and outcomes of arrangements to care for children that enable parents to work outside of the home (Penn et al., 2004, p.6). That parents need, are required or desire to work outside of the home is, according to Budig, the result of historical processes (in Scott, Treas and Richards, 2007). Prior to the Industrial Revolution, the home was frequently the site of economic production. Since then, paid work has increasingly been performed outside of the family home in a society that progressively separates employment and family life (in Scott, Treas and Richards, 2007, p.417). While the importance of gender is integral to this debate - as will be discussed further - suffice it to say at this point, that women's access to the labour market and to independent income, has within western societies been largely structured by widespread gendered division of caring, whereby women bear the primary responsibility (eg. Hakim, 2011; Groves and Finch, 1983; Pungello and Kurtz-Costes, 1999). Increased participation by women in the labour market and a trend away from the male breadwinner-model of family economics (Crompton, 2001, p.266) is therefore the primary frame within which the concept of custodial childcare has developed.

While many argue that the distinction between the cultivation and custodial functions of childcare is misplaced (eg. Naumann et al., 2013; Lloyd and Potter, 2014; Bennett and Tayler, 2006), it is evident in policy within the UK (Gambaro, Stewart and Waldfogel, 2012, p.3) and an important measure used in international welfare policy comparison. The *cultivation* function of childcare refers to its role in supporting children's development, particularly in the early years. Interest in early childhood has grown as research has established its importance in providing children with a head start before they enter formal education (eg. Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2004), while the wider and longer-term benefits (both socially and economically) have also been recognised (Belsky, Vandell and Burchinal, 2007) resulting in the state taking increasing responsibility for children's health and education (Moss, Dillon and Statham, 2000, p.241).

Within the broad custodial and cultivation functions that childcare performs are a range of other rationales given for childcare that are discussed in more detail later in this chapter and in Chapter Four. How these functions of childcare fit together both in policy and practice, is an important area for investigation in this study, and related to the next issue of where childcare is positioned within society.

As Hansen et. al. (2005) suggest, childcare is conceptually at a 'shifting interface between the economy and the family' (2005, p.3), to which it might be added, an increasing interface with the state. Javornik (2012) agrees, saying that childcare straddles the divide between the private and public realms (Javornik, 2012, p.1). Within the private realm of the family, increased female labour market participation has required patterns of paid and unpaid work at the household level to be negotiated and modified (Lewis, Campbell and Huerta, 2008, p.22). With regard to the care of children, parents may adapt their working hours, may take career / employment breaks, and may use leave entitlements in order to balance care and paid work. When parents in couple families are unable to reconcile employment and child care between themselves, they may use non-parental care, which may be more or less commodified (ibid. p.22) and can move childcare from the private to the public realm. Finch (2003) writes of the change from the breadwinner model of the family, where the provision of care for children was a private issue, to one where the state has extended citizenship to include and value care (2003, p.2). In order to facilitate women's participation in the labour market, the state has had to concern itself with services that enable women to balance care and work responsibilities (Skinner, 2003a, p.2).

Facilitating increased engagement by women, and mothers in particular, in the labour market inevitably means more public involvement with the organisation of care (Lewis, 1992). In the UK, and most other European countries, this has been achieved through a combination of flexible working and

leave entitlements alongside the provision of childcare provided by the state and/or the market and duly 'formalised' (Lewis, Campbell and Huerta, 2008, p.21). In the UK, according to Moss (2000, 242), childcare was until the 1980s placed firmly within the private family domain, but has since increasingly been subject to state interest, intervention and provision (Penn, 2011a, p.2).

State involvement has through specific policies resulted in another conceptual divide, whereby in the UK, childcare occupies a space within the economy as either market-led or public provision. Some childcare is free for parents, but can be delivered publicly or privately, while other childcare is paid for by parents and predominantly delivered by the market (La Valle, Payne, Lloyd and Potter, 2014). Furthermore, in the UK, the cultivation function of childcare is often either incorporated or differentiated with the term 'early education' or sometimes 'nursery education' (Bertram and Pascal, 2001, p.7). According to Gambaro, the terminology represents an important distinction with free 'early education' seen as a public good, while 'childcare' is seen as less important and therefore left predominantly to the market (2012, p.7).

Childcare can be further conceptualised as a practice, or as a set of diverse and distinctive practices. Parents use childcare for a variety of reasons, but these be set within broad economic, child-related or time-related categories (Huskinson et al., 2016, p.92). Economic reasons include working, looking for work or studying. Child-related reasons can include wanting the child to receive education or social opportunities with other children, or because a child enjoys attending. Parental-time reasons include caring for other children or dependants, domestic activity or socialising (Smith et al., 2009, p.41). The amount of time for which parents use childcare, or for which childcare is available, can further distinguish childcare practices. Concepts of full-time childcare and part-time childcare have meaning in relation to supporting parental working patterns ('part-time childcare that facilitates part-time employment', Welsh Assembly Government 2008), as well as having a definition within the regulatory framework for childcare (CSSIW, 2013). Finally, sitting somewhere between the nuclear family, the economy and the state is the practice of using other family or wider social networks to provide 'informal' childcare either on its own, or to complement other care arrangements. As the principal focus of study, this is now discussed further.

## **Informal childcare**

A primary area of interest for this study is the relationship between families, the market and the state. As has been discussed in the previous section, childcare has increasingly been encouraged by the state to bridge the gap between families' care responsibilities and their market obligations (Daly and Lewis, 2000). Informal childcare can be viewed as a set of bridges that span not only the gap between care

and work, but the gap between work and formal childcare provision (including early education), and the gap between work / care values that are manifest in anxieties about formal childcare and parents' desire to care for children themselves (Brady and Perales, 2014, p.327).

While informal care is a sub-*field* of the broader *field* of childcare, it shares some of the functions, positions and practices described in the previous section, but also is distinctive in many ways. This becomes apparent when investigating literature and other research examining informal childcare. A useful starting point is to look at how informal care might be differentiated from formal care. Here, literature takes two distinct approaches. The first is in a conceptualisation of informal care, the second in operationalising the term so that it can be measured using research tools such as surveys. However, in a number of cases there is little conceptualisation, while operationalisation is often dictated by secondary data sources (Holloway and Tamplin, 2001).

Much of the literature that attempts to conceptualise informal childcare in the UK is taken from the early 2000s and, as such, was set within a few years of the first National Childcare Strategy in England (Cm. 3959, 1998), when new investment and the expansion of formal childcare services were being planned, and within the context of changes to a wide range of family policies (Harker, 1998, p.3). In the course of the ensuing 15 years, while much has changed around conceptions and actualities of both formal and informal childcare, definitional clarity is still rare.

Hilary Land (2002) starts from the point of view that the concept of informal care is highly subjective. Quoting from the 1999 Royal Commission on Long Term Care:

*“Informal care is a term which hides a rich variety of human relationships between spouses, between children and parents; between kith and kin, friends and neighbours. Most care without giving thought to the financial cost of caring.”* (in Land, 2002, p.13)

Land (2002) further suggests that informal care as practice can therefore be an altruistic act, or where there is obligation to reciprocate, this often happens over long periods of time between generations. Regarding the positioning of informal childcare, she goes on to say that the distinction between the care provided by spouses, relatives, friends and neighbours and that provided by paid professional childcare workers is one of marketization, and of status. Formal care is seen as having an economic value and has higher status, particularly in the case of early education (2002, p.15).

Feminist writing examining informal care, such as Groves & Finch (1983), has focused mainly on unpaid, informal care within the family. Graham (1983) presents this *field* of caring as having two distinct but inseparable dimensions. First, caring as work - as labour towards the reproduction of the

family. This may involve childcare, meeting the physical needs of dependants and general household tasks. Secondly, is caring as emotion - giving love, affection and psychological support. According to Graham, caring involves both 'labour' and 'love' (1983, p.16) and is therefore tied up both in the socially constructed qualities of femininity and the social positioning of women within society and in the family in particular. However, as Thomas (1993, p.663) argues, it follows that in Graham's suggestion of true care containing the dimensions of 'labour' and 'love', care provided by paid, non-family members is therefore second-class care as it is labour without love. Thomas (1993) argues that the principle that informal care is always better than formal care is disproved in research, showing that familial care relations are not always good, adding that they can be devoid of love and affection or can be defined by abuse (1993, p.665).

Wheelock and Jones (2002) in their study, *'Grandparents Are the Next Best Thing: Informal Childcare for Working Parents in Urban Britain'*, take a similarly broad view of informal childcare and concur with Land (2002) in identifying informal care as '(in part) a gift of caring time given by grandparents to parents providing family based life-cycle insurance' (2002a, p.458). They also agree with Land (2002) that a key distinguishing factor would seem to be the marketization of the practice whereby formal care is delivered by paid workers, and in most cases, informal care providers are unsalaried. They conclude, however, that there is no standard definition of informal care in social science literature and that it seems problematic to develop one (2002a, p.444). They prefer, therefore, to use the term 'complementary care' to describe the care provided for children by 'relatives, friends or neighbours while parents are working, studying or training' (ibid p.444).

Halliday and Little's (2001) study of rural childcare makes a distinction that falls between many of the official designations that focus on informal care as anything that is not defined as formal, and the looser definition proposed by Wheelock and Jones (2002). Formal care, they say, is that which is 'visible' within the public domain to which access can be negotiated or bought. Informal care is located in the private domain and is largely the product of personal kinship and friendship networks (Halliday and Little, 2001, p.436).

Rutter and Evans (2011) agree with Wheelock and Jones (2002) in saying that there is no accepted definition of informal care. However, they go further than other writers in defining informal care as '*care that is largely unregistered by the state for quality control, child protection and / or taxation purposes*' (Rutter, Evans and Rutter, 2012). They go on to present a full list of those carers they categorise as informal, including unregistered childminders and foster carers - even though both are illegal.



Holloway and Tamplin's (2001) paper for the Office for National Statistics (ONS) '*Valuing Informal Childcare in the UK*', defines informal care as *unpaid* care and usually refers to care given by family members, such as grandparents and siblings, as well as friends. However, the purpose of their study was to assess economic value and therefore it is unsurprising that their definition was framed in economic terms:

"[Informal childcare] is all care which does not involve a monetary transaction. It is the total amount of childcare required (total number of children in the population multiplied by twenty four hours a day) less any formal childcare, defined as all paid childcare, whether it is registered or unregistered." (2001, p.2)

There is an acceptance, however, by Holloway and Tamplin that this was not a sufficiently inclusive definition for their purposes as it excluded some paid care which was known to take place, but for which the ONS's Household Satellite Account held no data (2001, p.9). This not only includes paid caregiving by unregulated individuals such as babysitters, but unregulated care provided by out of school clubs catering for over eights and playgroups operating for fewer than two hours that clearly fit Land's (2002) definition of formal care. Holloway and Tamplin (2001) suggest that their definition of informal childcare could be modified to include care which is unregistered even if paid for, and thus paid babysitters and unregistered childminders could fall into this category. This, they say, is still informal care because the arrangements are not formalised with contracts or employment rights.

In their research using data from the Millennium Cohort Study, Hansen et al. (2005) make a broad but rather vague distinction between formal and informal care based on a principle that formal caregivers are in some kind of paid employment. Formal arrangements, they say, include day-nurseries, playgroups and childminders, while informal care includes care provided by partners, relatives, older children, friends and neighbours. Broadly speaking, they suggest, formal arrangements are likely to involve financial transactions, most of which will appear in the 'income and / or expenditure sections of the National Accounts' (2005, p.7), even if the service is free to the families using it. Hansen et al. accept, however, that some informal care may be remunerated in cash, rather than in kind or reciprocal obligations, but for the purpose of their research assume that few of these informal cash transactions are formally recorded and that informal childcare is therefore part of the informal economy (2005, p.7).

The Childcare and Early Years Survey Wales (Smith et al., 2009) which was based on the English Childcare and Early Years Survey, uses a very precise definition of 'childcare and early years education'. Parents were asked to include any time that an individual child was not with a resident parent, a

resident parent's current partner or at school, and the definition is thus much broader than that used in some other studies (eg. Hansen 2006). To include all possible people or organisations that may have looked after their children, parents were shown the following list of categories (Smith et al., 2009, p.14).

**Formal Childcare:**

Nursery school	Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school
Reception class	Special day school or nursery or unit
Day nursery	Playgroup or pre-school (including Welsh-medium)
Childminder	Nanny or au pair
Babysitter who came to home	Breakfast/After-school club or activity club
	Holiday club/scheme

**Informal Childcare**

My ex-husband/wife/partner/the child's other parent (who does not live in this family)	The child's grandparent(s)
The child's older brother/sister	Another relative
A friend or neighbour	Other childcare

Although specific, there is no clear operational rationale set out behind Smith's (2009) categorisation of formal and informal childcare which has been used, broadly unchanged, in subsequent surveys in England (eg. Huskinson et al., 2016).

Because of the loose definitions used in many surveys, Bryson et al. (2012) use 'informal childcare' as a generic term in their analysis of data from the Childcare and Early Years Survey (Speight, 2008) and from the Millennium Cohort Study. But, where evidence allows, they are specific and explicit about which forms of informal childcare are being discussed. However, Bryson et al. (2012) also make a broad definition of informal care. While, on the face of it, informal care can be viewed as just the converse of formal – and regulated – the central focus of their review is on childcare provided by non-parental family and friends. Excluded is childcare that, they suggest, sits on the boundary between 'formal' and 'informal', such as unregulated pre-school care.

As suggested by a number of authors, there is a relationship between informal childcare and the state, although, as suggested by Lewis (2008, p.22), it is a sensitive area for policymakers not wanting to intrude in intimate family relationships. According to Skinner & Finch (2006) in 2003, the UK Treasury considered providing an informal childcare subsidy as part of its concern to meet welfare-to-work and anti-child poverty strategies, but the idea was rejected:

“The Government recognises the huge contribution that informal care makes to family life. However it is not the Government's role to offer financial support for care that is freely given

within families and it would also be extremely intrusive to make appropriate checks for payments between family members or friends.” (in Skinner and Finch, 2006, p.809)

Yet the words used indicate the terms in which Government defines informal care. Most definitions of informal care in official documents and state-sponsored surveys (eg. Smith et al., 2009, p.14; Holloway and Tamplin, 2001) focus on the three factors; the relationship of the carer to the person being cared for, the location of the care and the form of the reward (Land 2002). This is demonstrated by the OECD definition of informal care “...as care arranged by the child's parent either in the child's home or elsewhere, provided by relatives, friends, neighbours, babysitters or nannies and it is generally unpaid and unregulated” (OECD, 2010) and is the definition used within international comparative reports (eg. Naumann et al., 2013). The three factors are also the basis of most definitions of formal care which are then used to define childcare for regulatory purposes (eg. Welsh Assembly Government, 2010b).

Where official definitions of informal care are offered, they are often inconsistent. For example, guidance for Welsh local authorities on undertaking Childcare Sufficiency Assessments (Welsh Assembly Government 2006) states that councils must take into account the impact that ‘informal childcare’ has on local supply and demand for formal childcare, but does not clearly define what this means. Local authorities themselves refer to informal childcare variously as childcare provided by “*husband/wife/partner, grandparents, friends and neighbours*” (Anglesey County Council 2011), as that provided by “*a nanny, au pair, family or friend*” (Conwy County Borough Council 2011) or childcare provided by “*family and friends*” (Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council 2011, Caerphilly County Borough Council 2011, Conwy County Borough Council 2011). Often, the terms “*informal childcare*” and “*childcare provided by family and friends*” are used interchangeably (City and County of Swansea Council 2011, Caerphilly County Borough Council 2011).

In trying to refine the concept of informal care, a number of important elements would seem to emerge. First, is the principle set out in much of the literature, that informal care is non-parental care (Rutter and Evans, 2011; Wheelock and Jones, 2002a; Holloway et al., 2001). Most official and academic literature agrees that care given to young children by relatives other than their parents is informal, and that in most cases, informal care is relative care. Secondly, where informal care is placed in relation to the market is significant. Care that involves no financial benefit is commonly held to be informal, although as Land (2002) suggests, and others have found (Wheelock and Jones, 2002b; Hansen, Joshi and Verropoulou, 2005; Rutter, Evans and Rutter, 2012; Bryson et al., 2012), there may be reward or reciprocation, but its presence or absence would seem to make no difference to the practice. As Land argues, “Informal care is supplied in a market similar to older forms of markets based

on principles of reciprocity and redistribution” (Land, 2002, p.22). One method of operationalising this aspect of the concept is in assessing whether carers are ‘salaried’ or ‘professionalised’ (Land, 2002; Wheelock and Jones, 2002b). Finally, the location of informal care in relation to the public arena seems important, especially given the increase in state involvement in the arena of childcare (as discussed in the previous section). The *visibility* of formal care in relation to the state through regulation or direct financial support in many ways assists in defining informal care by omission (Lewis 2008).

In consideration of these points, the following working definition of informal childcare is used in this study:

*Whereas formal care is most often referred to as visible arrangements involving the employment of paid carers – either by parents or by the state – informal care is seen as comprising private arrangements between individuals but most commonly family members.*

## **Early Childhood Education and Care**

Following a Bourdieusian approach, the research object needs to be constructed afresh when it is approached ‘...making the normal conspicuous by reconceptualising it in relational terms’ (Silva and Warde, 2010, p.7). This requires some questioning, therefore, of both the researcher’s and common conceptions of the language and terminology being used. Thus far, the term ‘childcare’ has been utilised and operationalised to describe a *field* within which a number of distinctive practices – such as the use of formal and informal care – occur. For Bourdieu, language is not just a method of communication, but an expression of power. In *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991) Bourdieu talks about the importance of terminology in “...structuring the perception which social agents have of the social world, the act of naming helps to establish the structure of this world, and does so all the more significantly the more widely it is recognized. i.e. authorized” (Bourdieu, 1991a).

In this thesis, the structures and power dynamics that through state policies seek to define, boundary and modify the ‘childcare’ *field* are examined. Yet the term ‘childcare’, as discussed previously in this chapter, is not without significance and without alternatives. In particular, the term ‘Early Childhood Education and Care’ (ECEC) is terminology often used in academic literature and internationally by organisations such as the European Union and OECD, who define it as “...all educational and care arrangements for children from birth to compulsory schooling, regardless of setting, funding, opening hours, or programme content.” In Wales, and in the UK more widely, the terms ‘childcare’ and ‘early education’ are most commonly used separately in official texts. As Naumann et al. (2013, p.3) propose, ‘education’ and ‘childcare’ should be integral aspects of early years provision, thereby justifying use

of ECEC as both terminology and as a statement of position. Yet, as discussed by Bertram & Pascal (2014, p.7), most childhood services in the UK have been traditionally divided into ‘care-focused’ and ‘education-focused’ services, a situation which persists in Wales, as highlighted by Graham (2014). She identifies differing and separate systems of funding, provider responsibilities, regulation, inspection, staffing and training for what is termed ‘childcare’ and what is called ‘early education’. However, even though across the UK policy documents and political texts use the terms ‘childcare’ and ‘early education’ interchangeably (see for example, Scottish Government, 2011; Welsh Assembly, 2015), the term ECEC is not commonly used in the public domain. The difference in the use of terminology does not, according to Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1991a), happen by chance, but the terminology used by those holding power becomes the ‘authorized’ language. Other descriptions of the object – in this case the term ECEC – become ‘heretical subversions’ and a challenge to the dominant structures (Bourdieu, 1991a). Terminology also has power, loaded with symbolic meaning, according to Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1991a). For example, when ECEC in the UK is described as ‘childcare’ and ‘early education’, each construct has important political meaning and each has symbolic power. The Conservative administration’s 2015 pledge to increase ‘free childcare’ to 30 hours per week in England exemplifies how in official documents and discourses, childcare is often used as a cover-all term for ECEC but, in detail, distinctions are frequently made. In the 2015 Childcare Bill Policy Statement, the ‘new entitlement to 30 hours free childcare’ is described thus:

“All three and four-year-olds will continue to be eligible for 15 hours per week of free early education. This is a universal entitlement for all children. The new entitlement is an extension of the current entitlement and provides an additional 15 hours of free childcare.” (Department for Education 2015.)

The offer is not therefore 30 hours of free childcare, but 15 hours of early education and 15 hours of childcare. There is no additionality of one or the other. According to Moss (2006), Klein (1992) and others, such linguistic nuances represent the wider struggle for power between the social welfare profession concerned with childcare as a social function, and the education profession with its role as mass educator (Klein, 1992; Moss, 2006). Alternatively, according to White (2011, p.286), such contradictions and inconsistencies would seem to suggest that paradigmatic views on ECEC have not been fully formed in the UK, requiring a careful approach to the use of terminology and, in turn, care when trying to make sense of the language of policy. A further point worth mentioning is the focus on ‘early childhood’ that is implicit within the ECEC concept, which inevitably excludes care that is received by older children both formally in out of school provision and, importantly, with informal

carers. These arguments are discussed further in Chapter Four and are embodied within the framing analysis that is used to examine childcare policy therein.

## **The childcare *field* in Wales**

The focus of this study is on Wales as a geographical and administrative entity to investigate the *field* of childcare and in particular the sub-*field* of informal childcare. The purpose is to examine the construction and boundaries of the *field* and the positions and dispositions of those who inhabit it. There is no assumption made that the *field* is fashioned, or contains practices that are in any way different that might exist elsewhere in the UK or further afield, but at present there is little evidence that confirms whether this is the case or not.

How the *field* of childcare is structured and defined in Wales has relevance to the lives of ordinary people. Their behaviours, choices and actions are constrained or enhanced by cultural, economic and political elites shaping the *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1998, p.41). Since the Government of Wales Act in 1998 devolved a wide range of powers to the National Assembly for Wales – including responsibility for the education and care of young children – policies have been developed and introduced with the purpose of transforming social welfare, social institutions and social relations (Alcock, 2008, p.2). While policy is mainly expressed by government, policy making involves a web of interests, influences and actors which is interlinked and which changes over time (ibid. p.4). Yet, while policy mirrors and projects the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of those who hold political power, they are usually constrained by the way in which their actions are viewed as appropriate and acceptable by voters in elections, and public opinion as expressed by the media (Wood, 2014). Nonetheless, as Bown (2009) writes, those who influence and make policy – the ‘policy elites’ - act not only according to political and ideological positions, but are influenced by their own *habitus* formed from capitals, personal positions, cultural norms and social practices. In Wales, the formation of new structures since devolution has provided the opportunity to examine the policy making process. In doing so, a number of writers have suggested that both the policy-making process and many policies themselves, represent a ‘different way’ of doing things (Birrell, 2004, 2009a; Chaney, 2006; Osmond, 2011; Drakeford, 2005) including, specifically, a different approach to early childhood policy (Wincott, 2006b, p.295). The extent to which childcare and related policies in Wales can be distinguished, and an assessment of the effect that this has on structures and individuals requires examination, particularly, as Bourdieu argues, that policies have the effect of maintaining and strengthening the power base of dominant groups (Bourdieu, 1984; Skeggs, 2004a). This is discussed further in Chapter Four.

## **The structural topography of the childcare *field***

Following, is an overview of what is already known about both ‘childcare’ and ‘early education’ in Wales. As discussed above, while the term Early Childhood Education and Care might provide a more appropriate description of function, it is not used within common nor official discourse to describe practice; the two terms are therefore used in context despite their apparent contradictions and inconsistencies.

In mapping the ‘structural topography’ (Anheier, Gerhards and Romo, 1995a, p.861) of the childcare *field* in Wales, it is necessary to examine the structure, function and practice of childcare and early education in Wales while making some comparisons with other parts of the UK. This includes gathering information about the provision of childcare; the use of services – both formal and informal - by families and parents; who pays for childcare and how much; how childcare fits within other family policies and in particular parental leave; and the quality of childcare. There exist a number of official sources of evidence on childcare that provide some good information on the size, quality and location of services across Wales. There have been a small number of research projects that have examined how parents use childcare, although some of these are now dated (Jones, 2004; Bryson, Kazimirski and Southwood, 2006; Smith et al., 2009). Information on some elements such as cost, accessibility and demand for childcare services is more difficult to collate as, while each local authority in Wales assesses this on a regular basis, there is currently little consistency in how this data is collected or presented.

## **Childcare and early education provision in Wales**

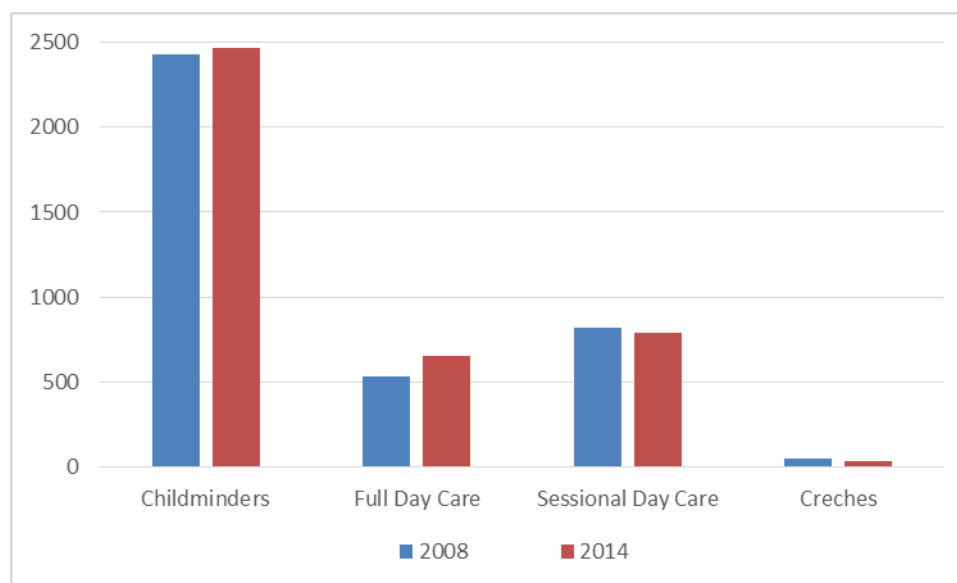
Here, childcare and early years education provision that is ‘free’ to all parents (such as part-time early education for three-year-olds) is distinguished from provision that is fully or partly paid for by parents (such as a day nursery), or provision that is free to parents but not universally available (such as Flying Start). Informal care is discussed separately.

### ***Regulated childcare services***

Some care arrangements for young children in Wales are regulated by Welsh Government (under the Children & Families Wales Measure 2010). Childcare that is defined within the Measure is required to be registered with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales and categorised as either Childminder care, Full Day Care, Sessional Daycare, Crèche care, Out of School, or Holiday childcare. In 2015 there were 3,942 settings registered for pre-school children, over half of which were childminders. The number of registered childcare settings in Wales varies year-on-year according to

Care Council Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) statistics. There have been some changes within the sector, but overall numbers have not increased significantly since 2008.

**Figure 2: Number of Registered Pre-school Childcare Settings 2008-2013<sup>7</sup>**



As would be expected, there are significant differences in the number of childcare settings in each local authority area, ranging from 433 registered pre-school childcare services in Cardiff, to just 58 in Merthyr Tydfil. As each setting caters for different numbers of children, a better measure of the supply of childcare is to calculate the total number of places and then relate this to the population of children in any given area. For the whole of Wales, the rate in December 2014 was 30 registered childcare places for every 100 children aged 0 to 4 years<sup>8</sup>. Comparing the amount of childcare with the local population of children illustrates starkly the regional differences across Wales. There is more childcare in North Wales, with Denbighshire having the highest rate at 48 places for every 100 children. Much of South Wales has limited childcare provision, with areas such as Blaenau Gwent (16 childcare places for every 100 children), Neath Port Talbot, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr and Swansea all having very little provision.

A further consideration in any analysis of childcare is that not all services are available at all times. In general, childminders and full daycare settings (usually day nurseries) offer childcare that matches the working hours of parents (on average 8am to 6pm, 5 days per week and for 50 weeks per year). Sessional care settings (most pre-school playgroups and *cylch meithrin*) only offer childcare for short – usually 2 ½ or 3 hour - sessions and most only operate during term times (CSSIW, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> CSSIW 2008 and 2013

<sup>8</sup> CSSIW 2008 and 2015 and Mid-year population estimates for single year of age and gender. ONS June 2015.



Compared with the other parts of the UK, it is likely that Wales has the lowest level of pre-school childcare when set against the population of young children.

**Table 3: Pre-school childcare in Great Britain<sup>9</sup>**

	Pre-School Childcare Places	Population 0 to 4 years	Childcare per 100 children
England	1,292,554	3,318,449	39
Wales	53,422	178,301	30
Scotland	152,190	294,281	52

### ***Free, universal early education***

By law, a child in Wales does not have to start school until the term following their fifth birthday (1996). However, most children in Wales start school in a reception class following their fourth birthday. There are, nonetheless, significant differences in admissions policies by area, with some schools accepting children the term after their fourth birthday and others only in the September after they become four. There are also differences between schools, with some four-year-olds starting full-time, and others part-time and building to full-time across the year. Comparing official population estimates (ONS 2015)<sup>10</sup> with Welsh Government School Pupil Data (Welsh Government 2015)<sup>11</sup>, shows that almost all children in Wales are in maintained schools by the time they are four years old.

Every three-year-old child in Wales is entitled to a free part-time educational place for a minimum of ten hours per week (in England the entitlement is higher, at 15 hours) during term-time – a total entitlement of 380 hours<sup>12</sup>. All local authorities in Wales fund part-time education for three-year-olds in schools ('maintained' settings) and most offer early education in other ('non-maintained') settings. Non-maintained settings include full day-care providers and sessional day-care which can be funded by the local authority on a per-child basis for providing an early education place. Local authorities are also responsible for ensuring that settings provide good quality early education (Estyn, 2014).

In total there are 1,848 settings that offer free, universally available early education to three-year-olds in Wales. Of these, 1,204 are maintained school settings while 644 are non-maintained. There is considerable variation in the balance of maintained and non-maintained settings across the country,

<sup>9</sup> Ofsted (2014), CSSIW (2014), Care Inspectorate (2014). ONS population estimates (2014) and NRS Mid-2013 Population Estimates Scotland

<sup>10</sup> ONS Mid-year population estimates for single year of age and gender. ONS June 2015.

<sup>11</sup> Welsh Government PLASC data January 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Some local authorities, including the Vale of Glamorgan and Newport, offer more (12.5 hours).

ranging from Monmouthshire where 73% of settings are non-maintained, to Neath Port Talbot where there are none.

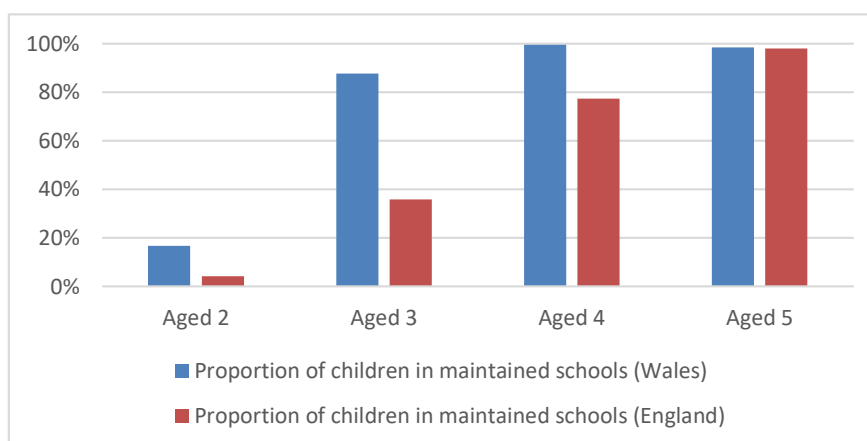
**Table 4: Number of Early Childhood Education and Care Settings in Wales (StatsWales 2015)<sup>13</sup>**

Registered Childcare Settings (CSSIW)				Early education settings (Estyn)	
Childminders	Full Day Care	Sessional Day Care	Creches	Maintained School Nursery Classes	Non-maintained settings
2466	654	790	32	1204	644

The extent to which parents can choose between provision for three-year-olds in maintained school nursery classes or in non-maintained settings varies considerably between local authority areas, as each sets its own admissions rules. Despite 35% of all settings being capable of delivering early education in Wales being non-maintained, the proportion of children attending these settings is very small in most areas<sup>14</sup>. Population and school-roll data shows that 88% of all three-year-olds in Wales are enrolled in maintained school nursery classes (StatsWales 2015). This compares with 36% in England, despite 93% of three-year-olds benefitting from some funded early education (Department for Education, 2016). In only a few areas – most notably Monmouthshire and Ceredigion – are any significant proportion of three-year-olds receiving their early education entitlement outside of the maintained sector (StatsWales 2015). Nonetheless, the data shows that the free early education entitlement is extremely popular with parents, with 96% of children either in school or non-maintained funded settings.

<sup>13</sup> StatsWales (downloaded 08/15) Source: CSSIW registration and regulatory business system December 2014 and Estyn (August 2015).

<sup>14</sup> This is due in part to individual school admissions policies and in part the result of local authority policies which restrict access to early education funding by non-maintained settings.

**Figure 3: Proportion of pre-school children attending maintained schools in Wales and England<sup>15</sup>**

### ***Free Flying Start childcare***

Aside from the ‘free’ early education entitlement that is available universally for three and four-year-olds, some two year olds in Wales receive ‘free childcare’ through the Flying Start programme (National Assembly for Wales Research Service, 2014). Flying Start is available to families with pre-school children living in the most deprived areas of Wales, and provides them with enhanced health visiting, parenting support, support for early language development (primarily in the form of language and play programmes) and free, high quality, part-time childcare from the term following their second birthday to the end of the term following their third birthday. Launched in 2007, it has long term aims to improve the skills base and ultimately tackle income inequality (White and McCrindle, 2010). Flying Start childcare is for two and a half hours a day, five days a week for 39 weeks, although parents can choose to take up the full or a reduced offer. In addition, there should be at least 15 sessions of provision for the family during the school holidays. Flying Start childcare is commissioned by each local authority and is provided by a mixture of maintained schools, pre-school playgroups, day nurseries and *cylch meithrin*. Initially, some 18,000 children were targeted, but this is currently being increased by Welsh Government to reach 36,000 children by the end of 2016 (National Assembly for Wales Research Service, 2014). Take up of Flying Start childcare is very high; 90% of offers of childcare were taken up in 2013 (Osborne, 2013), with two year olds most likely to take up places (in Flying Start areas over 90% of three-year-olds are in maintained school nursery classes (op.cit. 2014)). A total of 7,658 children received Flying Start childcare in 2014-15<sup>16</sup>, representing 21.4% of all two year olds in Wales<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Department for Education. Provision for children under five years of age in England: January 2015

<sup>16</sup> Statistics record the number of children receiving Flying Start services as those receiving health visitor services, while only the percentage take-up of childcare offers is recorded, and not actual numbers. Statistics for Wales. Flying Start, summary statistics 2014-15

<sup>17</sup> Some of these may have been three year olds. It is not known how many three-year olds are receiving both free Flying Start childcare and their free Early Education Entitlement in different settings.

However, Flying Start is an area-based initiative, and not all of the children receiving the service will be living in poverty. Similarly, this also means that some of the 32% of children experiencing poverty in Wales<sup>18</sup> will not be reached, because they do not live in a Flying Start area.

### ***Informal childcare in Wales***

In 2012, two significant pieces of research were published which provided, for the first time, an in-depth study of informal childcare in the UK. Rutter and Evans' (2012) *'Improving our Understanding of Informal Childcare in the UK'*, reported on research comprising a literature review and analysis of existing datasets, ten focus groups with parents who used informal care, a survey of 1,413 parents and a survey of 857 people who provided informal care (both undertaken by IPSOS Mori). Their research effectively maps informal childcare use and offers a greater understanding of many of the issues with which this research is concerned, including the key question of why informal childcare is used in preference to formal childcare in some families and not in others. The research report considerably enhances the knowledge base, and provides some new and interesting findings. However, as a UK-wide study, it has a number of shortcomings in examining informal childcare in Wales and the other devolved nations. First, little analysis is made of regional differences across the UK and, as only 10 per cent of those surveyed were in Wales, a sample of 140 parents and 85 carers is unlikely to reflect the geographical diversity necessary to understand the dynamics of childcare choice-making. The survey of both parents and carers did not record language use, which may be an important factor in the choice of childcare for Welsh parents, and none of the ten focus groups included parents or carers from Wales. Finally, despite their research being ostensibly UK-wide, the secondary data used to place their research in context relates only to England, and much of the policy analysis reflects only the situation in England, despite childcare being a devolved issue with some differences in policy deployment (Wincott, 2006a).

Bryson et al.'s (2012) report for the Nuffield Foundation, *'The role of informal childcare: understanding the research evidence'*, examines existing literature and analyses four secondary datasets. Alongside Rutter and Evan's (2012) research, Bryson et al.'s (2012) report adds considerably to the knowledge and understanding of the role that informal childcare plays in different families in the UK. However, it also suffers from some of the same shortcomings as Rutter and Evan's (2012) research in omitting analysis of childcare in the devolved nations of the United Kingdom. Bryson et al.'s (2012) primary data source is the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents series 1999 to 2008. Funded by the Department for Education, the repeat cross-sectional survey only involves parents in England. The

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<sup>18</sup> DWP (2015) Households below average income: an analysis of the income distribution 1994/95 to 2013/14

remaining datasets used by Bryson et al. (2012) are UK-wide, including the Millennium Cohort Study, the British Social Attitudes survey and the Labour Force Survey and therefore have validity for drawing conclusions across the UK. However, Bryson et al. (2012) do not analyse their data at a sub-UK level.

In Wales, the most comprehensive research in which informal childcare plays a significant part has been The Childcare and Early Years Survey, Wales series (Bryson, Kazimirski and Southwood, 2006; Smith et al., 2009) comprising two cross-sectional surveys. Commissioned by the Welsh Government, the series aimed to provide information on parents' use of childcare and early years education and their views and experiences of childcare. While the 2009 survey affords a wide ranging exploration of informal childcare, compared with the similar Childcare and Early Years Survey in England (Speight, National Centre for Social Research 2009), it had a small sample size (586 families). As acknowledged in the report, this restricts the ability of sub-sets of the data to be analysed. For example, regional differences within Wales are not accounted for, and where comparisons are made, the whole of Wales is related to regions of England. A further shortcoming is that no data was collected about Welsh language either in terms of use by parents or in provision.

### ***The extent of informal childcare in Wales***

Estimates of how many parents choose to use informal childcare in Wales vary. The Childcare and Early Years Survey (Smith et al. 2009) found that 30 per cent of parents in Wales used exclusively formal childcare, while 16 per cent used only informal care, with grandparents found to be the most common caregivers (32 per cent). However, the largest proportion of parents in Wales (31 per cent) used a combination of both, whilst 20 per cent of parents used no care at all, although the majority of these had children in the older age range of the 0 to 15 years sample. The researchers found no difference in the take up of informal childcare or childcare overall between Wales and England (2009, p.22). Rutter and Evans (Rutter, Evans and Rutter, 2012) also found higher rates of informal care than previously reported in both the Childcare and Early Years Surveys in Wales and in England with, they suggest, 47 per cent of families using informal care compared with 31 per cent using formal childcare. Differences in the estimates may depend on the previously discussed variations in the definition of informal childcare used in research, but also changes taking place over time between data sets. In their analysis of the Childcare Surveys in England, Bryson et al. (2012) found that use of informal childcare varied over the decade up to 2009 at between 24 per cent and 33 per cent, with no overall trend observable. They also found, however, that amongst working families, levels of both formal and informal care increased from 33 per cent in 1999 to 37 per cent in 2008. Bryson et al. (2012) make a strong link between policy and changes in childcare use. The increase of women in the labour market has, they say, had a significant effect on the overall use of childcare. The introduction of part-time

funded early education for all four-year-olds and subsequently all three-year-olds over the decade of her study is thought to be a further reason for an increase in informal care, as working parents call on grandparents, in particular, to provide care that bridges the school and the working day (Bryson et al., 2012). Smith et al. found that in Wales the take up of informal childcare remained stable between 2004 and 2009 (2009, p.20).

Examination<sup>19</sup> of the 22 Local Authority 2011 Childcare Sufficiency Assessments finds that, despite guidance from the Welsh Government, informal care was only mentioned in sixteen of the reports. Of these, only two (Swansea and Gwynedd) followed the guidance and showed that they had “developed an understanding of parents’ use of informal care”. This is despite many of the reports acknowledging the extent of informal childcare arrangements. Anglesey Council surveyed 271 families, of whom over 40 per cent preferred to use informal care, and yet there was no appreciation of the impact that this might have on the demand for formal childcare services (Anglesey County Council 2011). Research undertaken by Blaenau Gwent Council found that the majority of parents in the county mixed formal and informal care to keep costs down, yet, apart from briefly acknowledging it, their analysis of the supply of and demand for childcare, and its relationship to labour market access ignored the role that informal care has in supporting most families in work (Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council 2011). Conwy County Borough Council received responses from over 2,200 parents of children aged 0 to 17 years to its 2010 survey. Their report found that informal care was used by 20 per cent of parents compared with 27 per cent of parents who used formal care, but, apart from an acknowledgment that many parents depended on family and friends, there was, again, no analysis of the data or any assessment of any impact of this level of informal care on the local childcare market.

Extracting quantitative information from the 2011 CSAs is difficult and unreliable due to the lack of consistency in definitions, research methods and methodology. What information can be gleaned from them would seem broadly consistent with research findings from The Childcare and Early Years Survey, Wales (Smith et al. 2009), which found that 30 per cent of parents used formal care exclusively, and a further 31 per cent used a combination of formal and informal care. More importantly, what the CSAs illustrate is the need for a reliable quantitative analysis of informal care in Wales if regional and local differences in choice and behaviour are to be examined.

In summary, while there has been greater attention focused on researching informal childcare in the UK, most recently it has been mainly in the form of secondary, quantitative data analyses which have not been able to examine the situation within areas of the UK. In particular, there is a lack of reliable

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<sup>19</sup> This was done using NVivo software using a range of keyword searches.

data pertaining to Wales therefore making it difficult to draw any conclusions as to any differences or distinctiveness that may exist.

## **What users of informal care have in common**

The description of informal childcare thus far situates it as a widespread practice, used by at least a third of families in Wales. In this section, the existing literature is reviewed to examine what factors might be common amongst those that use informal care. A Bourdieusian approach necessitates the examination of the relationship between the *field* as previously described, and the *habitus* of those who inhabit it, as expressed in terms of capitals and their configurations (Grenfell, 2014). The possession of capitals – economic, social and cultural - may increase or decrease the propensity of families to use informal care either as a preference or out of necessity. The section looks for evidence within the literature of any association between the external factors that restrict or enhance practice within the *field* and the behaviour – *habitus* – of parents in making childcare choices.

### ***Economic Capital***

The extent to which the possession of, or wish to accumulate, economic *capital* influences behaviour in preferences for, and choice of childcare is an issue that is discussed by a number of authors. First, informal care is usually less expensive than formal care, and this is often cited as the most significant factor in parents' choice of care. Some suggest that labour force participation by mothers of pre-school children is highly dependent on the price of childcare (see, for example, Blau 2001, Wrohlich 2011, Del Boca 2007). Woodland et al. (2002) found that having reliable free or cheap childcare influenced the decision of 30 per cent of mothers about whether or not to go out to work, with 11 per cent identifying this as the most important factor (2002 p.62). When asked what their 'ideal' childcare would be, 65 per cent of working mothers thought grandparents were the ideal provider, with 54 per cent saying that friends or neighbours were ideal (2002 p.63). Hansen (2005) writes that a mother's decision about whether to join the labour market based on a rational choice model will involve weighing up the expected costs and benefits of doing so. In other words, if a mother's wages do not cover the cost of childcare, decisions about whether to work (or how many hours to work) will be constrained (2005, p.17). The 2009 Childcare and Early Years Survey in Wales (Smith et al., 2009) found that across both pre-school and school-age children, those in a combination of formal and informal care were most likely to be attending a provider for economic reasons, illustrating how a package of care can be required to cover parents' working hours.

Much of the literature makes strong links between household economics and the use of informal childcare, with the cost of formal childcare leading families with lower household incomes to choose informal childcare over formal childcare (eg. Brown, Dench 2004, Land 2002). While Smith (2009, p.22) found a substantial variation in families' use of formal childcare in Wales depending on their income, there is less clear evidence of a link between families' economic situations and the use of informal childcare. Both Bryson *et al* (2012) and Rutter and Evans (2012) found from their quantitative studies across the UK that informal care is not the domain of lower income families who cannot afford to pay for formal childcare. Both sets of research found that the likelihood of using informal childcare decreases down the income bands with parents in the lowest band (under £10,000 per year) least likely to use informal care. Should this be proved equally true in Wales, then it challenges many of the long-held beliefs (as is discussed in Chapter Five) that formal childcare development is hindered by the prevalence in use of informal childcare, particularly in more deprived areas.

### **Working patterns**

The gap in employment rates for women with and without children has narrowed over the last fifteen years, from 5.8 per cent in 1996 to just 0.8 per cent in 2010 when 66.5 per cent of mothers were in work, and 67.3 per cent of women without a dependent child were in work (Office for National Statistics 2011). In Wales, Smith *et al* (2009, p.114) concluded that the availability of informal care, children's life stages and having reliable childcare were all factors which enabled mothers to be in employment. Smith *et al.* found that working families were particularly likely to use grandparents as child carers, and the importance of informal care in supporting parental employment is a recurring theme throughout the report. Working mothers commonly reported that the availability of informal carers was a factor that enabled them to work; many working mothers used informal care to supplement the hours of childcare received from formal providers such as nursery classes, day nurseries or out-of-school providers (2009, p.47).

Bryson *et al* (2012) and Rutter and Evans (2012) discovered a strong connection between the use of informal care and parents' working hours. Unsurprisingly given the shortage of childcare outside of usual 'office hours', parents who work shifts or longer hours are far more likely to rely on informal care (Statham and Mooney, 2003, p.43). Bryson *et al* (2012) provide evidence that many families in which parents work atypical hours 'shift-parent' to avoid the need for childcare altogether. They also found that 60 per cent of lone parents working atypically used informal childcare. Rutter and Evans (2012) challenge the notion that atypical hours are the sole domain of those on lower incomes working shifts, or nurses and carers finding that it was often higher-income earners working long hours with long commutes who often required care outside normal hours. They go on to say that those unable to



command high salaries and who have no relatives or social networks to provide free informal childcare may not be able to take up employment that involves working outside normal office hours; the range of employment available to those parents is therefore limited (2012 p.48).

Bryson *et al* (2012) found a disproportionate reliance on informal childcare among parents working fewer hours each week, for both pre-school and school age children. In couple families, for instance, informal childcare accounts for a quarter (27 per cent) of all pre-school childcare time for families where both parents work full-time. This compares to 35 per cent of time in families with one parent who works between 16 and 29 hours each week. They also found that among lone and coupled working parents, the proportionate reliance on informal childcare increases as the children get older. So, the broad pattern of a bigger proportion of childcare time being accounted for by informal childcare is the same regardless of parents' working hours (Bryson *et al.*, 2012).

Parera-Nicolau & Mumford (2005) took a structural approach to the analysis of how family working patterns change with childcare needs. They concluded that in the typical British family with at least one child under five, the mother is the preferred provider of care, and that it is the mother's labour supply that is primarily affected by childcare decisions. They found that, in general, families prefer to reduce a mother's working hours rather than use formal childcare. Even if a mother's wages rise, families tend to prefer to maintain their existing household income by reducing the mother's working hours and increase hours of maternal care, rather than maintain or increase the amount of formal childcare required (Parera-Nicolau *et al.*, 2005). Craig and Powell's (2011) research in Australia into non-standard work schedules and the gendered division of childcare concluded that when mothers worked non-standard hours, they did so to schedule their own paid work and family responsibilities around each other with little impact on their spouse. When fathers work non-standard hours, however, mothers ended up doing more housework and more childcare (2011, p.289).

## **Deprivation**

A range of evidence suggests a strong link between disadvantage, deprivation, social class and childcare. Quantitative evidence from a range of surveys (eg. Speight, 2010, Smith *et al.* 2009) shows that both formal and informal childcare use by families suffering deprivation is lower as a result of lower levels of economic activity.

Speight *et al.* (2010) in their study of families experiencing multiple deprivation in England, found that, unsurprisingly given lower employment levels, use of both formal and informal childcare by the most disadvantaged families was lower than for other groups. In particular, it was noted that children from families with the highest level of disadvantage were least likely to receive informal childcare during

school holidays. This reflects data from Smith et al. (2009) highlighting school holidays as the time when the economic motivation for childcare was greatest and the costs were highest.

### **Perception of availability, affordability and quality of formal childcare**

Whether parents *feel* they can afford childcare, as opposed to economic calculations that decide whether they *can* afford it, has been discussed by Bryson (Bryson et al., 2012) and more recently in the House of Lords Select Committee Report on affordable childcare (2015). While a relative term, perceptions of affordability have been seen as a more accurate measure in predicting the behaviour of parents as part of a “multi-dimensional” concept, encompassing access, flexibility and quality as well as cost. The use of this measure is further discussed by Huskinson et al. (2016; 2014), and presented as an important factor in examining decision-making in their analysis of childcare in England.

Rutter and Evans (2012) say that childcare affordability is a major factor in decision-making, but few researchers have examined whether it is parents’ perceptions of affordability or the reality that is dominant. In other words, if parents knew more about the real costs of local childcare, would this affect their decisions? Bryson et al. (2012) found that parents using only informal childcare had a lower level of awareness of the cost and availability of formal care, while the proportion who said that childcare was affordable in their area was lower than amongst those using only formal care (Bryson et al., 2012). While it is difficult to infer causal links from the data, their findings support Rutter and Evans’ (2012) assertion that parents often examine the childcare options available to them first, and then examine affordability as one of the factors in their decision-making. They say that the primary factor in decision-making is the proximity of informal and formal care. If informal care is available to parents locally, and it fits with other subjective, internal factors (values and attitudes) then it would seem that there is little need for them to examine cost as a factor in their decision-making. Similarly, if there is no accessibility to formal childcare due to market failure, then even subjective issues become immaterial. Affordability as the primary factor in decision-making would therefore seem only to be relevant in a situation where parents have a choice between formal and informal care, and it is only in these situations that other factors – including values and other dispositions – come into play.

### **Paying for informal care**

Research (Holloway and Tamplin, 2001; Wheelock and Jones, 2002b) has suggested that informal care sometimes involves economic transactions in the form of payments or payment in kind, but there is little contemporary data available with which the issue in Wales can be investigated. In 2009, Smith et al. found that parents were much more likely to pay formal providers than informal providers but,

unfortunately, there were not enough Welsh cases to permit analysis of which types of informal provider were more likely to receive payments or payment in kind. Analysis of the English data collected at the same time showed that payment in kind was most common for friends/neighbours, followed by other relatives and older brothers and sisters, but least common for grandparents (Speight, 2008, p.71). A UK government-commissioned study of parental demand for childcare in 2002 (Woodland, Miller et al. 2002), found that just 7 per cent of grandparents received a payment for their childcare services. As an alternative to monetary payments, Woodland, Miller et al. (2002) stated that it has always been very common among friends and family to exchange help for domestic and childcare services. In some cases this help can become quite 'formal' as, for example, in 'baby-sitting circles' where groups of parents take turns to look after each others' children. Jones (2004) found evidence in rural North West Wales of what she terms 'care trading', giving the example of sisters who worked alternately during school holidays whilst cousins were cared for together.

While Skinner and Finch (2006) found in their study of lone parents and tax credits that money rarely changed hands, they also found that there were sometimes elements of reciprocity in the relationship between parents and informal carers. In the main, informal carers were grandparents who themselves did not want any payment, especially as this would turn their caring role into a 'job' (Skinner, Finch 2006). Some lone parents, on the other hand, wanted to be able to pay a grandparent for exactly the same reason. A transaction 'formalised' the arrangement and reflected the extrinsic value of childcare offered by the grandparent. This was also found in interviews with mothers by Land (2002, p.23). Relationships with informal carers other than grandparents, such as friends or other relatives, were found by Skinner, Finch (2006) and Woodland, Miller et al. (2002) to be more likely to be based on reciprocity or payment. In their Tyneside study of grandparent care, Wheelock and Jones (2002) also found that payment was the exception rather than the rule. Nearly three-quarters of carers interviewed said that they did not want any reward from parents for the caring they undertook, while parents themselves did not see formal payment as appropriate.

### ***Cultural Capital***

Reay has written extensively about the place of cultural *capital* in educational choice, where choice is restrained and unequal dependent on the accumulated capitals that form class *habitus* (Reay and Ball, 1997; Reay, 2010), while Ball and Vincent (2004) further suggest that the same is true in parents' choice of childcare, where it is chosen to maintain existing class position while accumulating additional *capital*. As Bourdieu makes clear, in making any decision, the range of choices available depends on the position that the actor occupies in a particular social *field* (1990, pp.52–65). A number of studies have examined the role of quality, or perceived quality when parents make childcare choices.

According to Reay, this is more likely to show an understanding of middle-class cultural norms rather than choices made rooted in conceptions of working class community and locality norms (Reay and Ball, 1997).

### **Childcare quality**

Given the near universal take-up of the free early years entitlement for three and four-year-olds in Wales, and the high take-up of free Flying Start places where they are offered in the most deprived communities (White, McCrindle 2010), it could be assumed that parents of all backgrounds choose childcare and early education for not only custodial reasons but for developmental motives. However, a number of studies have shown that despite awareness of quality, decision-making is not always overtly rational, particularly when payment for care is a part of the equation. As Wheelock and Jones (2002) state:

“...economic decisions about childcare are almost invariably determined at least in part by non-economic motives, but this does not mean that decisions are irrational or random”  
(Wheelock, Jones 2002).

Peyton et al. (2001) concluded that issues of practicality often supplant issues of quality, particularly for those parents who have their choices limited by financial, geographical or time constraints. In relation to informal care, they found that mothers most concerned with the quality of childcare were least likely to choose care with relatives or friends. However, they also noted that it was parents with higher incomes and higher educational achievements that were most concerned with quality. Also noted was a change in maternal attitudes related to the age of the child. Mothers were less concerned with the quality of childcare when their children were under three years, and therefore more likely to report satisfaction with informal care. Once children reached three years, parents would identify as high quality settings those likely to provide social and educational benefits (2001, p.200).

In a similar vein, Kensinger Rose, Elicker (2008) examined why, when there is a growing awareness that the quality of childcare is associated with child development, parents indicate satisfaction with their current care arrangements (both informal and formal) even if the childcare is judged to be mediocre or even low quality by expert observers. They concluded that parents make a number of trade-offs in the decision-making process, with particular weight being given to location, flexibility of hours and cost. All these factors were found to be more influential than notions of quality or even the perceived warmth of the caregiver (Kensinger Rose, Elicker 2008).

Defining childcare quality is difficult. Katz (1993) suggested that the meaning of quality is highly dependent on which of four perspectives of childcare you come from. There is the 'expert' view of professionals, educators and researchers, the parent's view, the childcare worker's view and finally, but most often ignored, the child's view (Katz 1993). Mather et al. (2012) add dimensions including structural (eg. staff ratios or qualifications) and process (eg. the characteristics of adult-child interactions) factors (2012, p.11).

Smith et al. (2009) found that children who were only cared for by informal providers were less likely than other children to be receiving care for what were categorised by researchers as child-related reasons (51 per cent compared to 78 per cent of those in centre-based care only and 75 per cent of those in a combination of centre-based and informal care) (2009 p.31).

Hansen, Joshi et al. (2006) collate evidence from a number of sources (including Sylva, Melhuish et al. 2004, Brooks-Gunn, Han et al. 2002) of the benefits to children's development of good quality childcare and early education in formal settings. This, alongside the wide-ranging benefits to children of living in more affluent households with two adult earners, should, in a rational choice model (with a relationship between quality of care, costs and parental decisions), result in parents choosing formal childcare. Yet Hansen (2006) found, in data from the Millennium Cohort Study, that the majority of care is provided in the non-formal sector.

The importance of trust in the quality and choice of childcare is highlighted in a number of studies (Wrohlich 2011, Vincent, Braun et al. 2008), where lower trust decreases the probability of parents choosing formal care. In a study using European Social Survey data (El-Attar 2007), it is suggested that the level of trust in what is termed 'external' or formal childcare varies widely in different countries, and may be an explanation for variations in female participation rates in labour markets.

## **Language**

The place of Welsh language within formations of cultural *capital* is discussed by Baker et al. (2014) in their study of culture in Welsh-speaking communities, while Lyon & Ellis (1991) further suggest that Welsh language ability confers cultural advantages in particular contexts in Wales. For some people, Welsh language has an intrinsic value to do with heritage and identity, while for others, it forms cultural *capital* that can be transformed into economic and social advantage.

There are a number of aspects that are important in considering the relationship between the Welsh language and informal childcare. According to Edwards and Newcombe (2008), language reproduction in the family is an area which receives less attention than formal education and other 'more eye-

catching but ephemeral efforts' (Fishman, 1991). It is unsurprising, therefore, that Welsh Government policy around language in the early years is focused on formal rather than informal childcare - although the Welsh Government funded 'Twf' scheme has had some success in promoting bilingualism in the early years. Fishman's 1991 study of language transmission, however, highlights the importance of a complete home-family-neighbourhood context in encouraging the informal, 'natural' language practices that are necessary in 'reversing language-shift' (Fishman, 1991, 162).

In '*Welsh-Language Socialization Within the Family*' Morris and Jones (2007) set out the importance of family in the 'inter-generational transmission' of Welsh. In a study of the practices of twelve families with babies and young children aged 0-2 years, they found that where families had made a conscious decision to socialise their children in Welsh, this resolution impacted on their choice of childcare. For Welsh-speaking parents, this resulted in a preference for informal care with Welsh-speaking relatives (grandparents). This was found to be the case whether or not Welsh-medium childcare was available. Morris and Jones (Morris and Jones, 2007) found that grandparents, particularly the maternal grandmother, had a significant effect on the language socialisation of children. In two-thirds of the cases studied, the maternal grandmother was the second carer after the mother. Jones' (2004) study of informal care in North West Wales found that grandparent care was the most commonly used childcare amongst primarily Welsh-speaking families.

The small amount of research surrounding this issue suggests that language may be an important factor in parental choice between formal and informal childcare in Wales. While Jones and Morris' (Morris and Jones, 2007) study seems to indicate that Welsh-speaking parents will choose informal childcare primarily to ensure language transmission, Hodges' (Hodges, 2012b) study of Welsh-medium education and parental choice in the Rhymney Valley suggests that some non-Welsh-speaking families may choose Welsh-medium formal childcare as preparation for Welsh-medium schooling, but that choices are complex and multi-layered based not only on language, but around issues of identity, nationality and belonging (Hodges, 2012b). This is an area that clearly requires further investigation to gain an understanding of childcare decision-making.

### ***Social capital***

According to Bourdieu (1986), social *capital* is 'the aggregate of the actual potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition' (1986, p. 248). Social *capital* for Bourdieu is related to the size of network and the volume of past accumulated social *capital* commanded by the agent (Tzanakis, 2013, p.3). As Reay (2004, p.57) writes, social *capital* is generated through social processes between the family and

wider society and is made up of social networks. Social *capital* would seem, therefore, to be a particularly important aspect in the examination of informal care. However, there is limited overt analysis of informal childcare and social *capital* within literature.

Bubolz (2001) highlights the role of the family as having a key role in building and supplying social *capital* through nurturing, socialisation and caregiving functions. She highlights cross-generational help, such as the provision of childcare by grandparents, as a significant example of the principles of reciprocity and exchange that underlie social *capital*. In her study of families on small farms in Michigan State, she notes the status of informal care amongst families removed from their relatives, and therefore from extended family support, as a key element in the development and flow of social *capital* (Bubolz 2001). Rutter and Evans (2012) argue that middle class families, in particular, gain social *capital* from informal childcare. Such families use 'play dates' as an important opportunity for socialisation outside the family. In turn, these cement family friendships that, they say, are a form of social *capital* and a source of mutual support and community solidarity (Rutter, Evans and Rutter, 2012).

If informal care is a form of social *capital*, then examination of the relationship between parents and informal carers is important to understand the dynamics of extended family and, in particular, of kin responsibilities. Whether relatives and grandparents provide informal childcare out of moral obligation, for self-gratification or to support the economic independence of the next generation has been a central question for researchers. Within social anthropology, this can be distilled into an argument between those, on one hand, who claim that kinship institutions are unique and autonomous with a firm moral base and what Fortes called an 'axiom of amity' (Fortes 2006), and other anthropologists, such as Kemp (1983), who argue that kinship has no such moral character but is an array of social relations that supports production and reproduction. In this sense, kin relationships are only defined by the material and economic interests of individuals. In their 1993 book, '*Negotiating Family Responsibilities*', Finch and Mason set out to investigate how kin relationships operate in practice, whether or not people give assistance to their relatives purely because they are kin, and what the foundations of such assistance might be. Based on a mixed methods study of families in Manchester, they concluded that there was indeed a sense of moral responsibility felt by family members towards each other that resulted in mutual support, but that this responsibility was born out of a sense of belonging to a social group rather than kinship per se (Finch, Mason 1993). Importantly when considering the motivation of informal carers, they also found that there was often a material aspect to exchanges of goods or services within families, and that there is often a balance of give and take in kinship care relationships that is founded not only in

reciprocity out of a sense of fairness, but out of the banking of future favour (Finch, Mason 1993). Finch and Mason (1993) suggest that reciprocity often involves careful negotiation between family members, but that relationships can go awry if the balance between dependence and independence or power and control becomes unstable.

In '*Grandparents Are the Next Best Thing*', Wheelock and Jones (2002) were able to explore childcare provided by grandparents from the carers' perspective. In focus groups, looking after grandchildren was seen as a reward in itself, arising from love more than from any sense of duty. Benefits included a 'second chance' at parenting with the benefit of hindsight, and feeling younger, healthier and fitter as a result of caring for grandchildren. Because the arrangement of childcare is most often the domain of the mother, grandmothers who care for their grandchildren are far more likely to be maternal rather than paternal grandmothers. This leads to a shared set of values and 'ways of doing things' between mothers and daughters (2002a, p.451). Grandparents also say that they want to take on the childcare role because they feel that they can provide the best care, or because they would rather take on the role than see their grandchildren looked after by 'strangers' (Mooney, Statham et al. 2002).

How informal childcare is negotiated between parents and grandparents has been examined in a range of literature. Skinner and Finch (2006, p.815) say that some families engage in open discussion and negotiation, but that in others arrangements were made on the basis of unspoken assumptions and implicit expectations. However, this notion is refuted by Rutter and Evans (2012), whose research concluded that parents asked grandparents and in some cases were refused. They also challenge any notion that informal childcare arrangements arise out of unspoken cultural norms that oblige grandparents to look after their grandchildren. They say that their research shows that informal childcare is not an altruistic activity carried out at cost to the carer but that informal arrangements are mutually beneficial. For parents it is a low-cost, flexible form of childcare, while for the informal carer it provides the opportunity to bond with the children in their care. Nonetheless, they go on to say that further qualitative research on this issue is needed to provide greater insight into the decision-making process and why informal carers often take on significant responsibilities (Rutter, Evans and Rutter, 2012).

### **Community tradition**

A number of studies have argued that informal childcare arrangements can develop into stronger networks among parents that have the potential to become a form of social *capital*.



There is a strong tradition in Wales of community-based and community-run childcare that might be seen as social *capital*. Like rural schools, childcare in the form of pre-school playgroups, parent and toddler groups, after school clubs and *cylchoed meithrin* can be a fulcrum of social cohesion and personal investment in community. The notion of childcare as social *capital* is discussed by Lowndes (2000), who argues that social *capital* has been sustained in Britain largely by virtue of women's voluntary work (Lowndes 2000). Taking Peter Hall's (1999) analysis of social *capital* in Britain, she discusses how patterns of formal and informal sociability build up relations of trust and mutual reciprocity. Women's involvement in childcare, Lowndes (2000) argues, produces 'really useful' social *capital*. Voluntary, formal childcare – particularly the pre-school playgroup movement – has in the past been mainly sustained by volunteers, while informal activities such as babysitting, the 'school run' and emergency care contribute to social networks based on trust and reciprocity. The sharing of childcare in school holidays is one area where a number of commentators (Wheelock, Jones 2002, Speight, Smith et al. 2010, Smith, Poole et al. 2009, Jones 2004) have identified the crucial role played by informal childcare networks in supporting working parents. Lowndes (2000) argues that the networks formed around childcare have been ignored in the analysis of social *capital* by many commentators.

### **Family structures**

Family structures inevitably play an important part in the choices that parents must make about childcare and the options that they have available to them to use either formal or informal care. The number and age of children within the family, the number of parents and their work situation, and the presence and location of extended family all need consideration.

Rutter and Evans (2012) concluded that the most significant indicator for parents' use of informal care was the practical constraint placed on them by their proximity to relatives. Using a logistic regression model to examine their survey data from interviews with 1,413 parents, they were able to isolate the effect of each predictor variable by controlling for the mediating effects of the other variables. Confirming research by Meltzer (1994), they found a strong correlation between the proximity of the nearest adult relative and the likelihood of the parents' use of informal childcare. While the 2009 Childcare and Early Years Survey in Wales did not account for the proximity of relatives, it found that parents' choices about childcare were often constrained by access to informal carers. Of those who had not used any form of childcare in the previous year, two-thirds said that they would be able to call upon informal carers for childcare on a regular basis (Smith et al., 2009, p.114). The availability of relatives and familial networks as a predictor for use of informal care suggests that parents make the choice to use informal care over and above factors such as the cost and availability of formal care.

By age of child, Smith et al. (2009) found that children aged 3-4 were considerably more likely than those aged 0-2 to be attending centre-based childcare, reflecting the high take-up of free part-time early years education among this age group. In contrast, 0-2 year olds were much more likely to be cared for only by informal providers. For school-aged children, use of informal care was higher, especially during school holidays (2009, p.24). Bryson *et al* (2012) discovered that, whereas the proportion of children in any form of childcare falls as children get older, where childcare is used for older children, the proportion using informal childcare rises. Reliance on grandparent care, in particular, was found to be consistently high across all age groups when compared with formal childcare. Amongst working parents, both Rutter and Evans (2012) and Bryson *et al* (2012) noted the importance to working parents of informal care of older children during school holidays. Smith et al. (2009) found that 24 per cent of children were looked after by their grandparents during term-time and 28 per cent in the holidays. This suggests that grandparents play an important role in providing childcare during the holidays for families with school-age children, possibly stepping in where families' term-time arrangements are not available in the holidays.

Smith et al. (2009) found that children living in lone parent households were more likely to receive informal care. This difference was also noted by Bryson *et al* (2012) in their study of informal childcare in England, where in 2008, 58 per cent of working lone parents used informal care for pre-school children compared with 46 per cent of working couple households. However, this contrasts with Rutter and Evans' (2012) UK research, which found no statistically significant difference between levels of informal childcare use for two-parent and single-parent families.

Bryson *et al* (2012) discovered that children of younger mothers (under 30) were more likely to be looked after by their grandparents than children with older mothers. They say that this association can be explained partly by the fact that older mothers are more likely to work full time and to be higher earners, both factors associated with the greater use of formal childcare. There may also be issues around the fact that older mothers are also more likely to be associated with older grandmothers, who are potentially less likely to want or be able to take on a major childcare role (Bryson, Brewer et al. 2012). Data from England analysed by Bryson *et al* (2012) also shows a relationship between mothers' qualifications and their use of informal childcare, with greater use of care by grandparents, siblings and other relatives by mothers with lower education levels. This, they say, is important to bear in mind when considering the impact of informal care on children's educational outcomes (Bryson et al., 2012).

### ***Spatial habitus***

If informal childcare use is to be seen as part of people's '*habitus*', then Holt-Jenson suggests that it must be embedded in both an embodied and a cognitive sense of place (1999, p.187). People's social space is often defined by the physical spaces they inhabit - "It is true that one can observe almost everywhere a tendency toward spatial segregation, people who are close together in social space tending to find themselves, by choice or by necessity, close to one another in geographic space" (Bourdieu, 1989a, p.16). Yet while space in the concept of *habitus* is not concrete, it is social, made up of the norms, values and resources that come from the communities in which people live (Cornwall, 2002, p.1). According to Day (2010), Wales is defined by its geography in more than the obvious topographical sense. The social history of Wales has been anything but uniform, resulting in differing structures and patterns of community, language and economy that go far beyond any simple rural / urban divide (Day, 2010b, p.95). Whether informal childcare is related to geography or a sense of space is an important question.

In their study of rural childcare, Halliday and Little (2001) identified two broad approaches that have been taken to understanding informal childcare use in rural areas. First, they say, is a rural 'services' debate focusing on the availability and accessibility of formal childcare services. A number of reports at national and local level (eg. Welsh Assembly Government 2002, Welsh Assembly Government 2011b, Children in Wales 2008, Mauthner et al. 2001), have recognised both the lack of childcare and the difficulty of sustaining formal childcare services in rural areas. Issues such as local employment structures (low paid work, seasonal employment, small scale employers, distance to work) and access to services (dispersed populations, distance to urban centres) present difficult conditions.

Secondly, Halliday and Little (2001) identify a perspective that focuses on traditional gender roles within the rural family. Brown and Baker (2011) write that, whilst there is a history of gender roles being transcended in Wales, defined gender-based domestic roles and the cultural construction of gendered rural identities in a socially conservative Wales is still important. Women's childcaring role is seen as having a central place in the Welsh family and is important in transmitting the cultural *capital* that defines rural life. As already discussed, this is taken further in Jones' (2007) study of Welsh language socialisation, highlighting the importance of the extended family in transmission of the language and, consequently, a greater use of informal childcare in the mainly rural Welsh-speaking areas (Jones, Morris 2007). A report commissioned by Plaid Cymru MP Hywel Williams on informal childcare in Gwynedd, concluded that there was a strong attachment to informal care in his Arfon constituency. Informal care represented many of the advantages of raising children within a close-knit

community, including safety, trust, community spirit, proximity to relatives and, to those with family nearby, patterns of reciprocal help and support (Jones 2004).

Halliday and Little (2001) attempted to reconcile what they saw as these two distinct approaches to analysing rural childcare. Their qualitative study of childcare use amongst families in rural Devon found that, whilst the paucity of services was a factor in limiting choice between formal and informal care, they also found that use of family and friends was a discrete category of care rather than a proxy for formal care. People interviewed found it difficult to articulate the reasons why they used informal care, suggesting that it was something so well defined and accepted that it should not need to be articulated. Family members were used because they possessed a family relationship; because this was how families functioned (2001, p.430).

Rutter and Evans (2012) made a geographical analysis of the overall use of informal care, finding lower levels of informal childcare use in metropolitan areas (28 per cent compared with 37 per cent for rural and suburban areas), although these were not seen as statistically significant. They did show in their research, however, some regional differences in the specific use of grandparent care. According to their study, 32 per cent of parents across the UK had used grandparent care in the last six months. In Wales, the figure was 29 per cent, and in Scotland it was 51 per cent. They surmised that the regional differences – including the particularly high rate in Scotland – are the result of low internal and external migration. Comparing London (18 per cent) with other parts of the UK would seem to support this conclusion, yet the low figures from Wales would seem to nullify such claims and are contrary to much of the other evidence (Rutter, Evans and Rutter, 2012).

### **Availability and accessibility of formal care**

There has been surprisingly little research that looks at the spatial relationships between the availability and accessibility of formal care and any relationship with the use of informal childcare. Yet it is assumed by policy makers that the provision of formal childcare services will lead to parents choosing to use it.

A common assumption made in Childcare Sufficiency Assessments in Wales, (Blaenau Gwent CBC 2014; Camarthenshire CBC 2014; Newport Council 2014 and others) is that there is a causal link between high levels of informal care and low rates of formal childcare. While rurality has been discussed, links between the amount and choice of formal care available to parents and their consequential use of informal care, has not been studied in any detail. Research, including Rutter and Evans (2012), would seem to assume uniform levels of formal care across all areas. Although they acknowledge that causal links cannot be inferred, Bryson et al (2012) found that parents using only

informal care were less aware of formal care and issues around it than those who did use it. This, they suggest, may be because parents are selecting informal care as their primary choice and therefore have little interest in the availability or accessibility of formal care (Bryson et al., 2012).

From the literature, researchers have in different ways attempted to discern differences in behaviour in relation to the physical space they occupy. It is, however, unclear as to relationship between geography and *habitus* that might be important in understanding the positions of actors within the childcare *field*. Yet in investigating the *doxa* related to informal childcare in Wales, it is an important aspect that requires further examination.

### ***Habitus, class and childcare choices***

Alongside external factors, parents are likely to be influenced in their choice of childcare by inherited values grounded in their own socialisation. Their choices will further be mitigated or impacted upon by internal factors - acquired values or moral positions that are the reflexive products of interactions and experiences. Values and moral positions have been identified in literature relating to caring roles, work, identity and perceptions that combine in differing ways and situations to affect how and why parents make childcare choices. Parents' dispositions are therefore combined with their portfolio of capitals as *habitus* that places them within an objective position in social space that can be represented in class formations (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2013).

Ball et al. (2007) claim that to fully understand childcare policies and practices and families' experiences of childcare, an analysis of social class is essential. Like others examining the actions of families in choosing both education and childcare, they take a Bourdieusian approach and use *habitus* to illuminate the pervasiveness of class in UK society at a time when people often deny class labels. Ball and Vincent (Ball, Kemp and Vincent, 2004; Ball and Vincent, 2004) examine the relationship between class and childcare in their study of the childcare choices of middle class parents. Concentrating on families where parents had high levels of education and were in mainly professional occupations, they found that while on the surface parents were very similar, they often made very different choices of care on moral grounds, particularly in choosing between state and private provision. On the one hand were parents who were essentially individualist and exclusivist and who chose private day nursery care, seeing it as a haven of middle class values and a stepping stone to either private education or to a highly regarded state primary school. On the other, were parents who could be termed 'inclusivist', with strong community values, and who despite having the means to pay for private nursery care chose the state sector in a conscious commitment to a collective social good. These parents wanted their child to experience the social and ethnic mix of their locality, and were

continuing with this value-led approach by educating their children locally within the state sector (2004, p.10). The conclusion drawn is that, in many cases, childcare is an agent of social reproduction where the choice of childcare 'positions' children differently within educational careers. It can also, the authors argue, be not only a social mechanism for the separation of and marking out of class groups, but also a battleground over what constitute good middle class values. Interestingly, none of the families studied were recorded as using informal childcare. There is an assumption made that this is due to high inward migration rates into London of a young, educated middle class population with few extended family ties. This is in contrast with many working class families that are less mobile and may, therefore, have family in the locality. The lack of informal childcare use amongst the middle class is further described as a distinct dividing line between the middle class as a whole and the working class (Ball and Vincent, 2004, p.25).

Ward et al. (2007) found in interviews with working class families in Wythenshawe, South Manchester that, while for the middle classes, labour-force restructuring has resulted in dual-income households where earnings are high enough for families to be able to buy in services such as childcare, there has been a feminisation of working class employment to the point where the majority of working class mothers need to perform some paid work (2007, p.320). Reflecting research by Duncan *et al* (2004), Holloway (2001) and Himmelweit and Sigala (2004), Ward concludes that working class mothers' decisions about whether to join the workforce while they have pre-school children are negotiated responses to the external constraints or opportunities offered by income, job opportunities, support networks and local services, as well as internal factors such as ideologies of femininity and mothering. Specifically, Ward (2007) found that the density of local family networks and the informal childcare available through them, was a significant factor in mothers' decision-making about work. They also suggested that the lack of formal childcare in the area was a consequence of high levels of informal childcare use (2007, p.315).

Rutter and Evans (2012) analysed informal childcare use by social class, using the Nation Readership Survey classification. Their 2011 survey of parents found that families in the highest social grade bracket were most likely to have used informal childcare in the past six months, and those in the lowest social grade bracket were least likely to have used it. Their explanation for this increased likelihood of informal childcare use among families in higher income bands and social grades is that those in professional and managerial occupations – and receiving higher incomes – are most likely to have atypical work patterns or work longer hours (Rutter, Evans and Rutter, 2012). They go on to say that their findings challenge previous research that working class women offer a great deal of mutual support in the form of informal childcare to their relatives and close friends, and also the widespread

notion of tight-knit working class communities, where families offer mutual support to each other (Ward et al., 2007). They support Ball & Vincent's (2004) findings which claim that while some women on low incomes do have these support networks, regular informal childcare offered by friends is more likely to involve parents and carers from higher social classes (2004, p.21). If true, this raises some policy issues, as economically deprived parents are less likely to be able to capitalise on the benefits of support networks. However, their findings conflict with other data, notably Bryson *et al* (2012), Speight (2009) and Sylva (2007), all of whom found that families were more likely to use informal care if they were from a lower socio-economic background.

Most literature tends to agree that childcare choice is highly gendered, with mothers predominantly the decision-makers (eg. Ball 2003, Wheelock, Jones 2002, Duncan, Edwards et al. 2004) and childcare decisions often forming part of broader deliberations about work and careers. In their study of working class mothers, paid work and childcare, Braun *et al* (2008) propose that all modern mothers are faced by two imperatives. First, is the imperative to be a 'good', self-reliant worker-citizen. Ball, Vincent et al. (2004b) found that middle class mothers in professions talked about 'the liberation of working' and of work as a publicly recognised sense of self and identity that was separate from their identities as mothers. Braun (2008) found that working class mothers expressed similar pride and commitment, even those in low paid, low status jobs (Braun, Vincent et al. 2008). Mothers differed, however, in that some middle class mothers talked in terms of a career, whilst working class women located themselves broadly as part of the labour force. Secondly, is the imperative to be a 'good' mother of well-behaved, achieving children. Braun, Vincent and Ball (2008) found that there were distinct differences in approaches to full-time parenting. Middle class mothers spent a good deal of time socialising through commercial children's activities and reciprocal visits with other mothers; working class mothers talked of not having enough money to enjoy time at home with their children (Braun, Vincent et al. 2008). As perhaps a consequence, when childcare was available to working class mothers - especially good quality nursery care - they were particularly enthusiastic, with a positive attitude towards the 'expertise' of professional childcare workers. This also corresponds well with strong policy messages around child development and the benefits of early education. Braun, Vincent and Ball (2008) suggest, nonetheless, that this may leave working class mothers with a negative sense that they may not be able to give their children all that they need. It could also affect how working class mothers behave in their choice between informal and formal care. Whilst all mothers are required to meet the imperatives of good worker-citizen and good mother, working class women have to do so from within a context of limited economic resources and fewer choices (Braun, Vincent et al. 2008).

Duncan and Irwin (2004) describe a continuum of views on mothering ranging from 'primarily mother' to 'primarily worker' that transcended class divides, albeit for different reasons. Middle class mothers at the 'primarily mother' end of the spectrum were able to afford to adopt this position with a strong moral sense that staying at home was best for their child. Working class women with a working partner who were 'primarily mothers' took a similar value-based position, but in the context of their own employment opportunities being constrained and therefore the difference their wage would make to the household limited. While not affluent, they could still afford not to work (Duncan, Irwin 2004).

The process of childcare decision-making has been discussed by a number of authors taking a range of perspectives. Here, three perspectives are highlighted that represent some of the diversity of thought.

In '*Choice and the relationship between identities and behaviour for mothers with pre-school children*', Himmelweit and Sigala (2004) set out to understand the extent to which maternal decision-making about the care of young children is based on subjectivities oriented by values and concepts of personal identities and perceived knowledge, or is influenced by social context, external constraints and actual knowledge. Within the introduction to their research, the authors discuss three broad approaches that had previously been taken in analysing how mothers make choices between employment and caring duties. First, is the notion that the choices women make about careers and motherhood reflect lifestyle preferences. Some women are career-orientated and others are home-centred, while a third group opt for a '*marriage career*' where employment and child-rearing are combined but a career takes second place (2004, p.468). In other words, behaviour is pre-defined by the values held by individuals. That is not to say, however, that this is a positivistic view with women's decision-making being pre-determined, but, on the contrary, is based on the notion that their action is driven by values and beliefs that are social constructs. Secondly, Himmelweit and Sigala (2004) cite Fagan (2001) in suggesting that the differences in maternal decision-making around careers and caring evident from international studies, is tightly constrained by external factors such as labour market conditions, childcare policies and economic necessity. This therefore leaves little opportunity for mothers' attitudes and choices. Finally, the authors draw upon literature from the US (Pungello and Kurtz-Costes 2000 and Peyton *et al.* 2001), which propose that in mothers' choice of care (rather than career) choices, external constraints affect the extent to which mothers' personal attitudes and identities are influential<sup>20</sup>. In particular, the amount of leeway that mothers have in choosing care is affected by their financial circumstances. Mothers on low incomes who need income from paid work are much more constrained in their ability to make care choices based on their values and beliefs. Also noted

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<sup>20</sup> See Chapter Six for discussion relating the concept of identities in this context with *habitus*.



were 'feedback' effects, where constrained behaviour due to external factors led to changes in attitudes by mothers regarding care-choice over the longer-term (2004, p.468).

Other studies take it for granted that the cost of formal childcare is a major factor in parents choosing informal care, and that the availability of informal care is expected to affect parents' decisions about work even where there is a proper childcare market, because it is a cheaper alternative (Arpino, Pronzato et al. 2010). Yet, empirical research suggesting rational choices (for example, Hofferth, Chaplin et al. 1996, Hansen, Joshi et al. 2006, Andren 2003) has struggled to prove that this is the case. Hofferth (2006) blames the quality of secondary data from large-scale surveys, and suggests that we do not have enough information on the options and constraints faced by parents to confirm the link. Hansen (2006) concludes that parents place greater emphasis on factors such as a safe and healthy environment, trust, love, flexibility, a convenient location and convenient hours. She also says that the high level of grandparent care illustrates that there is an 'active frontier between family and economy' (Hansen, Joshi et al. 2006) that is beyond rational economic analysis.

Duncan and Irwin (2004) challenge the notion that childcare choice is driven by what they see as household economics, where the imperatives of family income determine behaviour. Instead, they suggest that an analysis of the processes of socially negotiated moral understandings and relational commitments is needed (2004, p.391). They suggest that the UK government's vision for childcare is a 'rationality mistake', presuming that given the right incentives, parents will choose to use affordable, accessible, quality *formal* childcare that will free them to fully participate in the labour market. Evidence, they say, suggests that people do not act in this individualistic economically rational way, but that they make decisions with reference to moral and socially negotiated views about what behaviour they believe to be right and proper. This, say Duncan and Irwin (2004), will vary according to membership of different social groups, neighbourhoods and welfare states. They go on to say that people do not view the care of young children as purely a constraint on their involvement in the labour market. Decisions are complicated by what can be non-negotiable, highly gendered, moral obligations to care for their children and place their needs first. Duncan and Irwin (2004) conclude that "the perceived economic costs and benefits of taking or not taking employment and paying for child care may be important once these social and moral understandings are established, but remain essentially secondary". Choices are not irrational, but involve a different kind of rationality that often places deeply held moral values above economic considerations.

Finally, Forry et al. (2013) provide a useful synthesis of evidence about the context of childcare decision-making, both in process terms and by examining the factors that facilitate or challenge the process (2013, p.27). After noting the difficulties in synthesising evidence due to differing

methodologies, they conclude that a range of characteristics of the child, the parent and the communities to which they belong are associated with specific childcare decision-making, many of which have been discussed in this chapter. However, they find that the reasons for these associations are not always clear. They find that parents of very young children tend to prefer parent or informal care, before moving on to formal care during the pre-school years. Parents who are employed full-time focus more on the practical features of childcare arrangements such as cost and opening hours, than on features related to quality. They found that parents in urban areas prefer more structured activities than those in rural areas. Importantly, they concur with much of the literature already reviewed, that parents' beliefs about family roles and education, household income, and family structure are related to childcare preferences. Finally, in examining the childcare decision-making process itself, they find that it can be constrained by low incomes, limited childcare options, work schedules, affordability and a lack of information (2013, pp.27–29).

## Conclusions

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to reconstruct the research topic. This task has been approached first, by examining the key concepts in order to clarify, re-assess and reflect upon their meanings in ways that will enable the research endeavour to take place, and secondly by examining existing literature and empirical data to establish how the concepts have previously been represented and understood.

The difficulty in the first element of reconstruction is illustrated by the complexity within the concept of parenthood where both gender differentiation and gender neutrality are both seen to be important from different perspectives. The concept of 'childcare' is also found to be multi-faceted, with function, positionality and practice all used as distinguishing features that require consideration when approaching the research topic. In examining the concept of informal childcare, it can be seen to share some of the functions, positions and practices of the broader concept of childcare, but also to be distinctive in many ways. It includes a wide range of practices, and is, as a number of writers argue, therefore highly subjective. A working definition of informal childcare is, however, developed that reflects a number of central elements that in discussion appear to be most important in framing this research topic. First, is that informal childcare is non-parental care. Secondly, informal care is generally placed at arms-length from both the market and the state, and thirdly, the arrangements are mostly between family members.

As well as discussing the concepts of both formal and informal childcare, the intersection between the *fields* of childcare and education is important to consider. Necessarily, this takes place within the

specific time and place that is the focus of this study, where terminology such as 'Early Childhood Education and Care' has both practical, symbolic and political meaning. It also characterises a contested space, highlighting the importance of further analysis and investigation of the relationship and interdependence between the *fields*. Lastly, critical examination of the conceptual and physical space within which the study is situated would suggest that an important element to be further investigated is in the extent to which the functions, positions and practices of childcare are distinguishable in Wales.

Mapping of the childcare *field* in Wales provides some indication of distinction. The review of existing literature and data finds a system of formal childcare and early education that reflects the conceptual divides that have already been highlighted. Services that are distinguished by function, such as custody or cultivation, overlap with provision that is free in some cases and not in others, while the unequal distribution and accessibility of childcare in Wales is likely to have a bearing on how parents are able to engage with the *field* dependent on their own positions. While most researchers agree that it is a widespread practice, the information relating to informal childcare in Wales is thin, dated and incomplete, highlighting the need for empirical research if the *field* and the actions of those who engage in it, is to be further understood.

In taking a Bourdieusian approach to examination of the relationship between the *field* as previously described, and the *habitus* of those who inhabit it, as expressed in terms of economic, cultural and social *capital* and their relative configurations, evidence is provided as to the relative importance of class and a range of other factors that might be seen as important in parents' childcare decision-making.

Economic factors can be seen to be an important factor in the *field* of childcare, and an element that needs to be considered in understanding how parents make decisions about care. In surveys, parents express childcare decisions in economic terms, both in the context of work and care decisions, but also in deciding between different care types. Whether childcare is perceived to be affordable is highlighted as important, yet given evidence of limited financial transactions within informal care relationships, is a factor only when formal care is being considered. However, whether the economic circumstances of families can be correlated with use of formal care, informal care, or combinations of the two, is contested in the literature.

While cultural *capital* has been seen to be highly important in education choice, its role in childcare is less clear. One of the key elements of Bourdieu's argument is that class differences in cultural *capital* and *habitus* begin at birth, and increase throughout childhood (see page 14). Therefore, the effects of

differences in cultural *capital* and *habitus* should be apparent in children at a very young age, since they are part of the primary socialization experience. One might expect those (middle class) parents with the most useful accumulation of cultural *capital* to make decisions that are going to provide the greatest advantage for them or their children (Reay and Ball, 1997, p.89). Writing with Vincent, Ball concludes that childcare is an agent of social reproduction, where the choice of childcare 'positions' children differently within educational careers (Ball and Vincent, 2004, p.25). However, from literature that is focused on particular case studies, it is unclear how this might play out within the childcare *field* in Wales. Within elements such as language, the role of cultural *capital* is clearer, but other factors require additional conceptualisation and operationalisation to assess how useful they might be as indicators of cultural *capital*.

Social *capital*, as the sum of resources that can be mobilised through memberships of social networks, is usually thought of in most situations as 'stickier' in its ability to be transformed into other useful capitals, particular economic *capital* (Anheier, Gerhards and Romo, 1995b, p.862). Yet in the case of informal childcare, the role of the family and wider social networks is shown to have considerable weight. Inter-generational care arrangements, in particular, are shown to have significant and tangible economic value both in terms of savings on formal childcare, but also in providing complementary childcare that is shown to enhance working hours and therefore earning potential. Importantly, it would seem that the proximity and availability of family networks as a form of social *capital* - unlike other forms of *capital* - is more equally spread across social classes, which may explain why in some research, use of informal care is found to transcend class.

The concept of a 'spatial *habitus*' is not widely used in literature, but usefully describes the relationship between physical space, and the 'social space' that people inhabit. The extent to which geographic proximity is related to social space, and therefore to the practices of actors within the *field* of childcare, is referred to in the literature, but mostly in the broad duality of rural and urban.

Finally, in this chapter, the relationship between childcare decision-making, *habitus* and class is reviewed, drawing on a range of studies. Most examine the relationship between class and childcare more broadly, and conclude that particular childcare practices are more common amongst certain classes, yet there is no clear agreement around class dispositions and use of informal childcare. In examining the childcare decision-making process itself, a range of views are proposed in literature ranging from individualistic accounts through to more structured analyses, but most agree that childcare choices can be constrained by factors such as low incomes, limited childcare options, work schedules, affordability and a lack of information.

## Chapter 4 Childcare policy in Wales

In this chapter, the *field* of childcare is further discussed focusing on the relationship between the state, institutions and individual actors. Here, Bourdieu's writings provide a way of investigating childcare policy in a theoretically informed way. Following a Bourdieusian approach to research methodology (Grenfell, 2014) comprising a "three-level methodology" to *field* analysis, this chapter concerns itself with the second level in which, first, fields within the *field* of power are examined. In the context of the research question, examination is required of the structures and power dynamics in the *field*. Subsequent chapters aim to complete the picture of the *field* through examining the structure of the *field* itself (Chapter Five), and the *habitus* of those relatively positioned within it (Chapter Six). Social policy as an area of study refers to "...collective interventions directly affecting transformation in social welfare, social institutions and social relations" (Alcock, 2008, p.2). According to Yeates & Deacon (2006), social policy is, at one level, about policies and practices that support the means of social participation through the provision of services (such as education, health, housing, childcare etc.). At another level, social policy can be understood as the mechanisms, policies and procedures used by states, working with other actors, to modify the distributive and social products of economic activity (2006, p.1). While policy reflects and projects the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of those who hold political power, they are constrained by the way which their actions are viewed as appropriate and acceptable by voters and public opinion as expressed by the media (Wood, 2014, p.38).

In relation to Bourdieu's theories, Greener (2002, p.692) writes that policy forms a part of the relationship between structure and agency, attempting to modify (constrain or empower) actors' practice between *habitus* and the *field*. Using his sporting analogy, Bourdieu says that actors are most likely to behave in an instinctive manner based on their practice or their 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu, 1990, p.66). Yet, in the case of childcare, the literature tells us that the 'rules of the game', and in many cases the boundaries of the *field*, are structurally defined and not always fully and equally known to all (Moss, Dillon and Statham, 2000). According to Ball et al., inequality in economic or cultural capitals restricts agents in their ability to play the game (Ball, Kemp and Vincent, 2004, p.24). As Bourdieu says, actors do not decide to play the game (childcare) by a conscious act, but having children means that parents are 'born into the game' (1990, p.68) of childcare, and Bourdieu's theories would suggest that they play the childcare game according to a *habitus* formed from accumulated capitals. Bourdieu stresses, however, that the state wields power, through cultural, economic and political elites to shape the *habitus* of society, defining the state as "the culmination of a process of

concentration of the different species of *capital*" (Bourdieu, 1998, p.41). Childcare policy can therefore be seen as the rationale for and methods by which, the state seeks to influence the *practice* of parents within the childcare *field*.

According to Taylor (1997), policy is developed reflecting the values and beliefs of those who form the 'dominant culture' at a particular point in history, and manifests ideologies in its construction and implementation (Taylor, 1997, p.37). However, it can be argued that such an analysis is fundamentally one-sided, ignoring the extent of actors' agency and the role of reflexivity. As is discussed in Chapter Three, a criticism of Bourdieu's model is that it stresses the almost hegemonic power of the state to constrain, or even subjugate non-elite actors, leaving little room for them to manoeuvre (Greener, 2002, p.695). Childcare literature is often focused on how access to the *field* is constrained by a combination of the market and the positions of the political, cultural and political elites in shaping the *habitus* of society (Penn, 2011b; Lloyd and Penn, 2012; Vincent, Braun and Ball, 2008; Moss, 2012). Parents therefore might be seen as trapped actors, willing to engage in the fields of childcare and work, or looking to provide the best pedagogical experience for their children, but unable because of structural constraints such as the cost, availability or quality of the services available. Greener (2002, p.695) argues that where constraints become considerable, actors fall back on habitual behaviour because they lack the capitals, or the right kind of capitals to traverse the *field*.

A number of questions therefore arise within a Bourdieusian analysis of childcare policy. First, to understand contemporary debates, it is necessary to examine how the power relations that define the *field* of childcare have been shaped by past events and structures (Bourdieu 1984, 170). The current political discourses around childcare need to be placed within a historical context that also incorporates discourses of the related fields that previous studies have highlighted as important, including parenting, motherhood and early childhood itself (Moss, Dillon and Statham, 2000; Bown, Sumsion and Press, 2009; Kremer, 2007; Rafferty and Wiggan, 2011). As Moss et al. (2000) write, the relationship between children, parents and society is shaped by a particular discourse of childhood that has been qualified by the state in response to changing circumstances (2000, p.238). Gormley (1995) emphasizes the complexity of childcare in policy terms describing it as:

"especially vexing and perplexing, to both analysts and parents...it is a labor problem, a social problem, a regulatory problem, an intergovernmental problem, an administrative problem, a community problem, and, of course, a familial problem." (in Rigby, Tarrant and Neuman, 2007, p.99)

In this chapter, a historical narrative of the development of childcare as a policy area in Wales is presented to gain an understanding of how and why childcare policy has emerged and has subsequently developed. In this chapter, a mixed method of content analysis and policy framing techniques (Fischer 2003, Keeney 2004) are used to interpret childcare policy development through the study of key public texts from government, political parties and third sector organisations in what Alcock (2008, p.81) calls the 'policy networks' that engage citizens and groups in policy making.

A framework approach enables insights into how current childcare policy has been shaped and modified over time by political positions, ideologies and other discourses. For example, it is useful to examine the extent to which childcare policy emanates from Foucauldian notions of power and discourse as suggested by Moss et al. (2000). Others have suggested that as a topic that generally unites voters, policy decisions emanate from the *habitus* of politicians, policy advisors and people within the arena of early childhood (Ball, 2013b; Bown, Sumsion and Press, 2009). As Bown (2009) says, those engaged in formulating policy act not only according to political and ideological positions, but are influenced by their personal positions as parents, grandparents, community members, colleagues and voters (2009, p.199). Yet, as Alcock (2008) argues, policy-making involves a web of interests, influences and actors who are interlinked and who change over time. Nonetheless, it must be recognised that the power they hold is unequal and that 'policy elites' are able to exert greater pressure or influence (2008, p.81). Identifying who the most influential actors are in childcare policy-making, and for what reasons, is important in understanding how the *field* is constructed and how it operates. Furthermore, in examining the concept of childcare policy, questions can be asked as to whether the *field* itself can be viewed as autonomous, or whether a multitude of policy discourses result in it being indistinct or fractured (Maton, 2005, p.689).

Analysis of childcare through policy frames is used in this chapter to examine the extent to which childcare policy in Wales seeks to liberate or constrain actors, and how these approaches might be expressed. Policy might be seen as a benign influence that seeks to mitigate – through funding, organisation and regulation – against the structural limitations imposed on actors as a result of a market-orientated childcare sector (Lloyd and Penn, 2012). Alternatively, policy could be viewed as manipulating the 'rules of the game' in the *field* of childcare or attempting to modify the *habitus* of actors so that they make different choices when playing the game. These two positions are not, however, mutually exclusive.

Because the rationales behind policies are often focused on achieving different outcomes, there will inevitably be tensions, and in some cases conflict, as multiple frames are often deployed in policy. A focus on gender 'equity' may do little for the rights of children (Mahon, 2005), while frames that focus

on human capital theory (Penn 2011), and therefore stress individual productivity and progress over a lifetime, are likely to side-line structural issues such as women's or children's rights. Both a strength and a weakness of childcare as a *field* of social policy is that it is multidimensional, and deemed to be important across a number of policy areas including education, health, poverty, rights, inclusion, employment and equality (Daly and Lewis, 2000, p.285). While such prominence strengthens the case for investment in and development of childcare, as Saraceno (2011, p.79) concludes, it may result in weak objectives, incompatibility and conflict if contradictions between policy responses across policy areas are not addressed.

## Policy frames

The review of existing academic literature in Chapter Three suggests that amongst a small number of writers who have previously examined childcare policy there would seem to be some common frames within which policy is placed and interpreted. Inevitably, the process of labelling frames involves amalgamating existing frames that are connected with some coherence and underlying logic (White, 2011, p.287), but, returning to Goffman, the core of frame analysis rests on an interpretive scheme that "...enables the individual to make sense of activity that is otherwise meaningless" (1974, p.38). Each frame indicates a particular interpretation of childcare policy with commonly pronounced features that, it can be argued, are helpful in identifying policy approaches that are then reflected in the kind of programmes and services that are developed. For example, as Ball (2013b, p.16) writes, childcare provision as a part of welfare to work policies that have sought to engage lone parents in paid work, are indicative of a 'social investment state' ideology. As such, they can be placed in a 'labour force participation' frame underpinned by a view that it is the citizen's moral duty to be in paid work. However, placing discourses within the frame does not on its own provide a direct route to mandated policies and, according to Ferree & Miller, framing must be linked to power structures that involve the policy elites within the 'broader policy networks' that surround them, interpreting the frames through an institutional context (2000, p.460). This is particularly important when piecing together the policy-making process, interpreting how the policy actors, such as politicians, their advisers, interest groups and citizens exert influence. According to Ball (2013), writing about gender campaigners' attempts to influence Welsh Government policy, understanding of the discursive frame by those involved in the wider policy networks is important if their case is to be heard, and for them to influence policy (2013b, p.16). They must, therefore, employ the 'authorized' language (Bourdieu, 1991a) if they are to have agency and be effective, not ignored for holding heretic views and subsequently excluded in the policy-making process.



This study's focus on the relationship between the state, institutions and individual actors in Wales asks how policy or political action is influenced by the dominant dialogues through the examination of childcare policy texts, framed within the principal narratives identified in the literature. Documents - including political manifestos, policy papers, speeches and discussion documents - have been interrogated for evidence of issue positions, and aligned to an inductive framework based on literature as set out in.

Table 5.

Table 5: Childcare policy frames

<b>Policy Frame</b>	<b>Authors</b>	<b>Key concepts</b>	<b>Alternative Terminology</b>
<b>Poverty alleviation</b>	(Mahon, 2005; Penn, 2011b; Chaney, 2015)	Raising family incomes to move children out of poverty. Based on evidence that child poverty negatively impacts on educational performance, sense of self-worth and therefore limits future societal contributions.	Economic arguments / tackling poverty (Chaney, 2015)
<b>Labour force participation</b>	(White, 2011; Gornick and Meyers, 2006; Penn, 2011b; Chaney, 2015; Ball, 2013b; Crompton, 2001)	Increasing labour supply, particularly of underemployed women so that working mothers contribute to family incomes, tax revenues and reduce welfare dependency.	Neo-familialism and Third Way (Mahon, 2002) Work-life Balance (Chaney, 2015)
<b>Gender equality</b>	(Mahon, 2005; Gornick and Meyers, 2006; Chaney, 2015; Crompton, 2001)	Achieving gender parity in the workplace and the home "...towards the feminist ideal of full sharing of care and paid work by men and women" (Mahon 2005,2)	Women's rights (Ball, 2013b)
<b>Human capital</b>	(Mahon and Lewis, 2006; White, 2011; Penn, 2011b; Giddens, 1998)	Public investment in cognitive skills such as literacy and numeracy and non-cognitive skills such as self-discipline and perseverance. Outcomes include better attainment, improved employment and earnings, better health outcomes, less welfare dependency and juvenile delinquency.	
<b>Social pedagogy</b>	(White, 2011; Moss and Lewis, 2006; Gornick and Meyers, 2006; Penn, 2011b)	Emphasizes the promotion of children's overall developmental needs: health and physical development, emotional well-being and social competence, positive attitude toward learning, good communication skills, and cognition and general knowledge. Involves an integrated approach to care and education.	
<b>Social justice</b>	(Mahon and Lewis, 2006; White, 2011; Gornick and Meyers, 2006; Penn, 2011b; Ball, 2013b)	Similar to the social pedagogical frame. Sees ECEC as a human right, but not only in terms of children having a right to education and care; rights-givers (governments, employers etc.) should facilitate compatibility between labour market obligations and parental responsibilities through the provision of childcare (White 2011, 297).	Class or race equality Equality of opportunity (Chaney, 2015) Children's welfare and children's rights (Ball, 2013b)

			Egalitarian blueprint (Mahon, 2002a)
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## The development of early education and childcare in Wales

This section explores the development of childcare policy in Wales covering the period preceding devolution to the end of the fifth Welsh Assembly in 2016.

### *Pre-devolution*

According to Alcock (2008), family policy in the UK has been regarded as a private institution into which the state should only interfere in limited ways (2008, p.391), and until the 1990s, it is argued that there was a distinctive void in social policy in the UK involving childcare and the related issue of early childhood education (Finch, 2003, p.16). After 1945, the new Welfare State maintained the traditional ‘male bread-winner’ model, meaning that married women were reliant on their husbands for a range of entitlements and benefits, and the post-war reforms of both welfare and education conspicuously ruled out state involvement in provision for young children (Pierson and Castles, 2006, p.140). As Crompton (2001, p.268) points out, the widespread assumption and reality was that young children were, and should be, cared for mainly or exclusively by their mothers. A Ministry of Health Circular (221/45) from 1945, stated that:

“Under normal peacetime conditions, the right policy to pursue would be positively to discourage mothers of children under two from going out to work’, since ‘in the interest of the health and development of the child no less than for the benefit of the mother, the proper place for a child under two is at home with his mother’” (in Moss, Dillon and Statham, 2000, p.252).

Despite the Plowden Report (1967) advocating nursery education, the Seebohm Report (1968) arguing for local authority daycare and the Finer Report (1974) finding an ‘urgent’ need for public daycare for one-parent families, governments responded only with small-scale initiatives and little public funding (Randall, 1996, p.237), and there was no holistic view taken of early childhood, with policy split between early education under the Department for Education, and childcare and welfare under the Department for Health and Social Security. Moss et al. (2000) see this as reflecting a discourse dominant at that time - and one that they say has shaped policy since – of children being primarily the responsibility of parents and therefore disconnected from wider society; of maternal care for young children being the norm; and childhood being a biologically determined sequence of development (2000, p.240).

Nonetheless, by the 1980s, social change and demographics would seem to have reached a tipping point, and there arose a more common acceptance that the old male breadwinner model was no longer able to support the kind of family incomes that the working class, in particular, were coming to expect (Brannen and Moss, 1998). A rising number of women working outside the home saw demand for childcare services grow (Finch, 2003, p.3). Childcare became a manifesto issue for the first time in 1983, when the Labour Party placed childcare firmly as an issue of gender equality, promising “[We will] introduce positive action programmes to promote women’s rights and opportunities [and furthermore] we will: Improve child care and other social services” (1983, p.16). Yet from the ruling Conservative administrations of the 1980s and early 1990s, there was a weak discourse around care (Brannen and Moss, 1998), and little was done to improve childcare provision (Finch, 2003, p.16). Kremer (2007) notes that into the 1990s, the Conservative administration was still promoting the notion of full-time mothering and non-involvement of the state:

“Our view is that it is for parents that go out to work to decide how best to care for their children. If they want to or need help in this, they should make the appropriate arrangements and meet the cost” (Minister Edwina Curry quoted in Cohen, B.; Fraser 1991, 9).

According to Moss et al. (2000), this dominant discourse constituted childcare within the private domain even though in related areas such as education and child health, developing ideas of what was best for children - for example the High/Scope Perry Pre-School Study in the US (Schweinhart, 1993) - resulted in the state assuming some responsibility (2000, p.242).

The 1992 election established childcare as an issue for the three main political parties in the UK at the time. There were references to childcare in the Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Labour manifestos with commitments to variously increase provision, increase funding and safeguard quality. Analysis of the content reveals a good deal of commonality between Labour and the Conservatives in the way they framed childcare policy proposals. Both emphasised *Gender Equality* as the rationale for policy, with the Conservatives making a considerable change to their previous position:

“We believe mothers should be treated equally by government, whether they work outside the home or not.” (Conservative Party, 1992, p.23).

Manifesto statements suggest a position that was in reaction to an increasing involvement of women in the workforce. Labour repeated its 1983 proposal for a ‘childcare strategy’, placing it in the hands of a proposed Ministry for Women that was also to legislate for greater sex equality (Labour Party, 1992, p.17).

Following John Major's narrow Conservative victory in 1992, the Government followed through on its manifesto commitments to childcare. Reading of the Conservative manifesto (1992) provides clear statements of position for the policies that were to follow. First, was a clear delineation between the language of childcare – framed as supporting women to work – and early education, placed within a *Human Capital* frame linked to educational attainment:

“Conservatives believe that high standards in education and training are the key to personal opportunity and national success. We will continue to encourage the creation of nursery places. For the first time, over 50 per cent of three and four-year-olds have places either in nursery or primary schools.” (1992, p.19).

Kremer (2007) suggests that this policy approach was important in establishing an ideal of early childhood care being focused on early education, rather than the Danish social-pedagogical model<sup>21</sup>, that continues to influence policy across the UK (Kremer, 2007, p.211). Secondly within the manifesto was a commitment to parental choice and a mixed-economy of childcare in both early education and childcare (Conservative Party, 1992, p.51). Early education was to continue to be delivered via a market-driven voucher system which parents could use to buy a place at a setting of their choice worth £1,100 per year (Kiernan, Lewis and Land, 1998, p.258). Additionally, and for the first time, Government said that it would ‘...act where a push by government is needed to stimulate the provision of childcare.’ (Conservative Party, 1992, p.51). It was proposed that this would be done through the creation of out of school childcare services which were of ‘particular importance to many working mothers’ (ibid, p.51), and developed in the context of economic development through Training and Enterprise Councils across England and Wales.

Despite childcare in the UK being ‘...the sootiest of Cinderella services’ (Wincott 2006, 286), having no place within the Welfare State, that is not to say that prior to 1997 there were not extensive services for pre-school children. In particular, there was a long tradition of nursery education in many parts of Wales going back to the 1930s, when, inspired by the pioneering work of Elizabeth Andrews and influenced by Froebel's ideas of child development (Thane, 2011, p.6), the first nursery school in Wales was founded in in Ynyscynon, Llwynypia (Andrews, 2006, p.46). Many local authorities – particularly in South Wales - had long been providing early education for four-year-olds and some three-year-olds. By the 1990s, councils such as Cardiff and Swansea were developing local childcare policies which, in some cases, resulted in new local authority-funded childcare services (Ball, Charles 2006, Ball 2010).

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<sup>21</sup> According to Kremer, in Denmark, the full-time mother care model was replaced in the 1960s with an alternative system for the upbringing of children when mothers are at work, through the ideal of highly professional state-supported care with social-pedagogical aims placed centrally (Kremer, 2007, p.211).

In addition, childcare was provided by private day nurseries and childminders whose numbers had expanded in the 1980s in response to the rapid increase in the employment of women with young children (Gregg, Gutiérrez-Domènech, Waldfogel and Gutierrez-Domenech, 2007, p.8). The role of civil society at this time should also not be underestimated as part of what Royles describes as the national institution-building of pre-devolution (Royles, 2007, p.27). In this context, organisations such as Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin and the Wales Playgroup Association oversaw a coming-together of mothers (and some fathers) to set up childcare and early education services that would benefit children in their communities. Furthermore, in 1992 the campaigning organisation Chwarae Teg was founded to break down barriers to women's employment focusing on key issues including childcare (Chwarae Teg, 2012). Chwarae Teg was central in coordinating development in Wales, supporting out of school childcare development with the Training and Enterprise Councils, creating new childcare places with European Structural Funds and coordinating a Welsh Office Under 5s initiative (ibid). Chwarae Teg also developed an all-Wales childcare information service which was computerised, bilingual and, in 1999, even had a web-page (House of Commons 1999, Examination of Witnesses Q 280 - 299).

### ***Childcare and New Labour***

The 1997 election of New Labour heralded a decade of unprecedented development of childcare across the UK, and, according to Kremer (2007, p.213), a remarkable shift in policy. This was apparent in the 1997 Labour election manifesto which re-framed the issue of childcare away from the earlier emphasis on *gender equality to labour force participation*. Childcare was not just about responding to more women in the workforce, but about driving women's increased labour market participation (Skinner, 2003b, p.1).

“Labour's national childcare strategy will plan provision to match the requirements of the modern labour market and help parents, especially women, to balance family and working life.” (Labour Party, 1997, p.18).

Childcare was also framed within a broader discourse in the 1997 Labour manifesto. The manifesto sought to tackle poverty, while at the same time it also introduced a newly formulated concept of social exclusion (Lloyd, 2008; Skinner, 2003b; Lister, 2006; Mahon and Lewis, 2006). Childcare was to be part of a social investment in children as well as the promotion of an adult wage-earner model family (Lewis, 2003, p.220):

“Families without work are without independence. This is why we give so much emphasis to our welfare-to-work policies.” (Labour Party, 1997, p.18).

As well as promising a National Childcare Strategy, Labour proposed scrapping Nursery Vouchers and expanding 'nursery' education through 'early excellence centres combining education and care' (Labour Party, 1997, p.5). This indicated a shift in view towards the notion of an integrated approach to early childhood education and care. However, although over one hundred settings became integrated 'Early Excellence' centres, Moss et al. (2000) argue that an opportunity was lost to create a coherent system of integrated care and education. Accordingly, the split between publicly funded early education and subsidised mixed-market childcare was maintained (Lloyd, 2008).

In 1998, the UK's first National Childcare Strategy was launched as a Green Paper (Cm. 3959, 1998) and within *human capital* and *labour force participation* frames of policy aimed to socially include the poorest children so as to enable their mothers – and according to Lewis (2003, p.220), particularly lone mothers – to take on paid work. Four key barriers identified in the Green Paper needed to be tackled through policy development. First, was a need to increase the availability of childcare through pump-priming grants and other support - particularly in the most deprived areas. Secondly, to increase affordability for low and middle-income earners through a new Tax Credit system. Thirdly, to improve the quality of childcare through quality assurance, improved regulation and inspection. And finally, in order to drive quality through the market, to improve information to enable families to make informed choices (Cm. 3959, 1998). With £435m allocated to the task (Harker, 1998, p.459), most of these proposals were to be taken forward by local fora to represent a mixed-economy of early years needs and interests, and to prepare local development plans. It was clear that the state was to be the facilitator and not the provider of childcare. Within the sector, there was much hope that the distinction between early education and childcare would be 'put to bed' (Harker, 1998, p.461). Indeed, echoing the earlier Labour manifesto comment, the Green Paper said categorically:

“There is no sensible distinction between good early education and care; both enhance children's social and intellectual development in a safe and caring environment.” (Cm. 3959, 1998, p.18).

Yet as Penn (2007, p.195) sets out, the intention to address the divide between education and care was to be illusory as a result of ministerial turf-wars and budget constraints.

A number of authors have identified New Labour's childcare and early education agenda as having a clear anti-poverty focus (Lewis, 2003; Lister, 2006; Lloyd, 2008; Ball, 2010; Penn, 2007; Clarke, 2006a). This has been set within the frame of *human capital* investment in which children were seen as the future, and therefore a long-term investment in the nation's social and economic interests (Lister, 2006, p.3). The idea of human capital investment is closely linked with Giddens' (1998) focus on the

individual as being shaped by personal circumstances, and a redefinition of the rights and responsibilities between the individual and the community. Fawcett et al. (2004) argue that Giddens' ideas were influential in the New Labour approach to social policy, particularly in a 'work vs. care' context. The primary responsibility of the citizen is to work, and the state will support them in doing so and bestow rights upon them. Those choosing not to work may therefore forfeit rights. Only if an individual is incapable or temporarily unable to work for justifiable reasons (such as disability or childbirth), is the state obliged to provide support (2004, p.117). Childcare, like New Labour employment policy, is therefore part of what Giddens (1998) referred to as the 'social investment state' as an alternative to the notion of the Welfare State where the role of the government was to enable, not support. Giddens argues for "...investment in human capital wherever possible, rather than direct provision of economic maintenance" (Giddens, 1998, p.117). As discussed by Fawcett et al. (2004), the discourse that underpinned the New Labour approach to childcare was founded upon a belief that while the traditional welfare state sought to protect people from the market, the social investment state seeks to integrate them into the market (2004, p.41).

The approach has been subject to considerable critique, both contemporary and post-hoc, from a number of perspectives. Penn (2007) takes issue with the underlying principle of prioritising the benefits of women's labour market participation over the universal provision of a publicly funded and integrated system of early childhood education and care. From a gender standpoint, writers such as Crompton (2001), Clarke (2006) and Lister (2006, 2003) argue that the focus on children as future citizen-workers de-couples children from mothers. Clarke, in particular, argues that targeted programmes designed to 'intervene' in the lives of socially excluded families such as Sure Start, Flying Start and, most recently, the Troubled Families Programme (HM Government, 2016) focus on poor 'parenting' which, given that mothers are targeted, becomes shorthand for poor mothering. Social dysfunction, argues Clarke, therefore becomes a gender issue (Clarke, 2006a, p.718). "It is no longer a case of 'women and children first' but 'children (not women) first'" (Lister, 2006, p.2). Others, such as Moss (Moss, Dillon and Statham, 2000; Moss and Lewis, 2006) argue that a discourse that constructs the 'child in need' and targets them with resources, de-individualizes children by assessing their development and behaviour only against standardised measures, thereby identifying as 'abnormal' the child that does not respond (2000, p.251). Moss advocates a pedagogical model of the autonomous child such as that promoted by the Reggio Emilio movement in Italy, focusing on a *social justice* frame that is seen as missing within the dominant New Labour discourse (2000, p.248).

Other developments within the first term of the New Labour administration – such as the Sure Start programme - further embedded their family policies within the *poverty alleviation* frame. Related

frames promoted the *labour force participation* of women - and particularly lone mothers - and focused on increasing *human capital* investment through early education initiatives (Lister, 2003). The cross-departmental Sure Start initiative was a New Labour flagship policy, inspired by the US Headstart and Perry/High Scope programme (Schweinhart, 1993), which through intensive early intervention and support had been associated with higher educational attainment and lower high-school drop-out rates and teenage pregnancies amongst poor children (Currie and Thomas, 1993, p.342). Sure Start used the 'supporting families' language that Lewis (2003, p.221) says typified the 'social investment' discourse. A geographically targeted initiative that aimed to 'break the cycle of disadvantage' (Sure Start 2002), Sure Start set targets for the improvement of children's health and early education while focusing on the employment status of their parents, targeting mothers in particular with an initial budget of £452m over the first three years (Clarke, 2006a, p.700). In Wales, Flying Start was launched in 2006, on the surface proposing a similar approach of early intervention - including childcare and early education.

Thus far, the discussion of childcare policy has focused on policy emanating from Westminster. Until 1998, policy developed in Westminster was delivered in Wales by a small civil service with only minor alterations made in law and policy relating to cultural issues such as Welsh language (Reynolds, 2008). Proportional funding that had been assigned to the National Childcare Strategy in England was allocated to Wales including £14.3 million from the New Opportunities Fund for out of school projects in Wales. Funding for local authorities and other organisations in Wales to support the preparatory work for a Wales Childcare Strategy was delivered from the Welsh Office (Chwarae Teg, 2012).

### ***The Select Committee on Welsh Affairs Third Report 1999: Childcare in Wales***

The Welsh Office published the National Childcare Strategy in Wales (Welsh Office 1998) shortly after the National Childcare Strategy was published in England, and according to the Welsh Affairs Select Committee, it "was a disappointment to many" (1999, p.1). It was criticised for mirroring too closely the English strategy and for failing to take account of perceived Welsh differences in the supply and demand for childcare, and views that had been expressed during previous consultation exercises in Wales undertaken by Chwarae Teg around gender equality and children's rights (Ball, 2010). At the time, the Welsh Affairs Committee was the only elected body capable of scrutinising UK Government policy which impacted on Wales, and was particularly critical<sup>22</sup> of the Strategy (Pyper, 1999). As a

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<sup>22</sup> Committee member MP Julie Morgan said, "...I was actually very dismayed when I read the Childcare document...I could not believe it when I read it. That it was just exactly the same, word for word, as the English document, with just "Wales" put in instead of "England" or instead of the "United Kingdom", and some Welsh examples put in. It just seemed to me that there was no attempt at all to make it a Welsh Childcare Strategy document." (House of Commons 1999 Examination of Witnesses (Questions 421 - 439))



result, it set up an enquiry examining Childcare in Wales, taking evidence from a wide range of stakeholders, visiting childcare settings in Wales and going on a fact-finding mission to Denmark to view what was perceived to be the best childcare system in the world (Welsh Affairs Committee, 1999, para.1). The importance of the enquiry was that coming just before the first elections to the new Welsh Assembly, it comprised and took evidence from a number of actors who were to become Assembly Members, policy advisers and organisational representatives that were to become a part of the ‘policy networks’ that were subsequently formed in Cardiff. Within their number were two women<sup>23</sup> who were to become Cabinet Ministers in the Government of the First National Assembly for Wales, and another who was a Cabinet member in subsequent Welsh Governments<sup>24</sup>. Bowen et al. (2009) would argue that these actors were policy elites whose abilities to traverse *fields* gave them greater influence in policy (Bown, Sumsion and Press, 2009, p.195).

The evidence presented to the enquiry and its report can be assessed through the lens of the policy frames in Table 5 to help identify any divergence from the New Labour discourses that were dominant in Westminster, and to assess emerging ideas in Wales. Ball (2013b) describes the enquiry as “an opening in the political opportunity structure at a crucial point in the history of Wales, shortly before the transfer of power to the National Assembly for Wales” (2013b, p.48).

Evidence was heard from a wide variety of organisations including third sector bodies, industry and employment, local government, and early years and childcare representatives. Written and aural evidence has been coded using Nvivo software for both references to specific issues (eg. the economy of childcare and types of care) and for language, discourse and arguments that express an idea or issue that can be identified within the policy frames. In most cases, the written evidence presented set out the positions of organisations in line with their fundamental objectives. For example, submissions from the Council of Welsh Training and Enterprise Councils, Confederation for British Industry (CBI) Wales and Chwarae Teg primarily focused on childcare as an enabler for increasing *labour force participation*:

“Childcare is fundamental to the economic improvement of Wales and is a major contributor to the development of a flexible workforce.” (1999 Council of Welsh Training and Enterprise Councils written evidence).

While within this – and other – evidence was a focus on women’s workforce participation, this was not, however, in the context of achieving gender parity, but in recognition of the need for new care

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<sup>23</sup> Jane Hutt and Edwina Hart

<sup>24</sup> Jane Davidson

arrangements in what Mahon (2002) terms the 'defamilialization' of care in response to women's rising labour force participation rates and the undermining of the male breadwinner family. For example:

"The CBI believe that reconciling work and family life, increasing the sharing of parental responsibilities between mothers and fathers, and ensuring equality in access to economic activity during mothers' working lives, can be achieved in part through flexible working arrangements and an improved childcare infrastructure." (1999 Wales CBI Written evidence).

Evidence from Equal Opportunities Commission Wales and the Minority Ethnic Women's Network contained the largest number of references to *gender equality*, while also setting out childcare issues relating to the black and ethnic minority community (1999 Examination of Witnesses Questions 80 - 86). However, there was little argument presented that framed childcare in relation to the specific and different needs of women (Ball, 2013b, p.49). Most of the discussion focused on the achievement of gender equality through participation in the labour market.

The evidence from childcare organisations in Wales such as Mudiad Ysgolion Methrin (MYM), Wales Pre-School Playgroup Association (WPPA) and the National Childminders Association (NCMA) can be framed primarily as *human capital* discourses promoting early learning as a route to later attainment (1999 Written evidence). There was also a limited focus in evidence seeking to develop an integrated approach to education and care. The notion of integration was used within the evidence presented to call for 'joined-up' working across institutions, services and professions around childcare, rather than integrated early childhood education and care. This, and the clear absence of evidence from educationalists or the education establishment in the enquiry, is an important indication of the separation of childcare and early education at this point in time (1999 Examination of Witnesses Questions 1-19).

More frequent and strongly-worded arguments regarding the need for childcare to *alleviate poverty* were found in the evidence. In particular, submissions from the Trades Union Congress (TUC) (1999 Wales TUC Written evidence), Children in Wales (1999 Examination of Witnesses Questions 35-51), and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), highlighted the unfulfilled potential that childcare had in moving children out of poverty in Wales (1999 WLGA Written evidence). Allied to this was a sense that the existing Childcare Strategy for Wales did not recognise local needs:

"...the number of children who are living in poverty in Wales is high. We are talking about vast numbers of people. It is not the exception, it is at least one in three children. That means that the whole of the strategy for Wales has got to address this. There are linguistic needs, the

Valley areas and also rural communities. These are very different communities to the models from metropolitan England that I tend to feel a lot of the document is based on.” (1999 Q.3).

The most consistently voiced opinion within evidence to the enquiry was a view of childcare set within *social justice* or *social pedagogy* frames with some important cross-over. In evidence from individuals and organisations from across Welsh civil society, consistent use of language suggesting a holistic approach to meeting children’s needs identifies a common if not dominant paradigm. There were particularly strong statements made by the organisations Children in Wales, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) Cymru/Wales, and Play Wales that set childcare within a rights frame (1999 Q.20-24), and in the context of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). *Social pedagogy* was highlighted in evidence not only from practitioner and childcare provider representatives such as MYM, WPPA, NCMA but also by Children in Wales, WLGA and NSPCC Wales. It was often expressed as a desire for a ‘play-based’ early years curriculum:

“[We] need to ensure that curricula for younger children are play based rather than having an overtly educational bias. Evidence especially shows that too early exposure to an education curriculum can adversely affect the behaviour and performance of children in later life.” (1999 WLGA Written evidence)

That children and young people’s interests featured prominently in the evidence is perhaps unsurprising given that the Waterhouse Inquiry (2000) had heard its evidence and was to report in 2000. Its findings confirmed that decades of widespread sexual and physical abuse of children had taken place in North Wales care homes, and, as set out in evidence from NSPCC Wales / Cymru, there was already discussion about the need for a Children’s Commissioner in Wales to protect children’s rights (1999 Q.66).

Organisations that were not seen as promoting social justice were criticised during the enquiry, again suggesting that this was a discourse emerging in importance. This included Chwarae Teg, the organisation most closely associated with childcare policy in Wales at the time.

“Chair: How would you respond to the criticism that the Government Strategy and your organisation is overly concerned with economic needs and is not sufficiently “child centred”?  
 “Chwarae Teg: It is true that we have received feedback, particularly from the childcare partnerships, that this is the response from many of the agencies who are active in the field. Our view would be that the economic case and child centred quality services are not in any way mutually exclusive and that any development programmes must have quality issues very high on its agenda.” (1999 Q.3).

The enquiry examined the issue of informal childcare, hearing evidence from Chwarae Teg's research (Hanney, Holtermann et al. 1993) that 55 per cent of employed women with children under five in Wales used relatives, neighbours or friends to care for their children. The extent, impact and implications of informal care were mentioned in both written and oral evidence from Children in Wales, Chwarae Teg, NSPCC, Wales TUC, WLGA, Barnados, MYM, and Wales CBI. The Chair of the Committee reflected the commonly held assumption that "...extended families and informal carers play a major part in childcare, particularly for low income families" (Welsh Affairs Committee, 1999 Q.51), but, as Children in Wales stated in their written submission:

"...although there is anecdotal evidence that many parents in Wales use family and friends as the backbone of their childcare arrangements, there is no reliable source of information on the extent, reasons, preferences for the use of this kind of childcare. Also, there is no information on what sort of support informal carers would welcome." (1999 Children in Wales written evidence)

The evidence presented to the Committee illustrates a range of discourses that were being applied to childcare by a range of actors and organisations, defining the nascent policy *field* contested with the various agents using differing strategies to maintain or improve their position. As Thomson writes (in Grenfell, 2014, p.241), in Boudieusian terms, what was at stake in the *field* was the accumulation of capitals and therefore power, which was both a process in, and product of, the *field*. The 'winners' of the game were those most likely to influence policy in the new devolved landscape.

The Welsh Affairs Committee published its report in 1999. The Committee agreed with the three problems identified in the National Childcare Strategy in Wales: that the quality of childcare could be variable, the cost of care was high and out of the reach of many parents, and that in some areas there were not enough childcare places and parents' access to them was hampered by poor information (1999, para.3). They added two further issues — the lack of sustainable funding for childcare projects, and the shortage of qualified childcare staff to meet the planned increase in services.

Analysis of the language of the Committee's report within policy frames emphasises a number of issues that are important in assessing the emergence of some differences in approach to childcare policy in Wales on the eve of the formation of the first Welsh Government, but also highlights inconsistencies in incipient thought. First, the report distanced itself from the 'social investment' approach being taken by New Labour (Chaney, 2006, p.8), whose policies have been framed as *labour force participation* and *human capital*.

“...it is important that economic arguments do not distract us from what is best for children and that childcare is not planned in isolation from other services for children. The Strategy must be child-centred.” (1999, para.4)

However, despite calls from many giving evidence for a childcare system that facilitated compatibility between labour market obligations and parental responsibilities (White, 2011, para.297), the language used in the report does not provide a neat fit within a *social pedagogy* frame as defined by Moss, Dillon et al. (2000). Furthermore, despite calling for a ‘child-centred’ approach to childcare, the Report also recommended ‘...placing childcare in the mainstream of economic development policy’ (Welsh Affairs Committee, 1999, para.4).

Some value-laden statements could also be seen as challenging the emphasis on intervention as a support mechanism for those most in need, as opposed to universalism:

“Families living in poverty, are in particular need of support, but support for families must not be seen as something required only by families at risk.” (Welsh Affairs Committee, 1999, para.5)

The Committee’s report also struck a more conservative tone than was being advocated by New Labour with regards to gender, work and care:

“While the Strategy is clearly motivated by the wish to get parents, and mothers in particular, into work, it is important that parents should continue to have the choice to look after their young children themselves, if they wish. We would not wish to develop a society (as perhaps may exist in Denmark) where there is social and economic pressure for both parents to work outside the home.” (Welsh Affairs Committee, 1999, para.6)

This seems to reflect Mahon’s (2002) neofamilialist model. While looking to modernise in response to the growth in female labour force participation, this model:

“...shares with neoliberalism an emphasis on choice, but here choice is understood as women’s right to choose between a temporary housewife-mother role and labour force participation, rather than as choice among different forms of nonparental care.” (2002b, p.346).

Mahon goes on to say that framing childcare choice as the choice to work or to care mitigates not only against gender equality, but also against class and even racial equality.

In response to a weight of submitted evidence and opinion, the Committee's report recognised the importance of informal carers, whether they were grandparents, friends or informal childminders, and took an inclusive approach in recommending that:

“Local Childcare Partnerships should begin by trying to identify, as far as is possible, the sources of informal childcare and how they can best be accessed and supported. Improving the quality of informal childcare should be a priority in the Childcare Strategy.” (House of Commons 1999, 7).

In addition, the Committee recommended that there should be:

“...an extension of eligibility for the childcare tax credit to informal, but verifiable, childcare arrangements.” (House of Commons 1999, 36).

Finally, the report supported the status-quo in a mixed-economy of childcare, ignoring the calls for universalism as proposed by some who gave evidence. Furthermore, while calling for greater joined-up working across services and structures, it did not call for an integrated model of early childhood education and care.

In summary, the process of the Welsh Affairs Committee's enquiry provided an opportunity for policy actors to set out their positions on childcare policy at an important time in the devolution process. While analysis of the evidence presented shows some unique positionality, the conclusions of the report itself do not always fairly reflect or consistently represent the arguments put forward by the nascent policy actors.

## **The First National Assembly for Wales**

The Government of Wales Act in 1998 devolved a wide range of powers to the National Assembly for Wales, including responsibility for the education and care of young children.

The first election to the National Assembly was held in 1999. Textual analysis of manifestos from the four main political parties show the extent to which childcare and early education issues were represented. Plaid Cymru's manifesto contained the greatest number of references to childcare and early education, including proposals to provide universal free nursery education to all three year-olds. Childcare was to be expanded through mixed-economy provision coordinated by partnerships, and affordability improved within the devolution constraints on demand-side funding. It is not entirely clear where Plaid's commitments placed them within the policy frames, but with calls for universalism

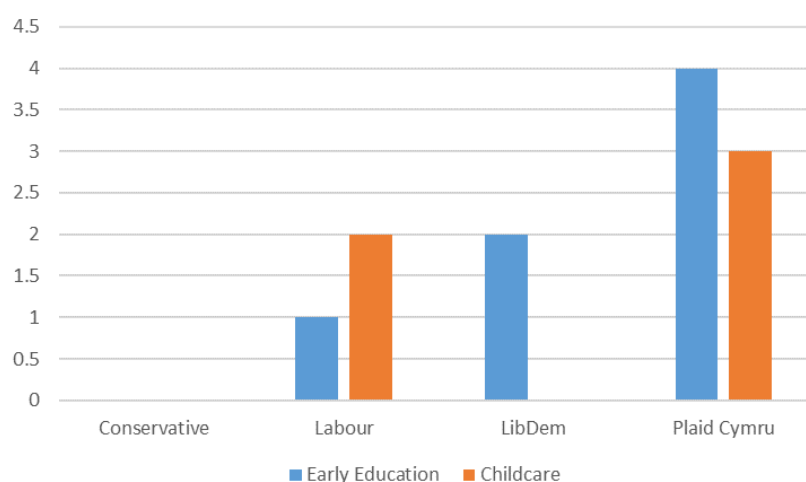
it places them away from the New Labour ‘social investment’ state. A call for more Welsh-medium early childhood services was also prominent in their manifesto. The Labour manifesto also aimed to extend nursery education to “every three-year-old whose parents want it”, and pledged to continue development of a national childcare strategy for Wales to:

“...help to give more parents the chance to take up work, education or training. We will also ensure that children are prepared for learning by the time they reach school, and have access to enjoyable developmental activities out of school hours.” (Labour Party, 1999, p.6)

Thus, it can be seen that around this issue, there was seemingly no difference between Welsh Labour and New Labour, with the statement above representing the *labour force participation* and *human capital* policy frames that were prominent within a ‘social investment’ approach. Also noticeable in the Welsh Labour manifesto was support for the new Childcare Tax Credits that had been introduced by New Labour as a cornerstone of its social investment policies.

The Conservative manifesto contained no references to childcare nor early education. The Liberal Democrat manifesto referred only to extending nursery education to three-year-olds, showing the extent to which early education was a valence issue.

**Figure 4: Wales Election Political Manifestos: Childcare and early education salience (n=13)**



Although Welsh Labour was the biggest party, it did not gain enough seats to form a majority government and instead ruled as a minority until 2000, when it entered into coalition with the Liberal Democrats, who held two Cabinet posts.

As Williams (2003) writes, children and young people’s interests featured prominently in the Assembly’s formative years. According to Birrell (2009b), the Assembly’s spotlight on children and

young people was partly due to the early devolution settlement (Birrell, 2009b), which meant that, unlike some other policy areas, the Assembly had many of the powers needed (in health, education and social services) to allow them to take forward a distinct approach to children and young people's policy. Another factor was that some Assembly Members who were 'key players' in the early Assemblies had a shared interest and experience in issues affecting children and young people (ibid). As discussed in the Select Committee's proceedings, Wales became the first country in the UK to establish a Children's Commissioner, in 2001, and children and young people's issues were also given prominence in early Welsh Government<sup>25</sup> Cabinet structures, with a minister whose portfolio and title centred on children and young people. There was also a Cabinet sub-committee specifically to decide on policies affecting children and young people (Williams, 2003, p.251). Royles (2007) argues that such subject committees provided far greater openings for wider policy networks to be formed than in Westminster (2007, p.42). Civil society organisations such as Children in Wales, Play Wales and the childcare membership organisations such as Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin and the Wales Pre-School Playgroup Association, often had opportunities to be consulted as well as be involved in childcare policy reviews and policy development. In addition, as Chaney et al. (2001) point out, during the early Assembly years there was a particularly weak civil service which often relied on external expertise that included academics, but also provided opportunities for civil society organisations to shape policy (2001, p.63).

in February 2001, following their manifesto pledge to take the National Childcare Strategy forward, Jane Hutt, the Minister for Health and Social Services, established a National Childcare Strategy Task Force (NCSTF) with a brief to develop a new childcare action plan. A large number of those organisations that had submitted evidence to the Select Committee for Welsh Affairs were represented as members of the Task Force, providing a sense of continuity in the policy networks. The NCSTF presented its report in November 2001. The report placed emphasis on putting the needs of children first as part of an extensive programme of measures for children. According to Ball (2013b), this indicated that the organisations and individuals that had best articulated their arguments in the Welsh Affairs Committee proceedings were rewarded with opportunities to engage in policy making. Ball suggests that those concerned with issues such as gender equality, however, were excluded (2013b, p.48). The childcare *field* would seem to have become a site of struggle (Eagleton and Bourdieu, 1992) for authority between the policy actors. Those who had been promoting the social justice and social investment policy positions in evidence to the Welsh Affairs Committee (such as Jane

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<sup>2525</sup> The government was established in 1999 as the *Welsh Assembly Government* by the Government of Wales Act 1998. Until 2007 there was no legal or constitutional separation of the legislative and executive functions, since it was a single corporate entity. The *Welsh Assembly Government* changed its name to *Welsh Government* in May 2011. The term Welsh Government is used throughout this thesis in referring to the executive function.



Hutt and Edwina Hart) had become policy elites, while, according to Ball (2010), actors promoting gender equality frames were excluded. Chaney (2015) argues that, in part, because the Assembly itself had achieved gender parity, there was a presumption that gender equality had been ‘institutionalised’ through policies that did not differentiate between men and women. Yet, as Chaney goes on to say, this ignored the deeply entrenched sex inequality that remained in the labour market and maintained women as the main carers of children (2015, p.10). The Secretary for Health and Social Services in her foreword to the NCSTF report, wrote:

“We continue to recognise that an effective strategy for childcare can improve the opportunities of many people to access employment and training. Women in particular – although not exclusively – are likely to benefit in this respect. An adequate supply of good quality childcare therefore helps to meet the Assembly’s economic aspirations and promotes equality of opportunity.” (NCSTF, 2001, p.2)

The Task Force made a number of recommendations to the new Welsh Government, both for the direction of policy and the practicalities of implementing existing policies inherited from the National Strategy (Welsh Office 1998). The most noteworthy was a call for an integrated approach to early education and childcare that had been muted in the previous enquiry.

“Departments in the Assembly should establish better mechanisms for developing integrated education and care services for children, alongside family support, and adult training in combating social exclusion, child poverty, educational underachievement, welfare dependency and unemployment.” (NCSTF, 2001, p.4)

The Childcare Action Plan (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002) was the Welsh Government’s response to the Task Force’s Report. In many ways, it provided contradictory policy messages, particularly around the integration of childcare and early education provision. This had been the central call from the Task Group (NCSTF, 2004). An integrated approach is implicit within the *social pedagogy* and *social justice* frames of policy, as set out in Table 5, that were seen as underpinning many of the other Welsh Government developments around children and young people at the time (such as an opposition to corporal punishment, commitment to UNCRC, the Play Strategy etc. – see Williams, 2003). The Plan announced a proposal to roll out early education for three-year-olds in Wales “...taking account of the role all sectors, including voluntary sector playgroups, can play in delivering a true partnership approach to early years provision” (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002). It integrated funding streams for children and young people within Cymorth, and announced plans for “integrated children’s centres [that] will provide childcare together with early years education,

supported play, community training, and other family resources.” (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002, p.2). While Integrated Centres provided a model of good practice, and the non-maintained sector was to be able (with limitations) to deliver early education to three-year-olds, there was no challenge in Wales to the fundamental principle of a split system of state-funded early education and subsidised market-led childcare (Lloyd, 2008). This had been identified as a particular problem for parents in Wales (Welsh Affairs Committee, 1999 Q.52) as, with less formal childcare and part-time early education primarily provided by schools with little ‘wrap-around’ care, working parents faced making complicated arrangements, and understandably relied on informal care where it was available to them (1999 Chwarae Teg written evidence).

The Childcare Action Plan (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002) established a new inspection and registration scheme for childcare that underpinned the split, with childcare becoming the responsibility of a new Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002). Early education settings however were to be inspected by the new schools inspectorate, Estyn, that had been established under the Education Act 1992. In England, the education inspectorate Ofsted had been given responsibility for both education and childcare in 2001, which at least held out the prospect of an integrated approach (Bertram and Pascal, 2001; Moss, 2006). In Wales, a clearer separation was manifest, with non-maintained settings that were to provide early education to three-year-olds and childcare to others, facing the prospect of dual inspections (Graham, 2014). This was taking place against the backdrop of increasing policy interest in early childhood across Europe and in other developed countries, as set out in the first OECD ‘Starting Strong’ publication (2001) that highlighted the benefits of an integrated approach.

Supported by funding from the New Opportunities Fund, European Objective One and some new Government funding (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002), the formal childcare sector in Wales expanded during the First Welsh Assembly, although exactly by how much it is difficult to ascertain. Two audits, commissioned by Chwarae Teg and Children in Wales, had been undertaken of registered childcare in Wales, in 1993 and 1996. Their aim was to take stock of progress in developing childcare services, including out of school care and those provided by childminders and day nurseries, and to identify supply and demand in relation to parents’ expectations and labour market needs. The main findings of the 1996 audit were that:

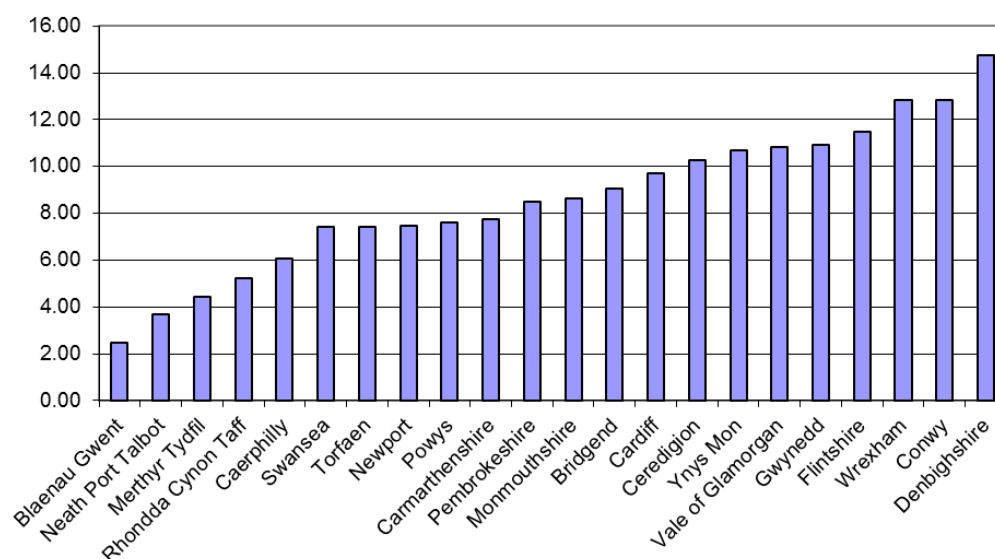
- there had been growth in the number of places between 1991 and 1994 (an additional 1,755 private day nursery places, 6,753 childminders and around 2,500 places in out of school clubs)
- the Out of School Childcare Initiative had played an important part in this

- all the increase had been in the independent sector rather than public provision
- there had been faster growth in Wales than in England, although this was catching-up
- the provision of places in Wales still lagged behind England

(Moss, Mooney et al. 1998)

The first relatively reliable picture of formal childcare provision in Wales can be found in the CSIW regulatory data made available from 2003. Analysis of the data finds that there were 46,709 registered childcare places in Wales, meaning that for every 100 children (aged 0 to 14 years) in Wales in 2003, there were 8.6 formal childcare places. In England, the rate was 13 places per 100 children (although regulatory differences between Ofsted and CSIW in how childcare places were calculated are likely to make this an underestimate). The amount of formal childcare varied across Wales, with less in South Wales, particularly in the areas of traditional heavy industry as shown below.

**Figure 5: Formal childcare places per 100 children aged 0 to 14 (CSIW, 2003 and ONS Census 2001)**



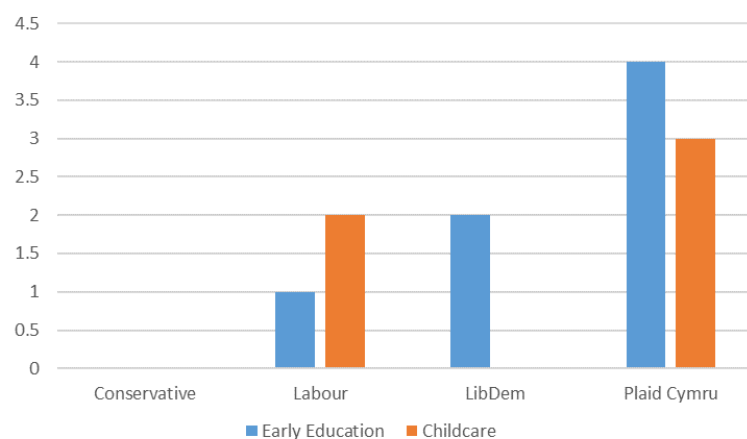
As indicated above, investments were made in creating new childcare places as a result of the Welsh Assembly Government's first Childcare Action Plan (1999), by the New Opportunities Fund and by the UK Government demand-side stimulus provided by the enhanced Childcare Tax Credit. These meant that by 2003, the number of formal childcare places in Wales had risen to 66,980 - an increase of over 30 per cent in three years, with the number of childcare places rising to 12.2 per 100 children in the population (CSIW, 2003 and ONS 2001).

## The Second National Assembly for Wales

The second elections to the Welsh Assembly took place in 2003, and examination of party manifestos finds a similar number of references to the issues as in 1999, with some key phrases used widely across party divides, reinforcing Chaney's (2015) claim of childcare being a valence issue. The commonality extended to the broader policy frame of *social justice* with, for example, the Liberal Democrat and Conservative manifestos talking of services that were 'child-centred' and supporting UNCRC as well as encouragement of Welsh-medium childcare. The Labour manifesto reviewed the party's achievements during the first Assembly and announced plans for "...a network of innovative new Early Years Centres for parents, teachers and other services to work together" (Labour Party, 2003, p.6) as well as "...a new curriculum for 3 to 7 year olds, integrating learning from nursery to primary school and focusing on child development and learning through-play" (ibid p.6). Yet, despite policies that can be categorised as more progressive within the *social justice* and *pedagogy* frames, the Labour manifesto also focused on the importance of childcare in *labour force participation*.

The Plaid Cymru manifesto also talked about an integrated approach to the early years – "The concept of Educare - in which all care is educational, and all education involves caring - will be the foundation our policy" (Plaid Cymru, 2003 p.15).

**Figure 6: Wales Election Political Manifestos 2003: Childcare and early education salience (n=13)**



The consistency and commonality with which most policy for children and young people was being discussed across the political spectrum in Wales, suggests a principal discourse that accepted children and young people as rights holders, and placed the state and its institutions as rights givers (Mahon, 2005). Furthermore, was what Williams (2003, p.250) also described as an inclusive ethos that was manifest in Government being open and accessible, but in policy, an emphasis on partnership working, particularly between the state institutions and a developing Welsh civil society (Royles, 2007).

However, the extent to which childcare was one of those areas of policy that created Rhodri Morgan's 'clear red water' between Cardiff and Westminster seemed unclear at this point in time (Chaney, 2006).

Having won the largest number of seats at the 2003 Assembly election - 30 out of 60 - the Labour party formed a government and, in its strategic agenda 'Wales: A Better Country' (Welsh Assembly Government, 2003b), set out a strong commitment to social justice. The Welsh Government's obligation to children's rights was published shortly afterwards in 'Children and Young People: Rights to Action' (Welsh Assembly Government, 2004). This document took the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as the basis for work with children and young people in Wales, and translated UNCRC into Seven Core Aims (2004, p.2) which were to ensure that all children and young people:

- have a flying start in life;
- have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities;
- enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation;
- have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities;
- are listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised;
- have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional wellbeing;
- are not disadvantaged by poverty.

Embedding a rights-based approach consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child across all areas of government policy relating to children was, according to Ball (2014), a bold move, but one in which childcare policy did not seem to fit easily. Childcare was set within Core Aim 4: Play, Leisure, Sporting and Cultural Activities as 'offering children a good quality play experience, at the same time as their parents are able to take part in work or training' with most of the subsequent references in the document made to out of school childcare (Welsh Assembly Government, 2004, p.44). Early education was covered separately under Core Aim 1: A flying Start in Life. Childcare was not linked with the wider equality agenda, nor was it placed within an anti-poverty frame, as pointed out by Chwarae Teg:

"Within the targets set out for measuring the outcomes of the seven core aims there is no mention of the provision of childcare as a contributory factor – nor is there mention of childcare in the outcomes referring to reducing the numbers of children and young people living in poverty." (Written evidence from Chwarae Teg to the Welsh Assembly Government Childcare Working Group, 2006, p.2)

In line with New Labour's philosophy that with opportunities come responsibilities (Skinner, 2003b, p.3), childcare policies in England, as already discussed, were founded on a belief in citizen-workers being able to move across cultural *fields* by accumulating the economic *capital* that derived from paid work (Lister, 2006, p.5). Childcare was a 'right' granted to parents who worked and therefore attracted subsidies through tax credits (Skinner, 2003b, p.3) - a policy over which the Welsh Government had no control (Birrell, 2009b). In Wales, it was clear that *social justice* had become an important frame in children and young people's policy. However, as Bowen et al. (2009, p.204) argue, there is an inherent conflict in the interface between childcare and children's rights. Childcare was an issue where the ideas of social justice overlapped with the New Labour discourse of *labour force participation* - in which childcare was also placed in Wales, as emphasised in the Welsh Labour manifesto where childcare was in a section titled 'Jobs and Prosperity' (Labour Party, 2003, p.15). The New Labour *social investment state* established the rights and entitlements of parents to access childcare in support of paid work, but according to Bown et al. (2009, p.205), in doing so, the policy can be seen to have silenced the rights of children. As Moss & Lewis (2006) surmise:

"...do children have a voice when it comes to these time (and care) arrangements? Or are they victims of the flexibilisation of the working world and the trend towards the 'adult worker' model." (2006, p.228)

Lister (2006, p.6) discusses this further, saying that while children have moved to the centre of policy within the *social investment state*, they are only valued for what they are to become, rather than bestowed with rights and valued for who they are, as rights-bearing citizens. Rights to Action (Welsh Assembly Government, 2004) did not address this conflict within childcare policy, and it would seem to be a struggle that is embedded within the devolution settlement and one that, as will be discussed further, has yet to be resolved.

A number of writers have argued that implicit within a *social justice* approach to early childhood is an integration of early childhood education and care (Moss and Lewis, 2006; Penn, 2007; Lister, 2006). Both are included within a social pedagogy that emphasises the importance of children's overall developmental needs. The Foundation Phase curriculum as set out in Rights to Action (Welsh Assembly Government, 2004), would seem to have set Welsh Labour apart from New Labour in England in following a *social pedagogy* approach to early learning rather than the *human capital* development associated with social investment (Bennett and Tayler, 2006). However, as White (2011) argues, while those concerned with human capital would not deny the importance of social pedagogy, it is in the implementation that the differences become clear, with a *human capital* frame focused on conformity to an adult agenda rather than a child-led environment that encourages children to explore

(2011, p.294). According to Waldron et al. (2012), underpinning the Foundation Phase is an explicitly developmental approach with a clear focus on the individual child and play-based provision, relating to a constructivist theory of learning for children up to the age of seven (2012, p.v). This is in clear contrast to the Foundation Stage early curriculum in England, which stops at the end of Reception Year (Hawker, 2009). Yet, while Foundation Phase was setting out a distinctive path for early learning in Wales, it was being delivered almost uniquely in schools with no sign of the integrated approach to early education and childcare that had been called for by Plaid Cymru in their manifesto (Plaid Cymru, 2003 p.15), or assured in the Childcare Action Plan (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002).

As promised in 'Rights to Action' (Welsh Assembly Government 2004), the Cabinet Sub-Committee for Children and Young People appointed Dr Brian Gibbons, Deputy Minister for Economic Development and Transport, as the chair of a new Childcare Working Group to develop new initiatives to build on and drive forward the Childcare Action Plan for Wales (2002).

Membership of the Childcare Working Group reflected Chaney's (2006, p.32) and Royles' (2007, p.39) observations that the Welsh Government had adopted a 'partnership governance' approach, in which a range of actors and agencies from within and without government are used to develop policy. The Working Group was drawn from those with childcare expertise in local government, business and the voluntary sector, with additional members being invited to join when it was appropriate to the group's discussions (Dallimore, 2004). A number of members had given evidence to the Welsh Affairs Committee in 1999 and had been involved in developing the Welsh Government's Childcare Action Plan (2002). It was unsurprising, therefore, that the Childcare Working Group's discussions contained similar arguments. The *social justice* frame was foremost within submissions and reflected in the Working Group's report, which concluded that "...the needs of children need to be set at the centre of planning, development and the delivery of childcare services" (Dallimore 2004, 6). Yet also prominent were themes around business efficiency and economic growth, the reading of which would seem to indicate a *labour force participation* frame, while the role of childcare in supporting Welsh language and culture and a discourse linking childcare with child poverty reduction were also highlighted. There was no discussion recorded, nor noteworthy evidence submitted, on the role of childcare in the context of *gender equality*.

The 2004 Working Group discussed and reported on informal care, albeit in the context of discussion around the regulation of 'home carers'. This had arisen as an issue as a legacy of a policy whereby nannies or childminders who worked in a child's home were exempted from regulation (under the 1998 Children Act). As a result, parents employing 'home childcarers' could not claim the new childcare tax credits as these were only available to users of regulated (and registered) care. The

Working Group was asked by the Welsh Assembly Government to look at the issue, and accepting that informal care was an important part of the childcare sector, concluded that:

“Due to the lack of accessible, affordable childcare provision in Wales, informal childcare is often the only childcare option available to parents. But for many parents, informal care is a positive and preferred choice, often being cheaper, more flexible and trustworthy.”  
(Dallimore, 2004, p.15)

The Group’s recommendation was that the state should not become involved in informal arrangements, and that:

“...parents should be given the responsibility to make their own choices regarding care.” (ibid p.15)

However, the Group felt that, if parents were able to pay informal childcarers using a state subsidy, such as the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit, the state then had a responsibility to ensure, as a minimum, that basic child protection could be maintained (2004, p.16).

The Childcare Working Group’s Final Report, entitled ‘A Flying Start Childcare for children, parents and communities’, was presented to the Welsh Assembly Government in March 2005 and contained 77 recommendations. Some of these were responded to immediately by the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning (Welsh Assembly Government, 2005a), but a fuller response was made in the form of a new policy plan for childcare, the Childcare Strategy for Wales, ‘Childcare is for Children’ (Welsh Assembly Government, 2005b). The Strategy set out the basis for policy in Wales and identified what it described as three broad inter-related objectives:

1. To ensure that all childcare supports the developmental needs of children in Wales.
2. To ensure that childcare is widely available and affordable, to enable parents to train or work and thus raise levels of economic activity in Wales.
3. To provide childcare so that parents can have flexibility and choice in how they balance family, work and other commitments within their lives, and in doing so promote gender equality within the workforce (Welsh Assembly Government, 2005b, p.4)

The first objective would seem to indicate childcare as an issue shifting further away from primarily being focused on labour force participation. The Strategy (2005b) claimed that childcare could support all seven Core Aims for children and young people as set out in ‘Rights to Action’, (Welsh Assembly Government 2004). Throughout, it emphasises a ‘child-centred approach’ (2005b, p.9) through



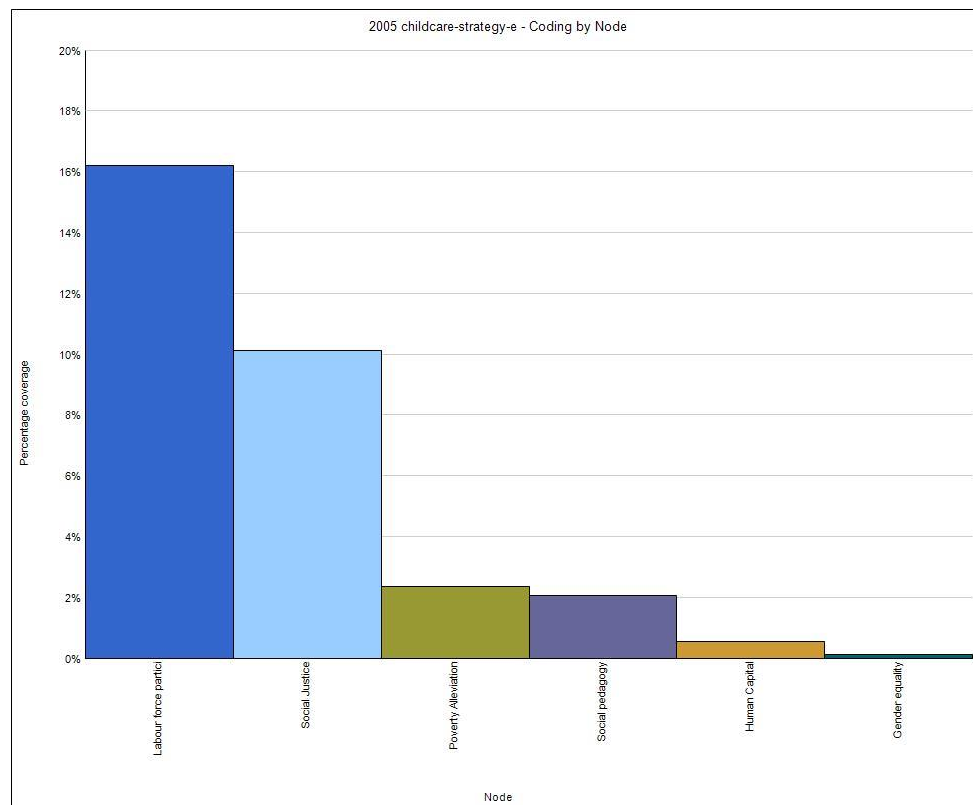
improving the quality of care, and of healthy child development. In this context, perhaps the most important proposal made was for a new programme called 'Flying Start'. Flying Start was to provide free part-time childcare for two-year olds – to be targeted at the most deprived communities in Wales – along with additional health visiting and parenting support. It therefore reflected the *social pedagogy* and *social justice* frames that Ball (2010) suggests had become dominant in Wales in the late 1990s, embodied in the Welsh Government's adoption of UNCRC (Ball, 2010). It was an important departure for the Welsh Government, extending the role of the State in providing childcare<sup>26</sup> rather than early education. In contrast, the Sure Start programme in England, which had similar objectives, maintained a staunch commitment to the childcare market in which public provision was discouraged (Moss, 2012). Flying Start was based on evidence that socio-economic disadvantage is linked to poor parenting skills and subsequently poorer child development (Gridley and Hutchings, 2013, p.255). The most deprived geographical areas in Wales were to be targeted, although, as Gridley and Hutchings point out, many in-need families either lived outside these areas or required further intervention above what was provided. Even with subsequent Welsh Government decisions to extend Flying Start, the targeting method may still fail to reach all high-risk families (2013, p.260).

Yet despite Flying Start setting out a new element of targeted, state-funded childcare, interpreting the content of the 2005 Strategy within the policy frames illustrates the salience of policy discourse and suggests that the primary narrative was not a child-centred *social justice* frame, but still around childcare in the context of *labour-force participation*.

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<sup>26</sup> While Flying Start childcare is provided by non-maintained childcare providers – mainly voluntary pre-school playgroups – it is free at the point of delivery.

**Figure 7: Percentage coverage of policy frames within the Childcare Strategy for Wales, 'Childcare is for Children' (Welsh Assembly Government, 2005)**



Given the content of the political manifestos from the 2003 election, this might come as no surprise. According to Ball (2013b), despite a different rhetorical tone that seemed to focus on children and *social justice*, childcare policy in Wales was not significantly different from the New Labour social integrationist model of ‘worker responsibility’ being followed in England, where, according to Drakeford & Scourfield (2002), a woman’s place was outside the home and in employment (2002, p.632). Flying Start, says Ball, was an initiative that stigmatised poor, working class and lone parents (2013b, p.51), echoing Clarke’s (2006a) view that programmes such as Sure Start and Flying Start concentrated on ‘proximal’ issues in child development such as poor parenting (and particularly maternal behaviour), rather than addressing structural inequalities, including poverty (Clarke, 2006a, p.716).

Finally, in examining the period of the Second Assembly, there were again some signs that the issue of a split-system of early education and childcare was on the agenda:

“Below the age of three, especially, there is no meaningful distinction between ‘education’ and ‘care’, providing that the care uses good practice to support children’s social, physical, language and intellectual development.” (Welsh Assembly Government, 2005b, para.17)

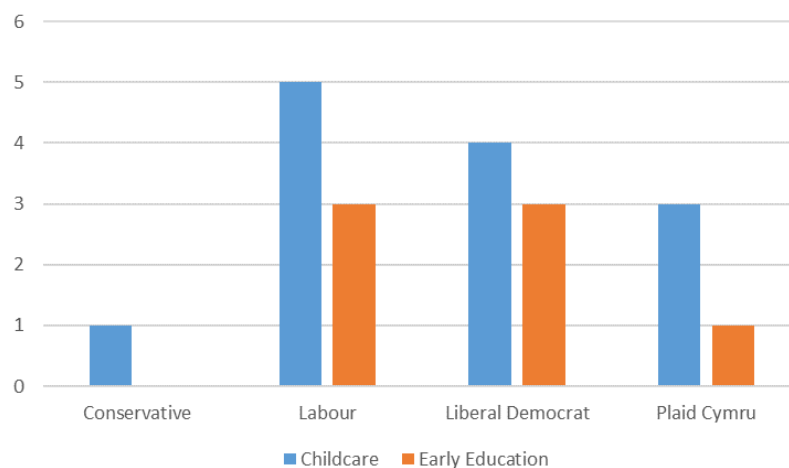
Yet the split system and mixed childcare economy was reaffirmed in the Childcare Act 2006. This was legislation through which the ‘mixed-market’ approach to childcare provision was enshrined in law, and local authorities were given a ‘market management’ duty. In England, it was also used to revise childcare regulation in light of the ‘*Every Child Matters*’ White Paper (2003), enhancing some safeguards while reducing others for older children. Section 22 of the Childcare Act 2006 gave local authorities in Wales a new duty:

“...to secure, as far as reasonably practicable, provision of childcare that is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area in order to enable them to work or undertake education or training leading to work.” (Welsh Assembly Government 2006, 1.2)

To achieve this, local authorities were required to undertake a *Childcare Sufficiency Assessment* on the back of which they should develop strategies to “establish plans to meet the needs of parents” (Welsh Assembly Government, 2006, p.3). Although writing about policy in England, Lloyd (2008) makes the relevant point that the Childcare Act 2006 and much of the discussion that followed has focused on interrogating the workings of the childcare and family support markets, rather than critically analysing the ‘neo-liberal’ policy principles on which childcare services are provided (Lloyd 2008, p.482). Moss describes how English policy on both childcare and early education was increasingly handed over to the market and to competition between a mixed group of providers, including a high proportion of for-profit businesses (Moss, 2012, p.81). As already mentioned, to a much greater extent in England than in Wales, state-funded early education for 3 and 4-year-old children in England was delivered in a mixed-market of schools, day nurseries and pre-school groups, allowing extensive choice in terms of which type of setting parents could use (Lloyd 2008). Underlying policy in England was therefore a clear belief that the competitive market, with its attendant values and assumptions, was the best way to deliver services.

## **The Third National Assembly for Wales**

The third elections to the Welsh Assembly took place in 2007. Childcare and early education increased in their salience within the manifestos, with a total of 20 separate mentions across the four main parties (Figure 8). For the first time, Labour accounted for the most references to childcare and early education, followed by the Liberal Democrats and Plaid Cymru. While mentioned, there was again, little focus on childcare or early education in the Conservative manifesto.

**Figure 8: Wales Election Political Manifestos 2007: Childcare and early education salience (n=20)**

The Labour manifesto placed greatest emphasis on childcare as a facilitator of parental *labour force participation* but with a distinctive view on how it saw delivery - “We will provide targeted support to help lone parents to find and stay in work, including support for cooperative enterprises which provide emergency childcare for women in work” (Welsh Labour, 2007, p.18). References to Flying Start by Welsh Labour also focused on the ‘free childcare’ element rather than the broader pedagogical aims, while *poverty alleviation* was also emphasised. The Liberal Democrat manifesto contained more references to childcare and early education than at previous elections calling for increased part-time provision for two-year-olds through Flying Start, but with a clearer focus on *social pedagogy* than Labour. Reflecting an overall focus on community engagement and development within its manifesto, Plaid’s attention was on delivering a universal childcare offer through mixed-provision. “A Plaid Government will prioritise universal, affordable, and high quality child care, provided by a range of deliverers for every family in Wales” (Plaid Cymru, 2007, p.38), although how this was to be achieved was not clear.

The 2007 Welsh Assembly election resulted in a coalition government being formed by Labour and Plaid Cymru, within an agreed agenda set out in the ‘One Wales’ plan (The Labour Party and Plaid Cymru, 2007). According to Parry (2008, p.117), the ‘One Wales’ document set an agenda that was distinct from UK New Labour thinking across a number of areas, including the NHS, schools, housing, and arguably early childhood policy. As illustrated in the party manifestos, childcare and early education policy was a valence issue in Wales, where there was considerable common ground between Labour and Plaid. ‘One Wales’ seemed to reinforce the *social justice / social pedagogy* discourse that can be seen to have been increasingly dominant since before devolution, and espoused by wider policy networks such as those feeding in to the previous childcare strategy review (2001) and childcare working group (2004). The document states that: “[w]e are determined that very young

children will have every opportunity to develop and grow in a happy, healthy and supportive environment” (The Labour Party and Plaid Cymru, 2007, p.22). This was suffixed with a statement that reflected a Plaid Cymru, more than Labour, manifesto commitment that “...we will commit to progressing provision of universal, affordable childcare, with additional budget support during the Assembly term, including extended free, full-time, high-quality childcare for two year olds in areas of greatest need” (ibid p.22).

With a good deal of consensus around childcare and early years policy, the Coalition embedded progress through fully rolling out the Foundation Phase (Waldron, Rhys and Taylor, 2014, p.2) and Flying Start projects (Morris and Willis, 2013, p.iii). However, it is noticeable that during the four years of Coalition, childcare policy statements and strategy contained fewer references to the rights of the child and UNCRC, and could be seen to be increasingly framed within a *poverty alleviation* discourse. The *Seven Core Aims for Children and Young People*’ became less visible while the Cymorth integrated funding stream was mainstreamed into local authority revenue (Clapham, 2014, p.11).

Nonetheless, according to Chaney (2015, p.9), this period saw an increase in the ‘territorialisation’ of childcare policy across the UK, with parties developing different regional approaches, particularly in the case of Labour, which was in power in England, Scotland and Wales. Wincott (2006b) argues, however, that emerging policy differences reflected fundamentally different starting points and unequal devolution settlements, and highlights differences in the approaches to early years and childcare taken by Scotland and Wales. Scotland, despite having greater devolved powers, struggled to deliver a commitment to an integrated approach to childcare and early education (Scottish Executive, 2003), while Wincott argues that in Wales, early childhood provision was redesigned in quite radical ways through Foundation Phase and Flying Start via ‘*entrepreneurial policy-making*’ which successfully made the most of limited powers (2006b, p.295).

Early childhood policies were in some cases creating some of the ideological ‘clear red water’ (as described by First Minister Rhodri Morgan in 2002, in Mooney, 2006) between Wales and England. State-funded early intervention and a pedagogical early education approach appear to have been singularly Welsh approaches. It might be argued that this reflects the ‘work and family arrangement’ (Pfau-Effinger, Flaquer et al. 2011) in Wales, comprising what Day (2010b, p.264) calls the differing cultural and historical values placed on care (low status) and education (high status). It may also reflect a different relationship between the population of Wales and the state. Mooney and Williams (2006, p.616) describe emerging Welsh social policy as emphasising ‘universalism’ rather than ‘individualism’, creating a tension with the policies emanating from Westminster, but reflecting a national-historical-

cultural terrain that, in the context of childcare, is interwoven with economic and social history and constructions of gender.

“...tensions arise when – at times and in different ways – claims are also made to ‘older’ cultural and national ‘traditions’, for example the oft repeated claims that Scotland and Wales represent more social democratic and collectivist societies, or that Scottishness and Welshness can be equated with social democratic values.” (Mooney and Williams, 2006, p.616)

In 2010, the Children and Families (Wales) Measure became law, giving the Welsh Government greater control over childcare policy, in particular repatriating powers over childcare regulation. The Measure (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010b), provided the primary legislative framework within which secondary legislation concerning the regulation of childcare could be enacted. It also placed in law the requirement for Welsh public bodies to develop strategies to tackle child poverty. The two elements were linked within the Child Poverty Strategy for Wales:

“[to] promote children’s development and help individuals enter the labour market and address household poverty” (Welsh Assembly Government, 2011a)

The first Child Poverty Strategy for Wales, ‘*A Fair Future for Our Children*’ (Welsh Assembly Government 2004), had been based on the Report of the Child Poverty Task Group, which was published in June 2004 (CPTG, 2004). The Task Group had identified improved childcare provision as a route to tackling child poverty, and subsequently made recommendations in relation to the need for flexible employment policies, for the provision of accessible and affordable childcare and quality childcare provision for disabled children. The Child Poverty Strategy for Wales referred to early years services, Sure Start, and Childcare and Family Support as arenas that would form part of the framework to tackle poverty and promote the well-being of children.

The Child Poverty Strategy (2011a) contained further references to childcare and the ‘early years’ that can be set within an overall *poverty alleviation* frame, but was also clear in the text that childcare’s role in tackling poverty was through *labour force participation* and *human capital* investment:

“We appreciate the benefits that childcare can provide for children, but also recognise the wider support that it can provide for families by enabling parents/carers to train or work.” (2011a, p.11)

“...the potential rewards of investing in the early years, not only as a path to improve the life chances of children, but also as an economic strategy. It is therefore possible that the cost of

providing effective interventions can be returned many times over if a disadvantaged child grows into a healthy adult with good skills and the potential for increased earnings.” (2011a, p.22)

Again, tensions are apparent in the ways in which childcare policy was being framed, moving away from the *social justice* and *social pedagogy* policy frames that dominated references to childcare and early education in the first two Assemblies. The social pedagogy frame in particular, had been promoted by policy actors such as Children in Wales and Play Wales (Welsh Affairs Committee, 1999 Written evidence), wherein children are seen as “active subjects and citizens, with rights, able to participate with ease and enjoyment from an early age in both private and public spheres” (Moss, 2006, p.73). In the Child Poverty Strategy (2011a), childcare was portrayed primarily as a way of supporting parents into work and therefore out of poverty. Investment in early childhood development through Flying Start was represented as long-term investment in developing human (economic) capital (Welsh Assembly Government, 2011a, para.22).

The Child Poverty Strategy for Wales (2011a) was closely followed by a Childcare Policy Statement, ‘*Nurturing Children, Supporting Families*’ (Welsh Assembly Government, 2011b). Its title alone highlights tensions that Lloyd (2008, p.479), writing about New Labour policies in England, says are difficult to reconcile. ‘*Nurturing Children, Supporting Families*’ (2011b) framed childcare policy as having twin aims. In the short-term, childcare would help tackle family poverty by facilitating increased parental engagement in the labour market, while in the long-term, poverty could be alleviated through enhanced child development support:

“Our commitment to childcare includes a priority to promote accessible, affordable and high-quality childcare. This offers a dual benefit for employment and children’s development.” (2011b, p.4)

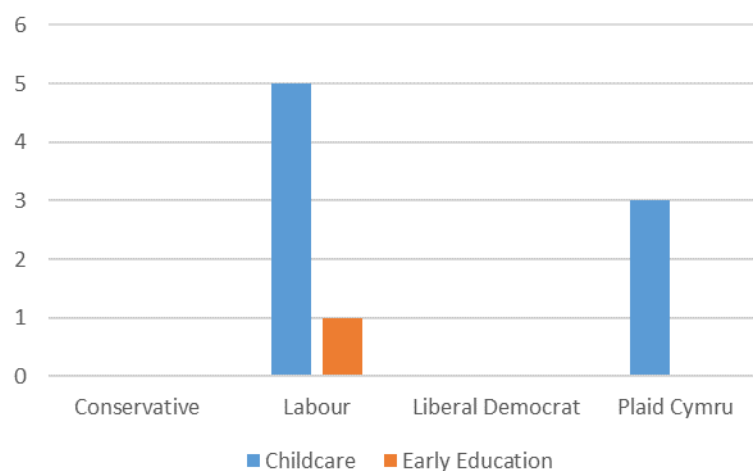
A number of writers challenge whether the policy frames of *social pedagogy* and *labour force participation* are reconcilable within a delivery model that treats early education and childcare differently (Lloyd, 2008; Penn, 2007; Moss, 2012). In Wales, the former was being provided predominantly by the state, with 88% of three-year-olds and almost all four-year-olds in school-based nursery education following the Foundation Phase curriculum (Estyn, 2014). Despite a small amount of state-provided childcare offered through Flying Start, most parents relied on market-led childcare services which, as the Childcare Policy Statement itself set out, were not universally available, unaffordable to many - particularly the poor - and of questionable quality (Welsh Assembly Government, 2011b). Lloyd suggests that a free market approach to childcare that ‘couples’ childcare

and parental employment status is likely to undermine child poverty strategies by promoting separate markets for the poor and the better off (2008, p.488), leading to *increased* social stratification (Penn, 2007, p.201).

## The Fourth National Assembly for Wales

The fourth elections to the Welsh Assembly took place in 2011 and saw a steep decline in the salience of both childcare and early education as an issue (Figure 9). As Chaney suggests, this may have been because, as a valence issue, there was common agreement across the political spectrum that childcare was a public good, thereby creating an uncontested *field* in which there was little to fight about (2015, p.9). Alternatively, the lack of manifesto commitments may have been related to what Drakeford describes as ‘the age of austerity’ following ‘a period of milk and honey in public expenditure’ (2012, p.2) in Wales. More practically, the fact that by the time of the May 2011 election, the One Wales coalition between Labour and Plaid Cymru had already passed an agreed budget for 2011/12 may have reduced opportunities for innovation.

**Figure 9: Wales Election Political Manifestos 2003: Childcare and early education salience (n=9)**



There were no mentions in either the Conservative nor the Liberal Democrat manifestos of childcare nor early education (or related terms), while coalition partners Labour and Plaid Cymru showed a degree of uniformity around an already-planned expansion of Flying Start.

“We will expand the Flying Start programme, offering free childcare to thousands of children in Wales, and increasing its provision through the medium of Welsh.” (Plaid Cymru, 2011)



“In the next Assembly term we will: Double the number of those gaining from Flying Start to 36,000 so that almost a quarter of all children in Wales aged 0-3 will be able to benefit.” (Welsh Labour, 2011)

The 2011 Welsh election was also held against the backdrop to the 2010 UK elections which had returned a Conservative-led coalition which Moss (2012) describes as being set on reducing the role of the state, reforming welfare, extending marketisation and reducing public spending (2012, p.198). Yet Drakeford claims that the Welsh Government had already started planning for a programme of public expenditure restraint, but one in which the principle gains in universal services - including Flying Start – would be protected and even expanded (2012, p.4).

Nonetheless, as previously discussed, devolution meant that Welsh Government held only some of the levers of childcare policy, and in *‘Nurturing Children, Supporting Families’* (Welsh Assembly Government, 2011b), had recognised the limited scope of action that could be taken by Welsh Governments, particularly around the affordability of childcare. In 2010, the UK Government reduced the level of demand-side support that parents could receive to help pay for childcare from 80 per cent to 70 per cent, and the rate at which tax credits were withdrawn as incomes rose also increased (HM Treasury 2010), which inevitably made childcare less affordable, particularly to families with low to middle incomes. The Welsh Government’s own research (Welsh Government, 2012) found that in 2010–11, there were 11,800 lone parents (55 per cent) and 9,500 couples (45 per cent) in Wales that were benefitting from the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. A reduction in support would therefore particularly affect single households with children - and hence more women than men, as women make up the majority of lone-parent households (2012, p.9). Welsh Government’s ability to tackle childcare affordability was limited to encouraging joined-up working principles as typified by the Families First programme, and improving information about entitlements to parents (Welsh Assembly Government, 2011b, pp.15–16). On the supply-side, it had been acknowledged in a report to Cabinet (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010a) that childcare provision was often insufficient to support parents moving into work, and therefore have any substantial impact on child poverty. The role of local authorities in managing their local market (under their 2006 Childcare Act duties) was reinforced, but there was no strategy or funding to develop new formal childcare places (Welsh Government 2011d). In fact, the number of childcare providers in Wales and the number of childcare places relative to the population of children declined between 2008 and 2011 (Dallimore 2013).

In 2013, a new ten-year plan was published by the Labour Welsh Government setting out their priorities for childcare, albeit this time in the wider context of a plan for young children and their families. *‘Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan’* (Welsh Assembly Government,

2013) aimed to provide a more holistic approach to support across health, social care, education and childcare focused on ‘...improving the life chances and outcomes of all children in Wales’ (2013, p.3).

Neither ‘*Building a Brighter Future*’ nor the preceding Childcare Policy Statement mentioned informal childcare, yet at this time there was increasing evidence (Smith et al., 2009) of the extent to which it was used – by the majority of parents in Wales. According to Rutter and Evans, use of informal care was also increasing as household finances were squeezed by stagnant wages and rises in formal childcare costs (Rutter, Evans and Rutter, 2012). Nonetheless, ‘*Building a Brighter Future*’ was important in maintaining a Welsh Government position on childcare that contrasted with changes in England, where the free-market agenda was being pushed further by the coalition government with plans for increased marketisation of childcare services, reductions in regulation, and the removal of the role of local authorities in managing and supporting local childcare markets (Department for Education, 2013). As Moss (2012) observed, in England, marketisation of childcare services was the hegemonic discourse and ‘the only game in town’ (Moss, 2012, p.200). In Wales, however, formal childcare provision was, and always had been, more mixed. A strong voluntary sector, represented by organisations such as Mudiad Meithrin, Wales PPA and Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids’ Clubs, along with state-provision of services such as Flying Start, often compensating for the inability of the market to deliver in economically deprived areas, gave formal childcare in Wales a different flavour but, more importantly, informal childcare remained the preferred or only option for many families (Smith et al., 2009).

While ‘*Building a Brighter Future*’ (Welsh Government 2013) cannot be seen as signalling any major change of policy, it promised to review a number of areas, including the regulation and inspection of childcare services. In October 2013, an ‘independent review of childcare and early education registration, regulation and inspection’ was commissioned by the Welsh Government and reported in June 2014. The central recommendation of the ‘Graham Review’ was that early education and childcare in Wales should be integrated within an Early Childhood Education and Care approach as described in the OECD ‘*Starting Strong*’ papers (OECD, 2001; Bennett and Tayler, 2006; OECD, 2012). The group was constituted as a ‘Task and Finish’ group by the Welsh Government, a structure which Royles describes as being extensively used as the main formal channel by which civil society organisations were engaged in policy formulation (2007, p.55). Many of the same organisations that had contributed to previous policy consultations were involved in discussions (Graham, 2014, p.91), so, unsurprisingly, conclusions were similar. Evidence to the Welsh Affairs Select Committee in 1999 had called for an integrated approach in Wales to early education and childcare, as did the 2001 National Childcare Task Force (NCSTF, 2001). The 2002 Childcare Action Plan seemed to reflect the

approach by promising that ‘...integrated children’s centres will provide childcare together with early years education, supported play, community training, and other family resources’ (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002, p.1). Yet the policy was not extended beyond funding one centre in each local authority. In 2003, Plaid Cymru were calling for an integrated approach of ‘educare’ while the 2004 Childcare Working Group that informed the 2005 Childcare Strategy for Wales stated clearly that there is no meaningful distinction between ‘education’ and ‘care’ for pre-school children (2005b, para.17). However, the Graham Review (2015) went further and set out how an integrated model of ECEC could be achieved. The Report proposed a new Single Quality Framework to cover education and care from birth to seven; an integrated regulatory regime combining the National Minimum Standards for Daycare and Childminding and the Foundation Phase; a single inspection regime replacing CSSIW and Estyn; and single Ministerial responsibility for Early Childhood Education and Care (Graham, 2014, pp.5–9). While the role of childcare and early education in poverty alleviation was recognised in the Review, the stated principles placed the approach clearly within *social justice* and *social pedagogy* frames.

“The working group has taken as our starting point the Welsh nation’s commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. All of our deliberations have started from the point of examining what each child needs, recognising that early childhood is the most important stage in determining life chances [and that] a consistent, whole child, needs led approach to learning and child development across all early childhood services is essential (Article 6, para 2) ensuring the child’s health, well-being safety and security (Article 24).” (2014, p.18)

The Graham Review (2014) was perhaps another chance to transform what Moss (1999, p.229) had described some fifteen years previously as an incoherent confusion of services into an integrated and coherent early years provision. The Graham Review focused on the six major issues that Moss (1999) identified as being required to transform early childhood services. These comprised identifying what constitutes early childhood: administrative integration; staffing; funding; the type of early childhood services that [Wales] needs; and identifying critical questions about early childhood and the purposes of early childhood services (Moss, 1999, p.229).

The Ministerial response (Lewis and Griffiths, 2015) to the Graham Review (2015) was encouraging but not emphatic. It set out a number of changes, including joint Estyn and CSSIW inspections, a new childcare and early years workforce strategy, a single quality framework and an extension to regulation of settings for children over the age of eight. Yet the Review’s over-riding challenge to the split system of childcare and early education was not addressed. Instead, the major childcare policy

development in 2015 was the *Parents, Childcare and Employment* scheme launched with £10m of Welsh Government and EU funding to cover the cost of childcare while parents undertake training to gain the skills they need to get a job (Welsh Government, 2015b). With a target to help 6,400 economically inactive parents into work or training over three years, the *Poverty Alleviation* and associated *Labour Force Participation* policy frame in which childcare was predominantly set could not be clearer.

As before devolution, the wider childcare policy network in Wales - as represented on the Task and Finish Group for the Graham Review (2015) - promoted pedagogical and social justice discourses in relation to childcare that they believed could only be realised through an integrated model of provision. Yet official texts and policy documents continued to promote childcare within an anti-poverty frame, through increasing labour market participation and economic competitiveness. As Moss (1999) concludes:

“Viewed from the perspective of these imperative projects, young children are understood primarily as dependents of their parents, in need of 'childcare' to enable their parents' employment, and as 'becoming' school children and economically active adults.” (Moss, 1999, p.235)

The situation at the end of the Fourth Welsh Assembly finds a highly fractured picture of the way in which childcare - and the related *field* of early education - is organised, delivered and governed. Most obvious is the distinction that is institutionalised between early education and childcare, but there are also availability and funding inequities and differences in the quality of services (Graham, 2014). Indicative of the lack of coherence to childcare and early years were the various statements made during the run-up to the 2016 Assembly elections. Echoing the commitments made during the previous year's Westminster elections, the two largest political parties in Wales promised:

“As the party for parents we will provide 30 hours free childcare a week for the working parents of three and four-year-olds, 48 weeks of the year.” (Welsh Labour, 2016, p.6)

“A Welsh Conservative Government will: Treble the free childcare allowance for parents of three to four-year-olds from 10 hours to 30 hours a week.” (Welsh Conservatives, 2016, p.26)

And, not to be outdone:

“[We will] begin the process of creating a national childcare service for Wales with free full-time nursery places for all three-year-olds by the end of this assembly term.” (Plaid Cymru, 2016, p.6)

The statements show either a lack of understanding regarding the difference between the 'free' early education entitlement and childcare which is currently paid-for, or reflects in the minds of politicians – and perhaps the electorate – an unnecessary distinction. More importantly, it would seem to express an unwillingness – or lack of ability – to build on distinctive and progressive early childhood policies that better reflect the core values of social justice that many commentators agree is a hallmark of Welsh social policy (including Osmond, 2011; Nicholl, 2011; Chaney, Hall and Pithouse, 2001; Drakeford, 2005). Alternatively, it might represent a disconnect between the commentators and manifesto writers.

## Conclusions

What emerges from the historical narrative of childcare policy in Wales since devolution, are four main points that require further discussion. First, a collectivist approach to Government and innovative policy networks does not necessarily result in a collective ideology nor a common discourse. The evidence presented suggests that childcare policy is a contested *field* where power is unequally distributed not only between policy actors and between the actors and Government, but between governments in Cardiff and Westminster. Secondly, while there has been some fluctuation in the policy framing of childcare over the course of devolved government in Wales, childcare policy is predominantly framed as an *anti-poverty* measure with the accompanying frames of *labour-force participation* and *human capital* building most prominent. Thirdly, despite calls from the main political parties, by key actors and policy networks, and consistently in policy documents, the aspiration for an integrated approach to early childhood education and care remains unfulfilled. Finally, the contestation of childcare policy, its political and ideological framing and the incoherent delivery model all can be seen to have implications for the place of informal childcare in Wales.

Returning to the first point of discussion, that Welsh Governments have six times established policy groups to advise on childcare as well as the Children & Young People's Committee and Early Years Sub-Group, illustrates what a number of commentators such as Royles (2000, p.71), Chaney (2001, p.35) and Birrell (2004, p.21) have described as a 'collectivist' way of working. The engagement between the policy elites and wider policy networks suggest a new participative political culture in Wales, characterized by partnership, inclusiveness and openness. Yet, as highlighted by Ball (2013), not all groups had equal access to such structures, while Bown et al. (2009) highlight further problems with the approach. They contend that groups or policy networks are a crucial component of the policy process, drawing on loyalty, cooperation and influence to assert their policy agendas and therefore legitimise the process. Nonetheless, through this struggle, groups "coalesce and divide over policy

proposals” resulting in policies that are not ideologically pure but contain ‘cannibalised’ products of multiple influences and agenda (2009, p.196). Certainly the size of Wales lends itself to a relationship between policy makers and civil society that is closer, but Drakeford (2005, p.501) suggests a deeper connection, saying that Welsh policymaking relies on co-operation, rather than competition, as the route to better services, and prefers ‘voice’ over ‘choice’ in engagement. According to Williams (2003), the working methods of the Welsh Government had been extremely conducive to the involvement of outside bodies with ease of access to Assembly Members, Ministers and civil servants a major contributory factor (2003, p.250). Evidence from the way that childcare policy has developed shows that Welsh civil society - as represented by a range of third sector groups - had substantial access to policy makers and have been included in the formulation of policy. Nicholl (2011) suggests, however, that the closeness of the relationship can be problematic. Organisations such as Mudiad Meithrin, Wales Pre-School Playgroup Association or Children in Wales benefitted considerably from the increase in public spending that accompanied the first decade of devolution, which has led to concerns about the independence of the sector. As Nicholl asks, to what extent can the sector really dissent from the views of those providing their funding (Nicholl, 2011, p.12)?

On the second point, the process of policy framing used in this chapter has highlighted considerable fluctuation in the way in which childcare has been presented in Wales as both ‘child centred’, reflecting a social justice and pedagogical approach – evident across a range of policies and initiatives such as Flying Start, Foundation Phase, Play Policy etc. – and as a measure to tackle poverty. Chaney (2015) argues that childcare policy in Wales has been decreasingly framed in terms of social investment, with economic considerations increasingly at the heart of policy. Lister (2006, p.6) describes this as reflecting a new paradigm of childhood that increasingly positions children as ‘becomings’ rather than ‘beings’. Childcare and education policies become more oriented towards employment priorities – current and future – than towards children’s well-being (2006, p.6). The evidence supports a move away from social justice and pedagogical frames of discourse and ideology that are often seen as child-centred. Writing in 2014, the Children’s Commissioner for Wales claimed that:

“...the Welsh Government seems too comfortable with its status as an international children’s rights trailblazer. Vital services aimed at children and young people are in danger of being lost, due to the lack of vision and leadership from the Welsh Government.” (Children’s Commissioner for Wales 2014)

This was highlighted again before the 2016 Assembly elections by the National Children’s Charities in Wales joint statement:

“Since devolution there has been a strong tradition of child-centred policy making in Wales. However, in recent years the policy response to children has been fragmented and focus has wavered. There is fragmented governance of issues affecting children at national and local levels which jeopardises children and young people’s outcomes.” (National Children’s Charities 2016, p.1)

Yet, it has been argued by Lloyd and Potter (2014, p.4) that public investment in childcare and early education can meet single, double and even triple policy rationales in certain circumstances. High quality social pedagogically focused provision that promotes children’s socio-emotional and intellectual development has been shown to have long-term impacts that reduce and prevent poverty. Nonetheless, they go on to say that this is seen as difficult to achieve within a market-led childcare sector (2014, p.80). As shown through policy analysis, the role of childcare as an anti-poverty measure in Wales is predominantly set on short-term gains rather than long-term public investment. Tackling poverty through increasing parental employment, and therefore household income, is foremost in current policy with schemes such as *Parents, Childcare and Employment* (Welsh Government, 2015b) increasing demand-side subsidies for parents using market-led childcare services. Yet, there is some evidence that childcare and early years provision delivered by the market is expensive for parents, and frequently of poor quality - the factors that are most likely to make the greatest difference to children, and families in poverty (Penn, 2011a; Lloyd and Penn, 2012; Lloyd and Potter, 2014; Moss, 2012). Furthermore, the rise of in-work poverty in families with children has demonstrated that work can no longer be seen as a guaranteed route out of poverty (Bradshaw, 2016, p.57). While Welsh childcare policies say they place the needs of children at the centre, the reality is that, as Moss et al. (2000) describe, children are seen as the responsibility of parents, maternal care is the norm, and childhood is a sequence of development towards adulthood and the production of citizen workers (Moss, Dillon and Statham, 2000, p.240). This has implications for the place of the child in society, the roles of parents (and mothers in particular) both as parents and workers, and the relationship between the state, childcare providers and childcare consumers.

Even the seemingly reformist policies have been subject to critique, with evaluations and reviews casting doubts on their ability to initiate long-term change that might tackle poverty and improve social justice. In her 2014 review of the Foundation Phase, Iram Siraj-Blatchford (2014) found many weaknesses in implementation across both maintained and non-maintained settings. The weaknesses, she says, threaten the underpinning pedagogy and practice of Foundation Phase that ought to lead to improvements in the quality of provision for children and their families (2014, p.3). As Drakeford (2012, p.20) maintains, the Foundation Phase should provide the greatest support, and improve the

long-term life chances for those children living in poverty. Flying Start's credentials have also been challenged in the National Evaluation (Morris and Willis, 2013) which found that "There was no statistically significant difference between Flying Start and non-Flying Start areas in terms of child cognitive and language skills, their social and emotional development and their independence/self-regulation" (2013, p.7). Meanwhile, Clarke, drawing on Levitas (2004), provides a more fundamental critique of a policy that at national level promotes a view of mothers as principally responsible for children's development and well-being, and risks sliding into a moral discourse of social exclusion that blames parents for poor outcomes (2006b, p.1).

The evidence collated in this chapter has consistently emphasised the third point of discussion, namely the unfulfilled aspiration for an integrated approach to early childhood education and care in Wales. According to Moss et al. (2000), maintaining the division between publicly funded early education and a subsidised market in childcare for working parents, is likely to increase child poverty by preventing the development of an equitable and universal childcare system. The very first Welsh Government Childcare Action Plan (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002) set out a principled line towards a unified system of early childhood education and care, a position that has been reiterated many times since but without action to match the commitment. Most recently, the Graham Review (2015) and the Foundation Phase Stocktake (Siraj-Blatchford, 2014) called for Wales to move towards a joined-up and seamless system for the early years. The ability of Welsh Government to achieve the major system change called for, however, is restricted by the powers it has in Welfare policy. Specifically, the supply-side subsidy of childcare that supports a market-driven approach was introduced by New Labour and continued by the Coalition and then Conservative UK Governments (Lloyd, 2015, p.145). Additionally, according to Lloyd and Potter (2014, p.82), raising income taxes to the level needed to deliver a universal offer seems an unlikely prospect.

A further narrative is highlighted by Penn (2007, p.198), who describes administrative changes in England that saw the national responsibility for all services to children transferred to the Department for Education and Skills, and, in the early years, a common curriculum and common staffing and training policies instituted and enforced by national inspection regimes. Despite considerable pressure from wider policy networks and groups, none of these administrative changes have taken place in Wales, where ministerial responsibility for childcare lies with the Minister for Communities (with responsibility for poverty), while pre-school learning – including Foundation Phase – sits with the Education Minister. Furthermore, in Wales, a regulatory regime split exists that results in some 700 childcare settings falling under both, and consequently being subject to dual inspections (Graham, 2014, p.18).



Finally, this chapter has emphasised the importance of informal care in Wales within policy discussions and political manifestos. While policy has concerned itself primarily with formal care and early education, it implicitly engages patterns and use of informal care. The perceived importance of informal childcare in Wales was highlighted in evidence presented before devolution to the Welsh Affairs Committee in 1999:

“Our view is that we need to take account of reality, that is, many close relatives are caring for children (and many more may do so if there were to be payment) and these and the children for whom they care for could benefit from training and support to improve the quality of care. This proposal would be particularly valuable in low income areas where childminders are in short supply because few people can afford to pay the cost and also in rural areas where formal childcare is more difficult to organise.” (Evidence from Children in Wales to the Welsh Affairs Committee, 1999)

Informal care again featured in evidence to the 2004 Childcare Working Group, and was acknowledged in the 2005 Ten Year Childcare Strategy for Wales, while the 2011 Childcare Policy Statement seems to incorporate informal care within its scope:

“The childcare market in Wales is delivered through a variety of means: informal childcare provided by the family, more formalised childcare settings delivered by the maintained sector, and provision from the private, voluntary and independent sectors.” (Welsh Assembly Government, 2011b, p.15)

Yet, despite this importance, the impact of Government childcare policies on the patterns and use of informal care – and on informal carers themselves - is generally not considered. Informal care is more often portrayed in policy documents as a positive choice made by some parents, rather than a necessity born out of the short-comings of formal care and early education policy. In the context of the previous discussion points arising from this chapter’s analysis of childcare policy in Wales, some important conclusions can be drawn regarding informal childcare.

First, study of policy papers and evidence finds that an ‘inclusive’ approach to policy-making through wide-spread engagement in Wales has rarely, if ever, considered the views of parents using informal care, nor informal carers themselves. Where their voices have been heard, it has been via a minority of third party advocates. Known research around informal care in Wales has comprised a small study examining grandparent care in Wales (Ivens and Akhtar, 2011), a community-focused study of

informal care in Gwynedd published by Plaid Cymru MP Hywel Williams (Jones, 2004), and some references to informal care in the childcare surveys undertaken by Bryson (2006) and Smith (2009).

The policy frames deployed around childcare can be seen to have important consequences for informal childcare. In particular, the *anti-poverty* frame in which childcare is a requirement to enable parents to participate in labour outside the home creates inequities as set out by Brannen and Moss (1998, p.236). They describe three groups of parents. These comprise: those who are 'work poor' - the diminishing group of 'male-breadwinner' families, where children are likely to spend most of their time at home with their mothers, with a gradual introduction, around the age of three, into free part-time care and education. A second group includes those who are 'work rich' - with both parents in full-time employment, and who can afford to use high volumes of formal care, or a combination of formal and informal care. A third, growing, group is also described, where two parents are employed, but one is in part-time employment where flexible or precarious work means that informal care is often the only option.

The split system of education and care in Wales is also likely to impact on the use of informal care. Evidence shows that where early education and care is universally available and free, it is taken up by a large proportion of families across the social spectrum (White, 2011, p.287). However, where provision is marketised, even uptake of free provision is lowest among the poorest children (Lloyd and Potter, 2014, p.79). Market-led childcare that exists primarily to support parental employment also suffers from being inaccessible to many parents, particularly those in deprived areas where market-failure is common (see Appendix Figure 19) leaving informal care as the only option. Even in the areas where Flying Start is available, research shows that the limited childcare offer has little impact on parents' employment (Morris and Willis, 2013, p.26), calling into question the effectiveness of the policies in shaping the dispositions and *habitus* of individuals as intended.

While the picture of childcare policy might seem to be of incoherent policy intentions and fractured services, there are opportunities for reform. The first step would be to clearly articulate a unifying rationale for state investment in childcare, and to resolve conflicts in the deployment of policy frames. Childcare can be deployed to tackle social injustice through both alleviating poverty by supporting parental employment and providing high quality experiences for children that improve their life chances, but provision needs to be of high quality and available to all. Currently, the distinction between the care and education of young children inherent within split responsibility within government, regulatory bodies, local authorities and in professions, prevents a coherent approach to policy development and implementation.

The challenge in Wales is to develop childcare that is more widely accessible and affordable. The 2016 manifesto commitment from Welsh Labour – if followed through - provides an opportunity to increase the current amount of state-funded ‘free’ universal childcare / early years education. If funded, it would provide a practical context in which to develop integrated services that will both enable children to access more high quality early learning, and make working parents’ lives easier. However, it needs to be qualified within a clear aspiration towards universalism and integration.

## Chapter 5    The childcare *field* in Wales

One of the starting points for this research is the identification in narratives of childcare in Wales (eg. Prichard 2013) of the prevalence of informal care as a factor in the economic participation of women in the labour market and the development of formal childcare services. Yet, as discussed in Chapter Three, there is little empirical evidence for these claims. What research activity there has been examining informal care has been UK-wide, using mainly data from England (Evans and Rutter, 2011; Rutter, Evans and Rutter, 2012; Bryson et al., 2012), inferring that the situation in Wales is no different.

In this chapter a contemporary Welsh data set is analysed. The purpose of the analysis is first to present a picture of informal childcare use in Wales, focusing on the questions of who uses informal childcare, how much they use it, when they use it, and what factors might be predictive of their usage. Secondly, it seeks to establish whether or not childcare in Wales can be treated as a distinct *field*, or whether the patterns of informal childcare are no different than in other parts of the UK. If it is different, there is some justification for the evidence to inform childcare policy in Wales. Thirdly, a large data set with a significant number of characteristic variables enables questions to be asked about whether parental decision-making is predominantly a rational choice based on calculations that maximise the expected utility of the decision, or whether as Bourdieu (1977) proposes, individualities, dispositions and capitals such as language, education, economic status etc. form particular *habitus*es that predispose agents towards informal childcare. Finally, is an interpretivistic element to the investigation of the quantitative data implicit within a mixed methods approach, where it is used to look at phenomena from different perspectives to provide an enriched understanding (Jick, 1979 in Feilzer, 2010).

In this chapter, data analysis relates to both the second and third levels of Bourdieu's methodological approach to *field* analysis (Bourdieu, 1992, pp.104–107). At the second level, the structural topography of the *field* itself is mapped and the positions of those who occupy the *field* are considered. In Level three, the actual individual agent within the *field* of informal childcare is analysed, with a focus on their background, trajectory and positioning (Grenfell, 2014).

In the first part of this chapter, data from the National Survey for Wales (NSW) is interrogated to investigate the size, extent and characteristics of the informal childcare *field* in Wales, focusing on the following questions that contribute towards an understanding of how the *field* is bounded:

- How is the practice of informal childcare in Wales accounted for?

- What are the common characteristics of families that practice informal childcare?
- Are there any distinctive aspects to informal childcare practice in Wales?

In the second section, individual features of the characteristics of individuals are investigated in so far as they relate to the *field*. In other words, it is interesting to know how particular attributes have value in terms of the *field* as a whole. Implicit within the Bourdieusian approach, and in Level three of his approach to *field* analysis, is the examination of the relationship between the *field* and the *habitus* of those who inhabit it, as expressed in terms of capitals and their configurations (Grenfell, 2014). The possession of capitals – economic, social and cultural - may increase or decrease the propensity of families to use informal care – either as a preference or out of necessity. I ask, therefore, what relationships within the data tell us about the association between the external factors that restrict or enhance choices and the conscious choices of behaviour made by parents. The quantitative data may not be able to explain to us fully why actors have made particular choices, but it does allow some basic testing of theoretical approaches to this *field*. If rational choice theories are correct, analysis of data should produce strong correlations that highlight a specific set of structural determinants within the context of financial, market and physical constraints. If Bourdieusian theory provides a better explanation, then individual agents' decisions will be seen to be driven by their *habitus* and accumulation of capitals within the particular time and place. Therefore, within the data, correlations between social and cultural variables and childcare choice is examined alongside economic evidence.

### **The childcare *field***

In this first section, mainly descriptive data are presented to consider what the NSW tells us about the childcare *field* in Wales, and, in particular, to identify differences in practice between families that use formal care, informal care or both. Contained in the data are indications as to the extent of childcare use across the population, the broad types of care use, and the hours of care being received set, first, against the characteristics of the child involved.

Of the 3,429 parents or guardians interviewed for the NSW with a child under the age of 14, just under a half (49.3%) said that they “need to arrange for [child] to be looked after so you can work, study or go on training.”

Subsequent questions in the NSW focused on one (randomly chosen) child within the family, with details collected about the types of childcare used. ‘Informal care’ is defined by the NSW as care that is provided by ‘family and friends’ and sub-divided as either ‘free’ or ‘paid for’. Respondents were told to exclude any care provided by a spouse, partner, other [non-resident] parent or step-parent.

Just over 40% of all families in Wales in this sample were found to use informal childcare, while only 21.3% said they use formal childcare. This suggests that informal care is used by 126,300 families at any one time in Wales. This further suggests that there may well be a similar number of people providing informal care<sup>27</sup> in Wales. Unpaid family and friends most commonly provide childcare, with other individual types of care being used only by small numbers of households. Over 3% of all households surveyed said that they paid family or friends to care for their child. While a small proportion of the whole, the figure represents almost a tenth of all informal care users. Payment for informal childcare was not followed up in the NSW, but it is discussed in the literature and in analysis of interview data in the next chapter.

The overall picture of childcare use in Wales according to the NSW therefore differs quite significantly from that consistently reported recently in England (Huskinson et al., 2014, 2016), where 79% of all parents use some form of childcare (60% in Wales) with two-thirds using formal childcare (21% in Wales) while 40% use informal care (40% in Wales). Some of the difference in formal childcare use may be explained partly by early education policy differences between Wales and England, and in part by definitional issues between surveys. As discussed in Chapter Three, most three and four-year-olds in Wales receive their free early education entitlement in schools. NSW did not include school-delivered early education provision within the childcare module, and therefore the 'free' nursery provision option only applies to a small number of children receiving their early education in non-school settings. Population and school-roll data<sup>28</sup> shows that 88% of all three-year-olds in Wales are enrolled in maintained school nursery classes. This compares with 36% in England, despite 96% of 3-year-olds benefitting from some funded early education. The majority of three-year-olds, a significant number of four-year-olds, and an increasing number of two-year-olds in England are therefore in 'childcare' settings, while their Welsh counterparts are in school (the issue of differentiation between childcare and early education is discussed in detail in Chapter Three).

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<sup>27</sup> Wheelock & Jones (2002) found that informal carers cared for an average of 1.74 children.

<sup>28</sup> StatsWales (downloaded 08/15) Source: CSSIW registration and regulatory business system December 2014 and Estyn (August 2015).

Table 6: Use of childcare (NSW 2014/15)<sup>29</sup>

Use of childcare	Count	%
<i>Base: All families with children aged 0 to 14</i>	3429	
<b>Ever needed to use childcare</b>	<b>1690</b>	<b>49.3%</b>
<b>Using childcare (for selected child)</b>	<b>2078</b>	<b>60.6%</b>
<b>Uses Informal childcare (selected child)</b>	<b>1383</b>	<b>40.3%</b>
Family or friends (paid)	118	3.4%
Family or friends (unpaid)	1295	37.8%
<b>Uses formal childcare (selected child)</b>	<b>695</b>	<b>20.3%</b>
Playgroup / crèche	92	2.7%
Nursery / pre-school (paid for)	236	6.9%
Nursery / pre-school (free)	44	1.3%
After school club or school breakfast club (paid for)	178	5.2%
After school club or school breakfast club (free)	91	2.7%
Child minder	128	3.7%
Nanny or au pair	11	0.3%
Babysitter who comes to your house (not friend or family)	13	0.4%
Holiday clubs or schemes	60	1.7%
Any other type of formal childcare (not friend or family)	18	0.5%

### ***Child characteristics and informal care***

The results of a correlation showed that there was a negative association between the use of childcare and the age of the child  $r = -.083$ ,  $p < .001$  (Table 7). The use of formal childcare was highest amongst the nought to four-year-old age group (32.1%) and lowest among twelve to fourteen-year-olds (3%). Informal childcare use was more consistently found across the age bands. While use of formal childcare declined significantly - particularly after the age of eleven - a third of older children were still being cared for informally. This is shown in more detail in Table 7. While use of all types of childcare declines as children get older, informal care use is still relatively high as children become teenagers. The analysis is consistent with Smith et al's (2009, p.27) finding that children's take-up of informal care did not vary by age, although the NSW data shows a far greater decline in formal childcare use (3%) once children get to secondary school compared with Smith et al.'s figure of 26% (2009, p.26). While differences are likely to be accounted for by methodological factors, policy may also play a part. In 2003, Welsh Government introduced 'Community Focused Schools' which, with the support of charity 'Continyou Cymru', encouraged secondary schools to develop stronger community links, especially in the realm of after school clubs and activities (Welsh Assembly Government, 2003a). Until the policy

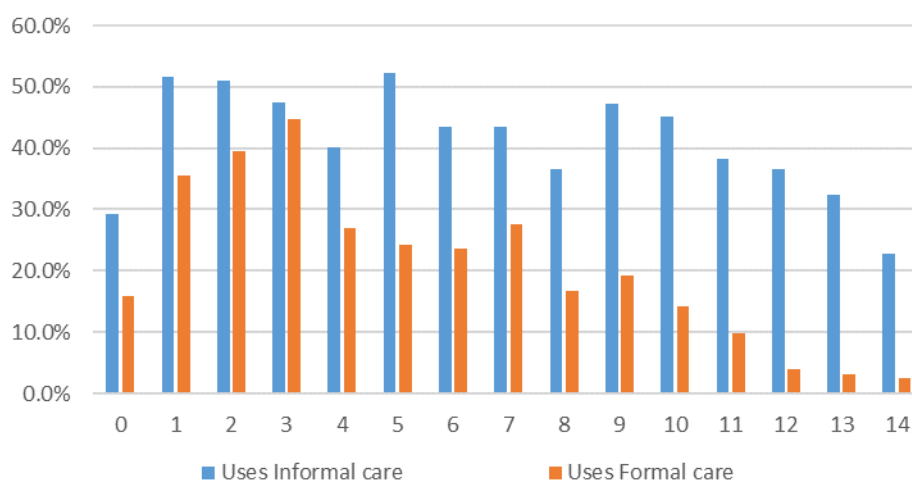
<sup>29</sup> Figures for use of different types of care will add up to more than 100% as some parents use multiple care types.

was modified to focus more on attainment, childcare or 'childcare-like' services were available in many secondary schools in Wales (Egan, 2007).

**Table 7: Use of childcare by age group (NSW 2014/15)**

Use of childcare	Age Group				Sig.
	0 to 4	5 to 11	12 to 14	All	
	%	%	%	%	
<i>Base: Sample of children of respondent families</i>	1236	1370	722	3328	
<b>Uses Informal childcare</b>	<b>43.5%</b>	<b>43.8%</b>	<b>30.6%</b>	<b>40.8%</b>	<.001
Family or friends (paid)	4.4%	3.6%	1.5%	3.4%	>.005
Family or friends (unpaid)	40.0%	41.6%	29.4%	38.3%	<.001
<b>Uses formal childcare</b>	<b>32.1%</b>	<b>19.5%</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>20.6%</b>	<.001
Playgroup / crèche	6.1%	0.9%	0.1%	2.7%	<.001
Nursery / pre-school (paid for)	17.4%	1.5%	0.0%	7.1%	<.001
Nursery / pre-school (free)	3.3%	0.2%	0.0%	1.3%	<.001
After school club or school breakfast club (paid for)	1.9%	10.9%	0.4%	5.3%	<.001
After school club or school breakfast club (free)	0.9%	5.3%	1.0%	2.7%	<.001
Child minder	5.4%	4.2%	1.0%	3.9%	<.001
Nanny or au pair	0.2%	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%	>.005
Babysitter who comes to your house (not friend or family)	0.3%	0.5%	0.0%	0.3%	>.005
Holiday clubs or schemes	0.3%	3.6%	0.7%	1.8%	<.001
Any other type of formal childcare (not friend or family)	1.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.5%	>.005

**Figure 10: Use of formal and informal childcare by age (NSW 2014/15)**



n=3,328. p<.001 Age cohort range 175 to 291

Use of any type of childcare was highest amongst two and three-year-olds, with over 90% of children in these year groups using either formal or informal childcare. It is likely that this can be attributed to two factors: the entitlement to 'free' childcare or early education through Flying Start or nursery education at this age, and the greater requirement for childcare in general, by parents with children



in the pre-school age-group. Age three is the only point at which formal childcare in Wales comes close to being used as prolifically as informal childcare.

The number of children in a household has previously been shown to be an important associative factor in childcare use and choice (Huskinson et al., 2016; Bryson et al., 2012; Rutter, Evans and Rutter, 2012). Setting it first against whether parents ever need childcare, there is a clear trend visible for households to need childcare less when they have more children (Table 8). This is true for both all households with children, and for households where all adults are working. We see the same phenomenon more clearly when examining actual use of care (Table 9) finding the trend following the same linear trajectory for all types of childcare. This might seem counter-intuitive, in that it would be logical for parents with more children to use more childcare to juggle different arrangements across age groups, and use more informal care in particular, as costs for formal care rise for two, three or more children. Rutter & Evans (Rutter, Evans and Rutter, 2012) found a similar pattern in their data suggesting that it might be explained by lower maternal employment rates in families with more children. This is an area where qualitative evidence might provide greater insight.

**Table 8: Childcare need by number of children in household (NSW 2015)**

		Number of Children					Sig.
		1	2	3	4	>4	
Childcare - Ever need childcare	All Households	59%	51%	38%	26%	n/a	$\Phi_c = .193 \rho < .000$
	<i>n</i> =	1,001	1,535	585	220	88	
	Working households	71%	60%	46%	36%	n/a	$\Phi_c = .203 \rho < .000$
	<i>n</i> =	770	1,233	398	127	48	

**Table 9: Childcare need by number of children in household (NSW 2015)<sup>30</sup>**

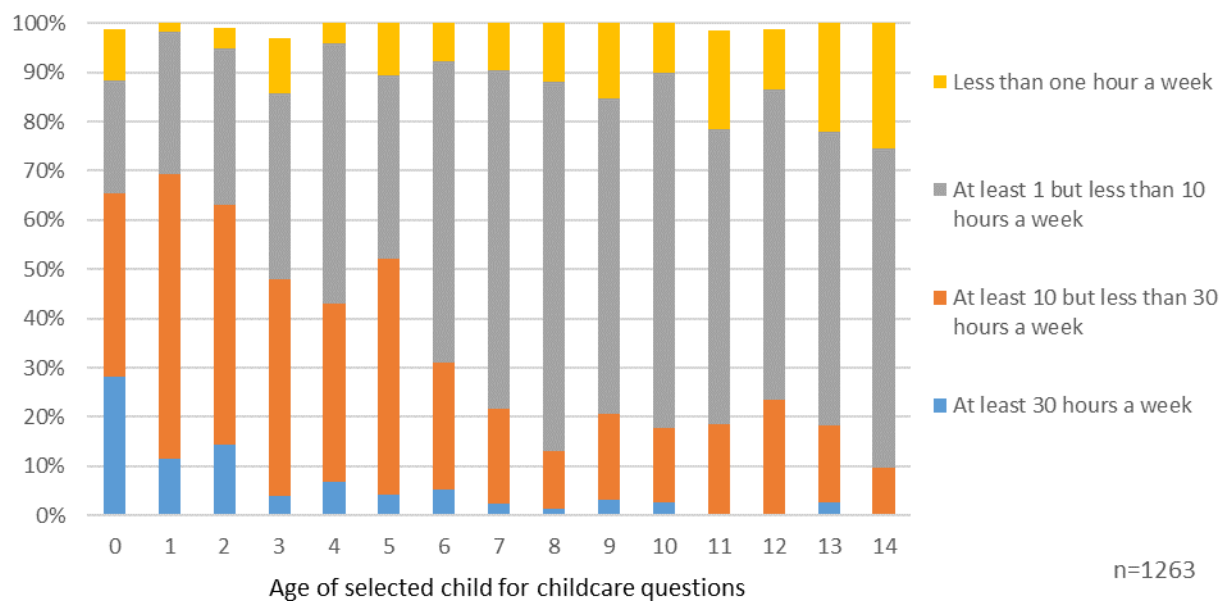
	Number of children				sig.
	1	2	3	4	
Uses any childcare	59%	51%	38%	24%	$\Phi_c = .161$ $\rho < .001$
Uses informal childcare	48%	42%	33%	20%	
Uses formal childcare	27%	21%	12%	9%	
<i>n</i> =	1001	1535	586	220	

Respondents who said that they used informal care (to support work or training) were asked, on average, how many hours per week family or friends looked after the [selected] child. Most commonly, children receive informal care for between 1 hour and 10 hours per week (51%), but more than 30% of children receive informal care for between 10 and 30 hours per week. Only 6% of children receiving informal care do so for more than 30 hours per week, with 7% receiving less than an hour per week. Figure 11 illustrates how the amount of informal care is distributed across the age range of children, showing the relative importance of informal care for younger children – particularly babies under the

<sup>30</sup> Columns will add up to more than 100% as households use more than one type of childcare.

age of one. Up to the age of five, longer hours (over 10 hours per week) of care provided by family and friends are common. Informal care would seem to be most important to families during the pre-school years, and particularly during the first year of life. This may be because of the high cost of childcare for this age group of children, where childcare settings must adhere to higher ratios, it may be due to new parents not having the knowledge or confidence to access formal care, or it could be because parents feel babies are most vulnerable and are unwilling to entrust them to 'strangers'. All of these explanations are mentioned in the literature, but the phenomenon would benefit from further investigation using the qualitative data to establish patterns and connections with other characteristics.

**Figure 11: Average number of hours per week family or friends look after child by age (NSW 2015)**



The gender of the selected child was recorded by interviewers but using a bivariate correlation test was not found to be a significant ( $p > 0.05$ ) factor in whether formal or informal care was received. Similarly, a bivariate correlation test found no significant relationship ( $p > 0.05$ ) between the number of hours of informal childcare received by children and their gender.

## What users of informal care have in common

We therefore have a broad description of informal childcare use in Wales which proposes that it is a widespread practice in which financial exchanges are rare, and is most commonly received by younger children within smaller families. We also find that formal childcare is used by only a small proportion of parents. In this next section, a range of independent variables is examined against the use of informal childcare to examine the presence and strength of any association.

The literature examined in Chapter Three would seem to suggest that, when choosing childcare, parents are influenced by a range of external factors and social characteristics. The NSW contains a large number of variables regarding the characteristics and dispositions of respondents which, alongside the childcare module, enables relationships and correspondences between individuals, groups and structures to intersect and operate within the *field* to be examined. If rational choice theories are correct, analysis of data should produce strong correlations that highlight a specific set of structural determinants within the context of financial, market and physical constraints. If Bourdieusian theory provides a better explanation, then individual agents' decisions will be seen to be driven by their *habitus* based on accumulation of capitals within the particular time and place. Therefore, within the data, correlations between social and cultural variables and childcare choice will be examined alongside economic evidence. Measuring the various capitals is, however, not an exact science, but recent work by Savage and Devine (2013) among others, provides some helpful guidance which has been utilised to justify the extraction of particular variables from the NSW in relation to cultural, social and economic capitals. These capitals have been used as headings in the following sections to group variables and frame the investigation.

### ***Measures of Economic Capital***

Savage et al. (2013) used three measures within their definition of economic *capital*, incorporating household income, household savings and housing (2013, p.9). The NSW provides indicators that can be used similarly to measure the economic *capital* of households. These include data about household ownership, rental tenure, the employment status of household members, and a derived variable that summarises economic status and average childcare affordability within their area. In this section, these variables are tested to examine the strength of association between these indicators and the use of formal and informal childcare, as well as comparing results with previous research to identify any differences between Wales and the rest of the UK.

A number of studies suggest that less affluent families may use more informal childcare as they are less able to afford formal provision (Brown & Dench 2004; Gregg et al. 2005; Naumann et al. 2013). However, this view is challenged by Rutter and Evans (2012) who concur with data consistently presented in the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents in England (Huskinson et al., 2014, 2016) showing that the likelihood of using informal childcare decreases down the income bands, with parents with the lowest incomes *least* likely to use informal childcare. In Wales, Smith et al. (2009) found a relationship between the take-up of informal care and income, but said that it was not significant given the small sample size.

A bivariate analysis shows the strength of relationship (using Cramér's  $V$ ) as ( $\Phi_c=0.347$ ) between childcare and employment. Among the 2,179 households interviewed within the childcare module where all adults were in work, 65% said they needed childcare. In households where only some adults were in work, the proportion needing childcare dropped to 26%, while in non-working households, just 14% said they needed childcare. When asked about the use of childcare, among households where all adults were in employment, 81% said they used childcare, with more than a half using informal care. Formal childcare was only used by just over a quarter of such households.

**Table 10: Use of childcare by household employment status (NSW 2015)**

	Derived variable - Whether household members in paid work, either full-time or part-time		
	All working	Some working	None working
Uses any childcare	81%	30%	16%
Uses informal childcare	53%	22%	11%
Uses formal childcare	28%	8%	5%
<i>n</i> =	2179	815	428

Columns add up to more than 100% as respondents could choose more than one answer.  $\Phi_c=.347$   $p<.001$

Examining housing, NSW provides a variable derived from questions to respondents regarding house ownership and rental tenure. This produces data that discriminates between owner occupiers and rented households. There is a growing literature (Hills, Cunliffe, Gambaro and Obolenskaya, 2013; Ball, 2013a) that uses tenure as an indicator of economic *capital*, with Ball (2013) going so far as to say that owner-occupiers are a social category in themselves, forming class fractions that have considerable political significance and a polarizing effect on society between themselves and those who rent. Examining the relationship between housing tenure and need for childcare amongst all households, a strong association is revealed ( $\Phi_c=.220$ ) as shown in Table 11.

**Table 11: Need for childcare and housing tenure – All households with children (NSW 2015)**

		Derived variable - Tenure (grouped)				<i>All rented</i>	Total
		Owner-occupied	Local authority	Housing association	Private rented		
Childcare - Ever need childcare	Yes	57%	29%	29%	43%	36%	49%
	No	43%	71%	71%	57%	64%	51%
<i>n</i> =		2129	384	220	684	1288	3417

$\Phi_c=.220$  and  $p<.001$

Compared with renting households, where 36% ever needed to arrange childcare, were 57% of owner-occupied households. Within rented households, there was no difference found between those renting from local authorities and housing associations, but those in private rented housing were

much more likely to need childcare. The strength of this association is unsurprising given other data (ONS 2011) showing that in two-thirds of households in social housing, the head of the household is not in paid work.

Controlling the data for employment status (Table 21) unsurprisingly finds a greater need expressed for childcare across all tenures, but little strength of association ( $\Phi_c=.064$ ). This is evident in the considerably narrower gap between different tenure types. In particular, the difference between owner-occupiers and renters may be almost insignificant given the margin of error for this sample.

**Table 12: Need for childcare and housing tenure – working households with children (NSW 2015)**

		Derived variable - Tenure (grouped)				<i>All rented</i>	Total
		Owner-occupied	Local authority	Housing association	Private rented		
Childcare - Ever need childcare	Yes	66%	55%	59%	63%	60%	1,411
	No	34%	45%	41%	37%	40%	764
<i>n=</i>		1632	124	61	358	543	2,175

$\Phi_c=.064$  and  $p>0.005$

Inspection of the relationship between use of any childcare amongst households that say they use childcare to support work or training finds higher use among owner-occupiers and private renters compared with those in social housing. Examination of formal care use shows a similar pattern. The proportions of households using informal care, however, suggests that there is little or no difference between housing tenure and whether they choose to use informal care.

**Table 13: Use of childcare and housing tenure (NSW 2015)**

		Derived variable - Tenure (grouped)				<i>All rented</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
		Owner-occupied	Local authority	Housing association	Private rented		
Uses any childcare		57%	27%	29%	43%	64%	$\Phi_c=.227$ $p<001$
	<i>n=</i>	2130	384	220	684	1288	
Uses Formal Childcare		25%	10%	7%	18%	13%	$\Phi_c=.150$ $p<001$
	<i>n=</i>	2130	384	220	684	1288	
Uses Informal Childcare		54%	44%	54%	52%	50%	$\Phi_c=.75$ $p<.005$
	<i>n=</i>	2130	384	220	684	1288	

The NSW provides a summary indicator of household economic status using the 'Acorn' classification system ([www.acorn.caci.co.uk](http://www.acorn.caci.co.uk)). The system is a multivariate statistical classification technique for establishing whether individuals within a population fall into different groups by making quantitative comparisons of multiple characteristics. As such, ACORN is a form of 'Big Data' analysis (Bail, 2014), in which it is argued social fields can be identified and bounded using large data sets and algorithms in ways that have previously been difficult, if not impossible, through empirical social research (Bail,

2014, p.470). However, there are also considerable problems in such systems as they inevitably do not include information about the social context in which data are produced, and the definitions and categories used are situated in a particular time and place and inevitably can be highly contested (Biernacki, 2012). In the iteration of the ACORN classification used in the NSW, the system classifies individual households as ranging from 'Hard Pressed' to 'Wealthy Achievers' based on data that includes housing cost, types, tenure, family structure, incomes and benefits data. This provides a potentially useful and novel variable with which the strength of association between economic *capital* and childcare use can be tested, although, given the criticisms, results should not be examined in isolation.

Amongst all families with children there are clear trends visible in both directions between the need for childcare and ACORN economic classification, with more affluent families having a greater need than those with fewer economic means (Table 14). Amongst those households where all adults are in work, the *need* for childcare is higher but less stratified, supporting the commonly found result (Smith et al., 2009; Huskinson et al., 2014, 2016; Hinds and Park, 2000) of greater need for childcare across all classifications in families where adults are all working (Table 15).

**Table 14: Need for childcare by economic classification – all households with children (NSW 2015)**

		Derived variable - ACORN classification					Total
		Wealthy Achievers	Urban Prosperity	Comfortably Off	Moderate Means	Hard Pressed	
Childcare - Ever need childcare	Yes	57%	64%	55%	43%	34%	1,685
	No	43%	36%	45%	57%	66%	1,734
<i>n</i> =		562	141	1143	1141	432	3,419

$\Phi_c = .172$  and  $p < .001$

**Table 15: Need for childcare by economic classification – employed households with children (NSW 2015)**

		Derived variable - ACORN classification					Total
		Wealthy Achievers	Urban Prosperity	Comfortably Off	Moderate Means	Hard Pressed	
Childcare - Ever need childcare	Yes	66%	77%	65%	64%	56%	1,410
	No	34%	23%	35%	36%	44%	764
<i>n</i> =		444	100	838	634	158	2,174

$\Phi_c = .203$  and  $p < .005$

Comparing those households who use childcare to support work or training by ACORN classification, some associations between affluence and use of childcare can be seen. Overall use of childcare and use of formal childcare is shown to increase with affluence, but informal care remains relatively steady as economic *capital* falls, according to this data. The exception, as shown in Table 14, Table 15 and Table 16 are the 'Wealthy Achievers' whom it can be seen have both less need for childcare and use less childcare – particularly formal care - than their near 'Urban Prosperity' neighbours. This result is

similar to that found by Bryson (2012), where childcare use was found to rise against income bands except the highest (£45k+).

**Table 16: Use of childcare to support work by ACORN classification – working families (NSW 2015)**

	Derived variable - ACORN classification					
	Wealthy Achievers	Urban Prosperity	Comfortably Off	Moderate Means	Hard Pressed	Total
Uses any childcare	85%	90%	82%	77%	66%	2,180
Uses informal childcare	47%	38%	47%	46%	51%	1,022
Uses formal childcare	32%	46%	28%	23%	18%	610
<i>n</i> =	444	120	839	634	158	1,766

Φc= .126 p<.005

If there is a correlation between the use of informal childcare and economic *capital* in Wales, then it should be evident when examining childcare use and deprivation data. NSW data for each household can be linked to the Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (Welsh Government, 2016) to provide the quintile for the ranking of the deprivation score for the lower-level super output area in which the household is located. The Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) is a measure of relative deprivation made up of eight separate domains (Income, Employment, Health, Education, Access to Services, Community Safety, Physical Environment and Housing). The WIMD is widely used for informing the targeting of resources and policy initiatives to areas of particular need, but according to Deas et al. (2003), there are limitations that must be acknowledged. They question first the robustness of the ‘raw’ data which come from a range of sources with limited quality appraisal. Secondly, they question both the assumptions and methodologies through which specific data are allocated to domains (Deas, Robson and Wong, 2003, p.889). Nonetheless, Deas et al. (2003) commend the IMD approach for developing a useful tool to quantify deprivation. For the purpose of assessing economic *capital* in this section, the income domain alone is used. A further analysis using other WIMD domains is used later in this chapter.

Examining households which say they ‘ever need childcare’, we see a trend visible amongst households for a greater need for childcare from those in the least deprived areas. Amongst households where all adults are working, however, levels of deprivation seem to have little association with whether or not they need to use childcare. Given the relationship previously found between employment and childcare need, and between employment and deprivation, this is unsurprising.

**Table 17: Need for childcare by Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation – Economic Domain (NSW 2015)**

		Derived variable - Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation - income score (in quintiles)					sig.
		Q1 Most deprived 20%	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5 Least deprived 20%	
Childcare - Ever need childcare	Employed families	60%	64%	71%	60%	68%	$\Phi_c = .142 \rho < .001$
	<i>n</i> =	335	425	457	487	476	
	All families	39%	44%	53%	54%	58%	$\Phi_c = .089 \rho < .001$
	<i>n</i> =	719	763	688	634	624	

Examination of actual childcare use among households where adults use childcare to support work or training is presented in Table 18. Here it can be seen that there is a discernible trend across the deprivation quintiles for the use of any childcare and for formal care use, with large ranges between the most and least deprived (+/-20% and +/-17%). However, the proportion of households in each quintile using informal care is more consistent, with only a +/-10% range of difference between the least and most deprived areas.

**Table 18: Use of childcare by Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation – Economic Domain – working families (NSW 2015)**

		Derived variable - Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation - income score (in quintiles)					Sig.
		Q1 Most deprived 20%	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5 Least deprived 20%	
Uses any childcare		38%	44%	53%	54%	58%	$\Phi_c = .148 \rho < .001$
	<i>n</i> =	720	763	688	634	624	
Uses informal childcare		34%	37%	45%	42%	44%	$\Phi_c = .85 \rho < .001$
	<i>n</i> =	720	763	688	633	625	
Uses formal childcare		13%	15%	22%	25%	30%	$\Phi_c = .154 \rho < .001$
	<i>n</i> =	720	763	688	634	625	

Finally, in this section, is an examination of whether the affordability of childcare bears any relation to the use of childcare. Whether parents *feel* they can afford childcare, as opposed to economic calculations that decide whether they *can* afford childcare, has been discussed by Bryson (Bryson et al., 2012) and in the House of Lords Select Committee Report on affordable childcare (2015). While a relative term, perceptions of affordability have been seen as a more accurate measure in predicting the behaviour of parents as part of a 'multi-dimensional' concept, encompassing access, flexibility and quality as well as cost (Family & Childcare Trust evidence to House of Lords, 2015). The use of this measure is further discussed by Huskinson et al. (2016; 2014), and presented as an important factor in examining decision-making in their analysis of childcare in England. It is therefore a valuable measure with which theories of rationality can be examined in the context of the other variables in this section, and in subsequent regression analyses.



NSW asked parents how easy or difficult it was for them to afford childcare. Overall, 54% of households found it fairly easy or very easy to afford childcare, as opposed to 46% of households who found it fairly, or very difficult ( $n=653$ ).

Comparing affordability with childcare use (Table 19) shows that in Wales - as in England (Huskinson et al., 2016, p.164) - households only using formal care are more likely to feel that it is affordable compared with those using only informal care. In finding a similar result, Bryson et al. (Bryson et al., 2012) suggest that this may be because parents using informal care are understandably less informed about costs, or that, because they use only informal care through an active choice based on values, any cost would be too high (Bryson et al., 2012).

**Table 19: Perception of affordability by childcare use (NSW 2015)**

	Childcare - How easy or difficult is it - to afford childcare for child				
	Very easy	Fairly easy	Fairly difficult	Very difficult	n=
Uses formal childcare only	10%	38%	35%	16%	285
Uses informal childcare only	9%	29%	42%	19%	325
Uses formal and informal childcare	12%	46%	27%	14%	364
					$\Phi_c = .109$ $p < .05$

Where households use both formal and informal care, data from the NSW suggests them to be the group that find childcare to be most affordable – or least unaffordable. It might be that this group using a combination of care is well-informed about costs, but able to manage costs through a combination of care types. This contrasts with Bryson et al.'s (2012) finding that parents using a mixture of formal and informal childcare think that formal childcare is less affordable than those using only formal childcare. This is a topic where qualitative data may provide some further understandings.

In summary, the NSW data provides some interesting insights into the extent to which economic *capital* can be seen to be associated with childcare need and use. It is clear that employment patterns within households are an important factor in families' need for childcare and their use of childcare. Where all adults within the household are in work, over four-fifths will use childcare, and a half of households will choose to use informal care. If housing tenure is an indicator of economic *capital*, then NSW data would propose a relatively weak link between it, and use of childcare, once employment status is taken into account. Examination of the ACORN classification and WIMD data suggests an association between formal care and household economic status, but in Wales, it seems that informal childcare use is a practice that transcends household economic boundaries. This would seem to challenge evidence from other parts of the UK (Huskinson et al., 2016; Rutter, Evans and Rutter, 2012) that use of informal childcare is greater amongst households with higher incomes. Finally, there is in

Wales, as in England, an association between perception of childcare affordability and the use of different types or combinations of care, although the similarities between the Welsh and English findings are not consistent.

### ***Measures of Cultural Capital***

The NSW contains three groups of variables that can be used to assess the cultural *capital* of respondents. Assessing the validity of a measure is not simple, given that the theoretical concept itself is difficult to define. Without a precise definition, and with no independent measure of cultural *capital*, operationalising requires an empirical exploration of the notion of cultural *capital* to establish whether different indicators deserve to be called *capital* and whether each of them is associated with childcare choice within the constraints of the available data. The first suitable indicator is the educational level attained by respondents in the NSW. Bourdieu (1977) refers to this as 'Institutionalised' cultural *capital*, whereby success within the education system is facilitated by possession of cultural *capital* which in turn creates a higher-class *habitus*. Secondly, the NSW contains a cultural module in which a number of questions are asked of households about consumption of various types of culture, including arts, museums and heritage, which measures 'embodied' cultural *capital* which Levitas (2004) refers to as the "tacit knowledge, tastes and dispositions informally acquired through participation in an upper-class *habitus*" (Levitas, 2004, p.51). Bourdieu himself uses a similar measure in his study 'The Love of Art' (1991), while the NSW measure is also similar to that used by Savage et al. (2013), which they termed 'a measure of 'highbrow' cultural *capital*, which scores the extent of respondents' engagement with classical music, attending stately homes, museums, art galleries, jazz, theatre and French restaurants' (2013, p.9). The third element of cultural *capital* to be measured is Welsh language ability amongst respondents. The place of Welsh language within formations of cultural *capital* is discussed by Baker et al. (2014) in their study of culture in Welsh-speaking communities. They submit that Welsh language was traditionally a key element within the '*buchedd*' or specific way of life that also incorporated a middle-class nonconformist respectability, that has parallels with Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* (Baker, Brown and Williams, 2014, p.50). Lyon & Ellis (1991) further suggest that Welsh language ability confers cultural advantages in particular contexts in Wales. For some people, Welsh language has an intrinsic value to do with heritage and identity, while for others, it forms cultural *capital* that can be transformed into economic and social advantage. Yet as Day (1998, p.230) discusses, the concepts of 'Welshness' are more complex than language alone and therefore it is also interesting to examine whether nationality or country of birth are factors which form a distinctive milieu that might be associated with childcare use. Whether these characteristics of householders have a bearing on their use of childcare is interesting in investigating whether, as Bourdieu's writings seem to suggest, possession of cultural *capital* usually means possession of a general culture

comprising knowledge, lifestyle and language, or whether possession of cultural *capital* is more fragmentary.

The relationship between parental education and child outcomes is well documented (Ermisch and Pronzato, 2010; Chevalier, Harmon, O' Sullivan and Walker, 2013), while specific links have been suggested between choice of childcare and mothers' education levels (Hansen & Hawkes 2009; Bryson et al. 2012). NSW respondents were asked for their highest educational qualifications, which were subsequently grouped into a derived five-category variable based on the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales. With a relatively strong association between the variables, the relationship visible in Table 20 is one of increasing *need* for childcare amongst those with higher qualifications, both across all households, and more so in households where all adults are employed.

**Table 20: Need for childcare and highest educational qualification of respondent (NSW 2015)**

		Derived variable - Highest educational qualification					Sig.
		National Qualification Framework levels 4-8	National Qualification Framework level 3	National Qualification Framework level 2	Below National Qualification Framework level 2	No qualification	
Childcare - Ever need childcare	All households	62%	54%	43%	32%	27%	$\Phi_c = .246 \rho < .001$
	<i>n</i> =	1288	691	675	351	282	
	Employed households	70%	69%	60%	47%	51%	$\Phi_c = .153 \rho < .001$
	<i>n</i> =	1021	459	395	155	83	

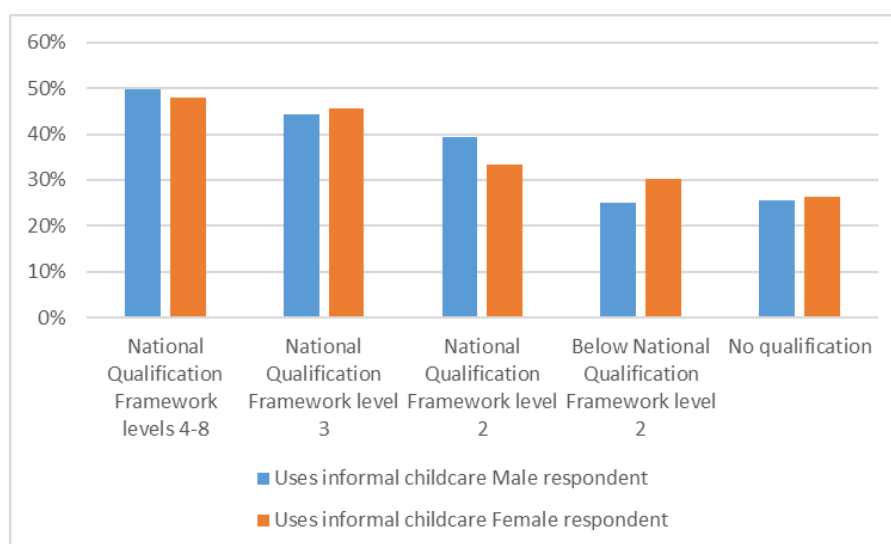
A similarly strong association ( $\Phi_c = .251$ ) is found when examining use of childcare by type of care. Of those respondents holding the highest qualifications in Wales, 62% use one form of childcare or another, while only 27% of respondents with no qualifications use any childcare at all. A similar trend can be observed in informal care use, with, again, half the proportion of no-qualification respondents using informal care compared with the highest qualified. Use of formal care set against the qualification of respondents follows the association trend, but is perhaps even more stratified with a more than four-fold gap between the lowest and highest qualified.

**Table 21: Use of childcare and highest educational qualification of respondent (NSW 2015)**

	Derived variable - Highest educational qualification					Sig.
	National Qualification Framework levels 4-8	National Qualification Framework level 3	National Qualification Framework level 2	Below National Qualification Framework level 2	No qualification	
Uses any childcare	62%	54%	43%	30%	27%	Φc= .251 p<.001
n=	1289	691	675	351	282	
Uses informal childcare	49%	45%	36%	28%	26%	Φc= .170 p<.001
n=	1288	691	676	351	282	
Uses formal childcare	31%	21%	15%	6%	7%	Φc= .232 p<.001
n=	1288	691	675	351	281	

Bryson et al. (2012) examined mothers' qualifications and found a link with informal care, but did not examine whether the link was evident with any parent. Examining the gender of respondents to the NSW and informal care use confirms the link between mothers' (female respondents) education and informal care in Wales (Φc= .168 p<.001), but also shows a similarly strong link with the education levels of fathers (male respondents) (Φc= .180 p<.001).

**Table 22: Use of informal childcare and highest educational qualification of respondent by gender (NSW 2015)**



Bryson et al. (2012) also found, using data from the Childcare Survey (2009) in England, that the relationship between mothers' education and use of informal care was age-dependent, with informal care for pre-school children being used more often by mothers with lower qualifications, while informal care was used by mothers with higher qualifications and school-aged children. Analysing the 1,322 records of households using informal care, and accounting for economic status, the NSW finds no significant association (Φc= .0.44 p=.751) between the age of the child receiving informal care and the educational qualification of the parent.

The cultural module of the NSW contains questions about whether respondents have visited arts events, museums or heritage locations within the past 12 months. The survey takes elements of what can be viewed as higher-class culture such as visiting ‘a monument such as a castle, fort or ruin’ attending arts events, galleries or ‘film at an arts centre’ as the basis of questions to respondents. Responses have been transformed into a single variable that provides a scale of 0 to 3 according to the number of cultural areas with which respondents engaged. As some respondents may have engaged with more than one activity within an area of culture, data does not truly assess the amount of cultural activity consumed, but does provide an indication as the breadth of culture experienced by households with children.

Compared with the general population, households with children were much more likely to access cultural activities, events and sites than those without children. Amongst all households with children, 15% were not active in any of the cultural areas. 21% were found to be active in one area, 28% in two areas and 35% in three areas. Setting cultural activities against the ‘need for childcare’ variable, finds a greater engagement in culture, but with little difference between all households and those where all adults work. This proposes that those not ever needing childcare – and therefore as established, more likely to be economically inactive – are less likely to be engaged in cultural activities. Indeed, the NSW asks for reasons why households do not engage, and, for this subset, the most common reason given was cost.

**Table 23: Need for childcare and cultural activity of respondent (NSW 2015)**

		CultureScore				Sig.
		No culture	Active in one cultural area	Active in two cultural areas	Active in three cultural areas	
Childcare - Ever need childcare	All Households	28%	44%	52%	60%	$\Phi_c = .217 \ p < .001$
	<i>n</i> =	522	734	974	1,199	
Working households	Working households	49%	62%	63%	72%	$\Phi_c = .141 \ p < .001$
	<i>n</i> =	214	424	656	885	

Table 24 examines whether cultural activities indicate tastes and dispositions that might form a *habitus* that in turn influences choice of childcare type. Firstly, there are strong statistical associations found between cultural activity and all three variables related to use of childcare. It is clear that the more culture is accessed, the greater the proportion of households use childcare. Between the different types of childcare used, there are differences which suggest some propensity. A gap of +/- 22% exists between households who use any type of childcare and don’t access culture, and those who are active in three cultural areas. For informal care, the gap is +/-25%, but for formal care, a gap

of +/-16% can be seen. This would suggest that cultural activity may be a stronger indicator for use of informal childcare than formal care.

**Table 24: Use of childcare and cultural activity of respondent (NSW 2015)**

	CultureScore				Sig.
	No culture	Active in one cultural area	Active in two cultural areas	Active in three cultural areas	
Uses any childcare	27%	44%	52%	59%	Φc= .216 p<.001
n=	521	734	974	1,199	
Uses informal childcare	23%	38%	42%	48%	Φc= .173 p<.001
n=	521	734	974	1,198	
Uses formal childcare	9%	15%	24%	25%	Φc= .150 p<.001
n=	521	735	974	1198	

The final measurement of cultural *capital* to be taken from the NSW is Welsh language. Within the NSW, respondents are categorised in four groups according to their Welsh language abilities, ranging from 'can understand spoken Welsh only' to 'can speak, read and write Welsh'. From these measures a scale variable has been derived indicating language proficiency.

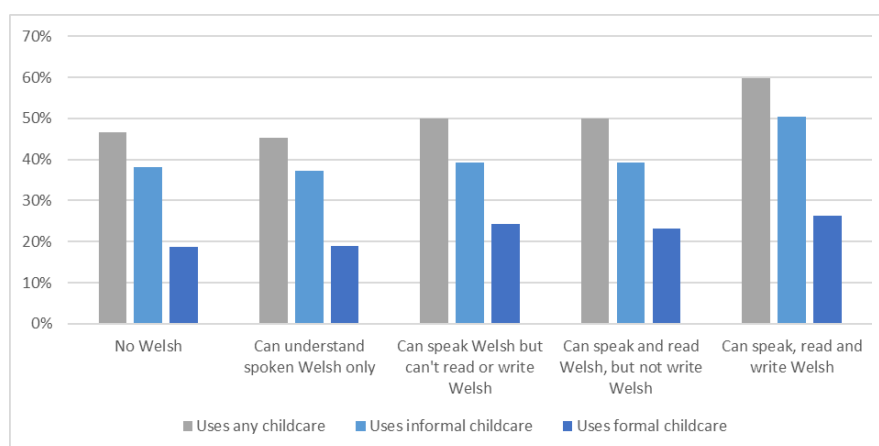
Amongst those households with children, those that speak the most Welsh are more likely (+13%) to say that they need childcare, particularly if they work (+9%). With a good degree of significance, the data shows a clear propensity for childcare in line with Welsh language ability (Table 25).

**Table 25: Need for childcare and Welsh language ability of respondent (NSW 2015)**

		Derived Variable - Welsh Language ability					Sig.
		No Welsh	Can understand spoken Welsh only	Can speak Welsh but can't read or write Welsh	Can speak and read Welsh, but not write Welsh	Can speak, read and write Welsh	
Childcare - Ever need childcare	All Households	47%	46%	50%	50%	60%	Φc= .095 p<.001
	n=	2,587	126	74	56	586	
	Working households	63%	53%	67%	69%	72%	Φc= .089 p<.005
	n=	1,572	93	46	35	434	

Investigating households that actually use childcare finds a similar association with Welsh language ability. Respondents that had the highest language abilities were 13% more likely to use any childcare than non-Welsh speakers. They were 12% more likely to use informal care, and 7% more likely to use formal childcare.

Figure 12: Use of childcare and Welsh language ability of respondent (NSW 2015)



	Derived Variable - Welsh Language ability					Sig.
	No Welsh	Can understand spoken Welsh only	Can speak Welsh but can't read or write Welsh	Can speak and read Welsh, but not write Welsh	Can speak, read and write Welsh	
Uses any childcare	47%	45%	50%	50%	60%	$\Phi_c = .098 \rho < .001$
<i>n</i> =	2,587	126	74	56	586	
Uses informal childcare	38%	37%	39%	39%	50%	$\Phi_c = .172 \rho < .005$
<i>n</i> =	2,586	126	74	56	587	
Uses formal childcare	19%	19%	24%	23%	26%	$\Phi_c = .094 \rho < .001$
<i>n</i> =	2587	126	74	56	587	

Findings relating informal childcare to Welsh language ability are repeated when examining the country of birth of parents responding to the NSW childcare module. Examining data where there are significant sample sizes, respondents born in Wales were less likely to be using any kind of childcare, but particularly not formal childcare. Use of informal care by Welsh-born respondents was accordingly higher (5%) than among English-born householders.

Table 26: Use of childcare and respondent's country of birth (NSW 2015)

	Country of birth					Sig.
	Wales	England	Scotland	Northern Ireland	UK	
Uses Informal Childcare	43%	38%	28%	33%	34%	$\Phi_c = .101 \rho < .000$
<i>n</i> =	2,331	701	32	9	82	
Uses Formal Childcare	18%	27%	10%	56%	22%	$\Phi_c = .102 \rho < .001$
<i>n</i> =	2,330	700	31	9	82	
Uses any childcare	50%	53%	29%	56%	38%	$\Phi_c = .086 \rho < .000$
<i>n</i> =	2,330	700	31	9	81	

While no causality can be inferred, differences in behaviour by parents that relate to their country of birth might be seen as indicating the existence of a particular Welsh *habitus* expressed through a preference for informal care. Alternatively, it may be simply that parents born in Wales are more likely to have family close-by who can furnish care. Otherwise, as Day (1998) submits, the feature may be the result of economic factors whereby in Wales "...dominant social positions [are] occupied by people who are non-Welsh, including the bulk of managerial and skilled jobs" (Day, 1998, p.234).

To examine which of these explanations seems most plausible, a multiple logistic regression to test country of birth against both childcare choice and economic factors was undertaken (Table 27). The test confirms a strong association and predictivity ( $p < .000$ ,  $B = -.230$ ) between where parents were born and their likelihood of using informal childcare. A lesser correlation with weaker predictive strength can be seen for formal care use. Against the economic factors chosen to regress, while all are associated with country of birth, employment is a less significant measure than either tenure or economic (ACORN) classification, but none show the strength of predictability assigned to childcare choice. Alongside childcare choice, the social measure representing the extent of networks can be seen to be significant and highly predictive, suggesting that, of the three explanations, country of birth is probably a proxy for proximity to familial and social networks that in turn enables greater use of informal childcare.

**Table 27: Multiple logistic regression analysis model of country of birth compared with childcare use, economic, social and cultural indicators (NSW 2015)**

	<i>a. Dependent Variable: Country of birth</i>	
	B	Sig.
Uses Informal Childcare	.230	.000***
Uses Formal Childcare	-.165	.022**
Derived variable - Whether household members in paid work, either full-time or part-time	.113	.014*
Derived variable - ACORN classification	-.088	.000***
Derived variable - Tenure (grouped)	.109	.000***
Derived Variable - All culture	-.017	.548
Well-being - How many close family/friends you can talk to about private matters, or call on for help	-.220	.000***

To summarise, the NSW provides evidence that childcare choice is associated with notions of cultural *capital* in Wales as measured by a number of factors. The NSW data provides statistical evidence that choice of childcare is associated with parents' education levels, with those having higher levels of qualification more likely to use all types of childcare than those with no, or low qualifications. The relationship is also present when examining both mothers' and fathers' education levels. The second measure establishes an association between cultural activity and the propensity to use childcare. In particular, informal childcare is used by households which also access more culture, building a picture of a class *habitus* in which childcare use and culture are connected and might be seen as providing advantage. A strong relationship is also found between those that speak Welsh and childcare - and particularly informal care - supporting previous research findings by Morris & Jones (2009). Finally, there is an association between country of birth and care, with those born in Wales more likely to use



informal care than those not, which in all likelihood can be explained by proximity of family and friends.

### ***Measures of Social Capital***

As with cultural *capital*, there are no empirically-tested independent measures of social *capital* within the NSW, but Bourdieu goes some way to providing a definition from which existing measures can be assessed. According to Bourdieu (1986), social *capital* is “the aggregate of the actual potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (1986, p. 248). Social *capital* for Bourdieu is related to the size of network and the volume of past accumulated social *capital* commanded by the agent (Tzanakis, 2013, p.3). As Reay (2004, p.57) writes, social *capital* is generated through social processes between the family and wider society and is made up of social networks. The NSW contains a number of questions related to these themes, the answers to which might be utilised as measurements of social *capital*, while also assisting in operationalising the term within the context of childcare. The first variable considered is household type, which in the context of this study identifies whether the respondent is a single parent household, or a two-adult household with children. According to Grenfell (2014), social *capital* can be seen in terms of both social support and social leverage. The social support potential of the family is obviously increased if there are two adults in the household. Secondly, and more specifically within NSW, is a module related to well-being, which asks how many close family / friends respondents have that can be called on for help. Thirdly, is a derived variable from within the well-being module, which indicates an individual’s overall well-being and connectedness within society. This may provide an indication of social leverage, although the extent may be difficult to measure.

In the first test of association, the need for childcare is set against household type with predictable results. Across all households with children in Wales, two-adult households are more likely to need childcare than single-parent households. If only working households are examined, the situation is reversed. This confirms other research in the field (Bell et al. 2005; Smith et al. 2009; Skinner & Finch 2006; Rafferty & Wiggan 2011; Himmelweit & Sigala 2003 and others) demonstrating a greater need for childcare from employed lone parents.

**Table 28: Need for childcare and household type (NSW 2015)**

		Derived variable - Household type			Sig.
		Two adult household with children	Single parent household	Other households	
Ever need childcare - Yes	All households	50%	46%	0%	$\Phi_c = .058 \rho < .005$
	<i>n</i> =	2847	573	8	
	Employed households	57%	61%	0%	$\Phi_c = .045 \rho < .1$
	<i>n</i> =	2371	380	3	

When looking at childcare use as opposed to need, across all childcare types, and just formal care, there is a 5% difference between single parent and two-adult households. The gap narrows to 3% for those using informal care, suggesting a greater use of informal care by single parents. While statistically significant, the difference is small. Nonetheless, the finding is consistent with previous research in this area from other parts of the UK (Duncan & Edwards 1999; Bell et al. 2005; Woodland et al. 2002) and further afield (Brady and Perales, 2014; Brady, 2016), but conflicts with Bryson's (Bryson et al., 2012) account, which concluded that working lone parents are no more likely than dual-earner couple parents to use either formal or informal childcare. However, in the context of this research, it is hypothesised that once economic status is accounted for, dual-adult households are greater users of childcare than lone parents, because they have more social support available creating more social *capital*. Yet, in trying to establish this, the data from NSW is inconclusive and the hypothesis difficult to support. The question is one that is worth investigating within the qualitative enquiry.

**Table 29: Use of childcare and household type (NSW 2015)**

		Derived variable - Household type			Sig.
		Two adult household with children	Single parent household	Other households	
Uses any childcare		50%	45%	0%	$\Phi_c = .58 \rho < .005$
	<i>n</i> =	2,847	574	8	
Uses informal childcare		41%	38%	0%	$\Phi_c = .54 \rho < .005$
	<i>n</i> =	2,847	574	8	
Uses formal childcare		21%	16%	0%	$\Phi_c = .45 \rho < .001$
	<i>n</i> =	2847	574	8	

Other research (Skinner and Finch, 2006; Rafferty and Wiggan, 2011; Bryson et al., 2012) submits that despite fewer single parents using informal care than couples, they use it for longer periods of time. This is corroborated in Table 30, showing that across most time-bands, single parent households use more informal care than couples in Wales. It is clear that this area of investigation is important in any discussion of childcare and the choices that parents make, yet, as in other researchers' work (Bryson et al., 2012; Rutter and Evans, 2011; Smith et al., 2009), exploration using quantitative data is highly

complex, involving multiple variables, and often leaves many questions unanswered. Qualitative enquiry may prove to be more effective in exploring the multifaceted interactions that take place in this area.

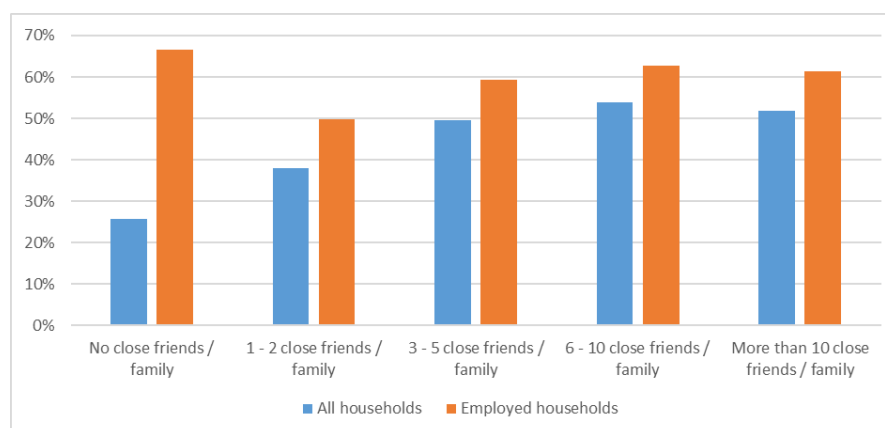
**Table 30: Amount of informal childcare use by household type (NSW 2015)**

		Childcare - Average, number of hours per week family or friends look after child, unpaid					n=
		At least 30 hours a week	At least 10 but less than 30 hours a week	At least 1 but less than 10 hours a week	Less than one hour a week	Never (SPONTANEOUS ONLY)	
Informal Care Users	Two adult household with children	6%	31%	52%	10%	1%	318
	Single parent household	7%	34%	46%	13%	1%	42
							$\Phi_c = .246 \ p < .001$

The second NSW variable that would seem to provide an appropriate measurement of social *capital* within Bourdieu's definition of "relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (1986, p. 248), comes from the NSW module related to 'well-being', which asks how many close family / friends respondents have that can be called upon for help. Respondents could choose five categories ranging from "No close friends / family" to "More than 10 close friends / family". Across all households with children in the NSW, the modal average was "3 to 5 close friends/family". Only 1% of households with children had no friends / family.

Comparing the variables (Table 31) produces a strong association between households who use childcare and their social contacts. It shows a trend of increasing use of childcare in line with social contacts for all households. However, when just fully-employed households are examined, the test of association is weaker and there would seem to be no clear relationship evident.

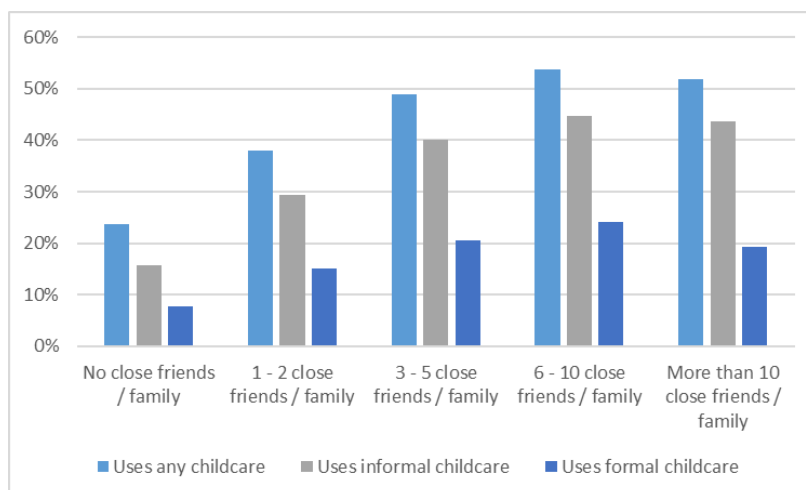
**Figure 13: Use of childcare and number of close friends / family (NSW 2015)**



**Table 31: Use of childcare and number of close friends / family (NSW 2015)**

	Well-being - How many close family/friends you can talk to about private matters, or call on for help					Sig.
	No close friends / family	1 - 2 close friends / family	3 - 5 close friends / family	6 - 10 close friends / family	More than 10 close friends / family	
All households	26%	38%	49%	54%	52%	Φc= .111 p<.001
n=	39	453	1098	980	832	
Employed households	67%	50%	59%	63%	61%	Φc= .079 p<.005
n=	12	292	815	780	662	

**Figure 14: Use of childcare and number of close friends / family (NSW 2015)**



**Table 32: Use of childcare and number of close friends / family (NSW 2015)**

	Well-being - How many close family/friends you can talk to about private matters, or call on for help					Sig.
	No close friends / family	1 - 2 close friends / family	3 - 5 close friends / family	6 - 10 close friends / family	More than 10 close friends / family	
Uses any childcare	24%	38%	49%	54%	52%	Φc= .113 p<.001
n=	38	453	1,097	980	832	
Uses informal childcare	16%	29%	40%	45%	44%	Φc= .079p<.001
n=	38	453	1,097	980	832	
Uses formal childcare	8%	15%	20%	24%	19%	Φc= .114 p<.001
n=	39	453	1098	980	832	

A direct association between social contacts and childcare is evident when examining actual use of childcare to support work and training rather than need (Table 32). Here, a clear trend across all types is visible in relation to friends/family contacts and childcare use, but with the differences between the highest and lowest values indicating a more profound effect on informal care. There is an interesting exception, however, with those respondents who say they have more than ten close family/friends being linked to slightly lower use of childcare than the previous category. This requires some further investigation. Running a logistic regression analysis using the 'How many close friends/family' independent variable set against a range of the dependent variables used previously (see appendix 7) shows a relationship ( $p<.001$ ) with the economic *capital* measures of employment status ( $r^2=0.89$ ) and housing tenure ( $r^2=0.67$ ) and the social *capital* measure of Welsh language ( $r^2=0.68$ ). A further

measure found to be important in predicting the measure was gender ( $r^2=0.68$ ). People who have a very large number of family/friends around them in Wales are therefore more likely to be female, Welsh-speaking, employed, owner-occupiers. Measures which are usually associated with childcare use such as education qualifications, household status, economic classification and whether they live in a deprived area were therefore less likely to be predictive of the number of social contacts, which may go some way to explaining the unexpected results.

The final indicator of social *capital* is a variable from within the well-being module which derived from a number of other questions that may indicate an individual's connectedness within society. The measure is reported on a five-point Likert scale. Reading across the data columns (Table 33), while there is a tendency amongst all households with children who say that they need childcare to be more connected and therefore have greater social *capital*, when employment is controlled for, there is little correlation of significance and no clear tendency visible across the groups, which, again, implies the primacy of employment as a dominant influence.

**Table 33: Need for childcare and feeling of connectedness (NSW 2015)**

		Well-being - I have many connections across society					Sig.
		Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	
Ever need childcare - Yes	All households	53%	53%	50%	40%	29%	$\Phi_c = .097 \rho < .001$
	<i>n</i> =	510	1183	636	196	58	
Ever need childcare - No	Employed households	64%	68%	68%	61%	77%	$\Phi_c = .051 \rho > .005$
	<i>n</i> =	359	824	364	87	13	

When use of childcare is examined against the measure of connectedness, an inclination is apparent for better-connected respondents to use more childcare of all types than those who feel less well-connected. The gap between those best and least connected was found to be +/-24% for those using any type of childcare, +/-18% for those using informal care and +/-9% for households using formal childcare. The measure therefore follows a similar pattern to that found in the previous factor of number of family/friends.

**Table 34: Use of childcare and feeling of connectedness (NSW 2015)**

		Well-being - I have many connections across society					Sig.
		Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	
Uses any childcare		53%	53%	50%	39%	29%	$\Phi_c = .099 \rho < .001$
	<i>n</i> =	511	1,183	637	197	58	
Uses informal childcare		43%	45%	41%	34%	25%	$\Phi_c = .049 \rho > .005$
	<i>n</i> =	510	1,183	637	197	57	
Uses formal childcare		23%	22%	20%	17%	14%	$\Phi_c = .081 \rho < .005$
	<i>n</i> =	511	1183	636	196	58	

It can be seen, therefore, that household structure, while a topic for further investigation, does not provide an effective measurement of social *capital*. However, the quantitative analysis of social contacts and subjective feelings of connectedness provide some evidence of relationships linking social networks and childcare use. Lowndes (2000) suggests that there may be some element of reflexivity in social *capital* and childcare use, as patterns of formal and informal sociability build up relations of trust and mutual reciprocity that are likely to support informal childcare networks. These can, in turn, enhance opportunities for economic activity and increase the need for childcare (Lowndes, 2000).

### ***Spatial habitus***

If informal childcare use is to be seen as part of people's '*habitus*', then Holt-Jenson suggests that it must be embedded in both an embodied and a cognitive sense of place (1999, p.187). People's sense of social space is often defined by where they live. Yet while space in the concept of *habitus* is not concrete - like the home in which people live - Bourdieu's 'place', as defined in his studies of the Bearn (1991), is social but necessarily made up of the norms, values and resources that come from the communities in which people live (Cornwall, 2002). This is related to the concept of social *capital* as a feature of social organisation related to power, class relations and the distribution of economic resources in society. In Wales, the most basic of socio-economic statistics tell us that these resources are polarised across the social spectrum, and are likely to be at the root of some of the geographical differences evident in, for example, the Wales Deprivation Indices (Welsh Government, 2016). While any geographical analysis is crude in that not everyone living in any given area conforms to a particular type or find themselves in the same social space, characteristics of social, economic and cultural *capital* are shared, making up the symbolic *capital* that is the basis for *habitus* (Devine 2005). As Ball *et al.* (2004b) found, the childcare choices made by parents who are stratified similarly by income and occupation, but live in diverse social spaces, reflect differently prevailing child-rearing values and sociality. In this section, the relationship between place and childcare in Wales is examined using the NSW data.

Because the NSW is designed around a large sample within each local authority in Wales, it is possible to undertake some analysis at this level using confidence levels and standard deviation tests as guides to the significance of results. In the first test of connectedness, the proportion of households that say they need childcare is measured by local authority area. With a good to moderate level of significance we find levels of childcare need amongst households with children (Appendix

**Figure 19: Pre-school Childcare Rates by Local Authority.**

Includes all registered childminder, full day care, sessional care and crèche places. CSSIW December 2014 and ONS Population Estimates June 2015

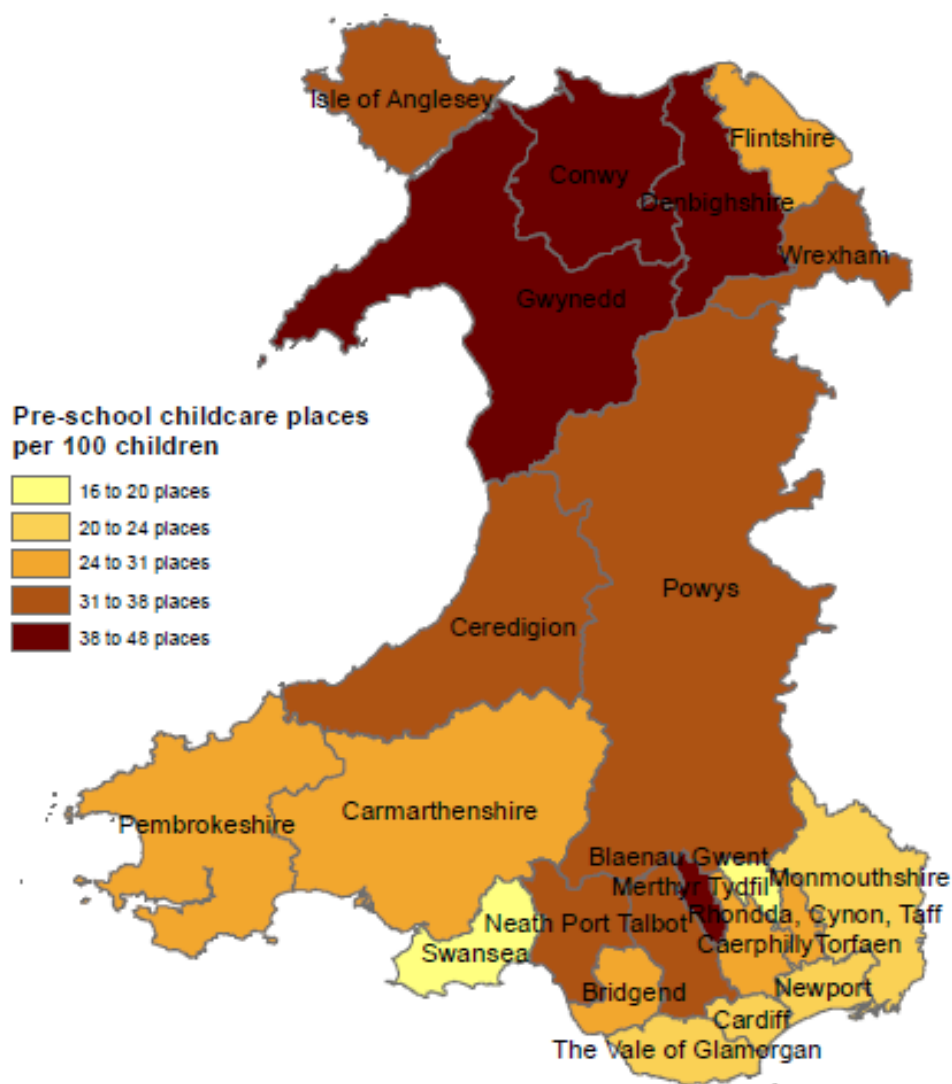
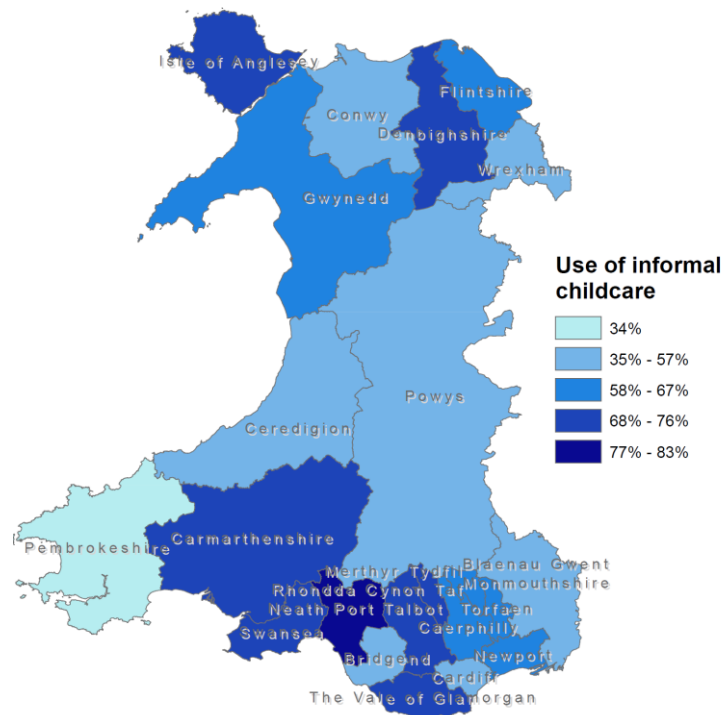


Table 37) ranging from 34% in Pembrokeshire to 60% in Gwynedd. Extracting responses only from those households where all adults are employed, increases the range from 41% in Pembrokeshire to 82% in Neath Port Talbot. By any measure, these ranges are very wide, pointing to the presence of distinct conditions or diverse practices in local areas of Wales.

Using the alternative measure of use of childcare by households (Appendix Table 38), produces data that is more consistent across the local authorities. Outliers include three areas in North Wales that have higher than expected use of childcare, namely Gwynedd, Anglesey and Denbighshire, while in Pembrokeshire, Bridgend and Blaenau Gwent, households use less childcare than would be expected.

Examining use of informal care highlights Anglesey, Gwynedd, Denbighshire, Neath Port Talbot and Rhondda Cynon Taff as areas with higher than expected use of informal care, while Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire are areas where informal care use is less prolific.

**Figure 15: Informal care use as a proportion of all employed households by local authority (NSW 2015)**



From this data, a number of questions can be investigated. First, it is important to explore whether there are any patterns of informal childcare related to localities. This is illustrated by the map, Figure 15, showing the distribution of informal childcare practices in Wales. Following an F-test to check if the two population variances are equal, the Standard Deviations of informal childcare across the 22 local authorities ( $\sigma = 0.11$ ) compared with formal care ( $\sigma = 0.09$ ) suggests that informal childcare use is more prone to geographical variation than formal childcare use. Nonetheless, understanding the importance of this requires the assessment of other social and demographic factors.

In facilitating further enquiry, informal care use in each local authority was used as the dependent variable in a logistic regression analysis set against the independent variables of employment status, Welsh speakers, deprivation level, economic activity, education levels and rurality (see Appendix Table 38). Of those examined, only the overall level of employment in a local authority area was found to be a strongly associated ( $p < .001$ ) with informal childcare use. In areas where Welsh language use was most common, some association with informal care use was visible ( $p = .096$ ), while no association was found between deprivation levels across local authorities and informal childcare use ( $p = .911$ ), and



rurality was not found to make a significant difference ( $p=.169$ ). Overall education qualifications in local areas was also found not to be an associated variable.

## **The relationship between formal childcare supply and informal childcare use**

Whether there is a relationship between the supply of formal childcare and the use of informal care was a question posed by Rutter and Evans (2012), who, in their research, suggested that the availability of both formal and informal care was a significant factor in parental decision-making. Yet there has been little research that has examined the parents' use of different types of care and the availability of formal childcare services where they live.

The Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales publish a figure for the number of childcare settings and the number of childcare places registered in Wales on a quarterly basis. The number of settings provides some useful information regarding the size of the childcare sector, and may indicate some geographical differences in supply that may be relational to the use of, or preference for, informal care. In December 2014, there were a total of 4,419 childcare settings registered with CSSIW in Wales. The majority of these (2,466) were childminders, 790 were sessional daycare settings (predominantly pre-school playgroups and *cylchoed meithrin*), 654 full daycare settings (mainly day nurseries), 477 out of school clubs and 32 crèches. As would be expected, there are large differences in the number of childcare settings in each local authority area, ranging from 482 registered childcare services in Cardiff, to just 62 in Merthyr Tydfil (CSSIW, 2014).

Data from CSSIW (2014) also provides the number of childcare places provided by each registration type across Wales and in each local authority area. These data do not relate to the actual number of children using childcare, but record the maximum number of places available at any one time. As one registered childcare place may be used at different times of the day or on different days of the week by different children, measuring reach is not possible with these data. However, when related to the population of children, the data provides a useful tool to question whether there is any association between formal care provision and informal childcare use.

To assess whether there is a link, childcare supply data is analysed alongside NSW data. Utilising CSSIW (2014) and ONS (2011) Census population data, a measure can be constructed to present the amount of formal care in each local authority in Wales, accounting for differing population size using the formula  $\gamma = \frac{\text{childcare places}}{\text{population of children}} \times 100$ . Using this formula, we find that across Wales there were, on

average, 14 childcare places per 100 children aged 0 to 14 ( $\sigma = 4.53$ ) with a range reaching from just seven childcare place per 100 children in Blaenau Gwent to 23 places per 100 children in Denbighshire.

Using bivariate correlation analyses, the propensity of NSW respondents to use different types of childcare can be examined in relation to the amount of formal childcare available within their local authority area. As set out in Table 35, there is a very weak correlation ( $\rho = .050$ ) between NSW respondents using any type of childcare and the supply of formal childcare in an area. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is a strong link visible ( $\rho > .001$ ) between formal care use and formal care supply. However, there was no correlation found ( $\rho = .985$ ) between use of informal childcare and the availability of formal childcare.

**Table 35: Correlations between childcare use (NSW 2015) and formal childcare provision (CSSIW 2014)**

Correlations				
		All Care	Formal Care	Informal care
Childcare per 100 children	Pearson Correlation	.422*	.772**	.004
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.050	.000	.985
	N	22	22	22

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

An alternative approach is to use NSW to examine the use of childcare against a question asked about the availability of childcare locally. As in the discussion of affordability, parents' perceptions of childcare availability may not reflect the reality of provision, but might reflect householders' disposition towards it. In the NSW data, however, there was no significant association found between the measures ( $\rho = .263$ ).

These findings are important in that they challenge the assumption expressed in many Childcare Sufficiency Assessments undertaken by local authorities in Wales (Blaenau Gwent CBC 2014; Camarthenshire CBC 2014; Newport Council 2014 and others) that there is a causal link between high levels of informal care, and low rates of formal childcare. It can be concluded therefore, that while the use of informal care varies widely across Wales, no strong links have been found between the characteristics of local authority areas and childcare use within them. This suggests that within the childcare *field* at least, there may be no such thing as a *spatial habitus*. However, the previous analyses illustrate how parents share economic, social and cultural characteristics, and probably share many of these with their immediate neighbours. Yet, the boundaries of such communities created are likely to be highly flexible and clearly not coterminous with the artificial boundaries used to define the counties of Wales in this study. It is possible that a different investigative approach might reproduce Ball *et al.*'s (2004b) 'well-bounded spaces' attracting and reproducing different class lifestyles and cultures based

upon the use of differently available forms and volumes of *capital* which can result in specific childcare values and choices.

## **Modelling childcare choice**

The data so far have highlighted significant differences in the use of childcare in Wales in relation to a range of economic, social and cultural factors. To analyse which factors are most strongly associated with the use of informal childcare, a statistical model can be developed that proposes relationships between the concepts which can be subsequently tested using a logistic regression analysis (Fielding and Gilbert, 2006, p.279). There are clear limits to how such a statistical approach can take account of a complex social behaviour such as childcare choice, and it is not the primary purpose of this study to do so, but the analyses presented previously, alongside evidence from the literature, suggest a range of factors that might be most important and, more to the point, are theoretically interesting. The research question relates to the extent to which structural factors promote rationality in parental choice between using formal and informal childcare, or whether individualities result in a particular *habitus* that disposes parents to one type of childcare or another. The statistical models proposed, therefore, examine variables from within the confines of the NSW in three groups relating to Bourdieu's capitals. Three models have been developed to test the extent to which variables chosen to represent capitals are associated with the use of any childcare (model 1), formal childcare (model 2) and informal childcare (model 3). The variables chosen were tested to establish a linear relationship with each of the models' dependent variable. For each parameter, the B statistic is given reporting the predictive effect of each, followed by the  $p$  value which tells us whether the independent variable has statistically significant predictive capability.

**Table 36: Multiple logistic regression analysis modelling childcare use (NSW 2015)**

		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
		<i>Uses any childcare</i>		<i>Uses formal childcare</i>		<i>Uses informal childcare</i>	
		B	Sig.	B	Sig.	B	Sig.
Economic capital	Age of child	-.020	.000***	-.025	.000***	-.011	.000***
	Employment	-.281	.000***	-.110	.000***	-.238	.000***
	Housing tenure	-.019	.000***	-.021	.000***	-.019	.025*
	ACORN class	.007	.020*	-.001	.002**	.000	.960
	WIMD (overall score)	.015	.458	.018	.855	-.005	.526
	Affordability	-.025	.065	-.033	.010*	-.006	.451
Cultural capital	Education	-.033	.003*	-.019	.000***	-.026	.007*
	Culture	.009	.000***	.003	.016*	.016	.009*
	Country of birth	-0.02	.000***	.003	.476	-.027	.000***
	Welsh language	.079	.104	.035	.576	.059	.000***
Social capital	Household type	-.003	.000***	-.007	.002**	.000	.990
	Marital Status	.013	.826	-.008	.526	.022	.019*
	Social network	.008	.161	.007	.309	.011	.000***
	Connectedness	.000	.403	.000	.453	.000	.000***

\*significant at  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*significant at  $p < 0.005$ ; \*\*\*significant at  $p < 0.001$

The three models illustrate how each factor predicts the use of childcare. Two variables stand out as consistent predictors across all types of childcare use. First, the employment status of households is found to be a predictor across all care types, with negative 'B' figures indicating that within the NSW categorisation, households with adults working the most, are more likely to use childcare. The strength of prediction, however, is greater for informal care use than formal care. Secondly, it can be seen that the age of the child is a good predictor of childcare use, showing that the younger the child, the more likely they are to use childcare. The strength of age influence is greater for informal childcare use than formal care reflecting the earlier analysis (Table 7). Other significant factors affect use of childcare in different ways. For formal childcare use, housing tenure, economic classification and parental education levels are strong predictors, with culture, affordability and household type also having some effect. Informal childcare is also predicted by education, with less certainty, but with greater effect, along with culture - and a strong positive correlation is found between Welsh language and informal childcare use. The extent to which households were connected socially can be seen to be a predictor of informal care use, but not formal childcare, and while the connectedness measure has predictive capability, its effect is very small.

### **Data Limitations**

There are limitations to the NSW survey. First, despite a reasonably high response rate, the 35-40% of those who declined to take part will affect the accuracy of the results. Because the survey only covered individual households, it missed people living in institutional establishments such as hostels or student halls, although the proportion of parents that were living with children in such establishments is likely to be very small. Conducted over a period of 12 months, patterns of childcare use by parents may be under or over-represented depending on when parents were interviewed ie. during term-time or school holidays. The broad scope of the survey may have an impact on responses to a specific issue such as childcare, making it difficult to compare data from the NSW with other childcare-specific research. Finally, the data was collected between April 2014 and March 2015 so the results are inevitably dated to this point.

### **Conclusions**

Within this chapter an attempt has been made to boundary the *field* of informal childcare in Wales. As Maton (in Grenfell, 2014) suggests, to understand practice, one must first identify the regularities of the social *field* and then relate these to the practical logic (*habitus*) of the actors. The interrogation of a reliable and appropriate data source has gone some way to enabling such an understanding. Within the constraints of the data, a range of findings indicate the scope of activity and the extent of practice. The National Survey Wales data shows that families' use of childcare is different in Wales than it is in other parts of the UK. In Wales, parents are more inclined to use informal care, and much less likely to use formal care – with Welsh Government policies (in early education, in particular) likely to account for some of the difference. This finding alone justifies further investigation of the *field* as a distinct area of practice. In other measures, the choice and use of childcare is similar to that found in UK-wide and English studies. It also seems clear that informal care is used more than formal care across the 0 to 14 age-range of children, even though younger children are most likely to be cared for. As in other research, all types of childcare were found to be used by families with fewer children, although reasons for this are uncertain and deserve further investigation. Informal care is used most widely for relatively short time periods (1 to 10 hours per week), but for the youngest children, longer periods of informal care are more common. Payment for informal care is rare, and as suggested by Wheelock & Jones (2002), places informal care as outside of the scope of the market.

Also in this section, data has been explored to examine the relationship between the informal and formal childcare fields. This has been achieved by identifying and quantifying practice within the various forms of *capital* to assess what users of informal childcare have in common, thereby creating

a greater understanding of the *habitus* of the agents within the *field*. Collecting measures aligned with the concepts of economic, social, cultural and social capitals has enabled theory testing of Bourdieusian ideas against the accounts of rational choice that suggest conscious calculations by actors as the basis of actions (eg. Cleveland et al. 1996).

Assessing measures of *economic capital* highlight a strong association between household employment and childcare use in Wales, confirming previous research findings showing greater use of childcare amongst families where all adults are working. However, once employment status is controlled for, other measures provide less clear indications that childcare use is strongly associated with economic factors. Social classifications based on occupations and incomes, and indicators such as housing tenure that are used widely in social research, find a relatively weak link with informal care, leaving the impression that it is a practice which transcends traditional economic classes in Wales - unlike in England, where informal care has been found to be more commonly used by families with higher incomes and of higher social grades (Huskinson et al., 2016). It might be suggested that Wales has a less stratified economic structure, yet according to the 2011 Census (ONS 2011, Table QS611EW) with a lower proportion of ABs (17.9% in Wales, 23% in England) and a higher proportion of C2s and DEs (29.7% in Wales, 25.5% in England), the variance between the classes in Wales is actually greater in Wales ( $\sigma=4.86$ ) than in England ( $\sigma=3.82$ ). It may be as Osmond (1988) suggests, that in Wales a sense of place is more important than class, and therefore structure is far less important than agency in this context. Alternatively, Day (2010a, p.264) sees no consistent patterns of identity in Wales, instead suggesting that economic variations conspire to set different parts of Wales apart from one another rather than bring them together.

Measures of *cultural capital* would seem to play a much greater part in predicting use of informal childcare in Wales than many of the economic measures. Strong associations were found with parents' education levels, but not in the directions found in other studies. Along with researchers in the US (Brown-Lyons and Robertson, 2001; Hofferth, Chaplin, Wissoker and Robins, 1996), UK research (Gregg et al., 2005; Paull, Taylor and Duncan, 2002) has previously found that mothers with the lowest educational attainment were most likely to rely on informal care. However, in Wales, controlling for employment status, data from NSW shows that the opposite is true. All childcare use, including informal childcare, increases in line with parents' education levels. Informal care is used by nearly half of all households where the respondent held the highest (Level 8) qualifications, as opposed to fewer than 30% of respondents with no qualifications. Other studies have focused on maternal qualifications as having a strong link with informal childcare use, with some differences by age-group of the child (Bryson et al., 2012). The NSW data shows no significant difference in either gender, nor in the age of

the child receiving informal care and parental qualifications. Nonetheless, Schober & Scott's (2012, p.527) research found that a preference for informal care is associated with more traditional gender roles within society, but suitable instrumental variables were not available within NSW to test this.

If parents with higher education are more likely to use informal childcare, then it is probably unsurprising that there is also an association with cultural activities, particularly those framed in the NSW as elements of the legitimate or dominant culture, defined by those with the power conferred by their education (Grenfell, 2014). The relationship found between use of informal childcare and Welsh language has been suggested by Morris & Jones (Morris and Jones, 2007) but not tested against a large data-set. The NSW provides substantiation of a strong association where those with the highest Welsh language skills are also those most likely to be using childcare, and, more interestingly, using more informal care.

The relationship between *social capital* and informal childcare would seem to be straightforward, as concluded by Rutter & Evans (2011), who found the most significant association with informal care to be the spatial proximity of relatives. While this factor was not able to be explored directly using the NSW, the country of birth measure along with a social contacts variable provide some clues. Informal care is more likely to be used by households where the respondent was born in Wales, and therefore it might be assumed that they are more likely to have family close-by. Informal care was also found to be used by households with greater numbers of close family or friends, although the association is not as clear as might be expected. In the same context, it might be presumed that two-parent families might provide more informal care resources to be called upon than single parents. This association was not clearly observable in the data, proving to be a more complex issue that other researchers have also found problematic to unpick using quantitative data alone.

Data were also tested to examine whether *spatial* differences in informal childcare use could be observed and, furthermore, whether the presence of formal childcare is linked to the propensity to use informal care in different areas of Wales. A hypothesis suggesting that the extent of informal childcare use reduces demand for formal childcare - explaining why in some parts of the country there is very little formal care available – has been shown to be false using the NSW data. Informal childcare use is indeed widespread across Wales, and at levels that would seem to be higher than other parts of the UK, but while more formal childcare is linked to higher *use* of formal childcare, greater use of informal childcare does not necessarily lead to less formal care provision.

Finally, the logistic regression analysis provides useful data that contributes to an understanding of why households might choose particular types of childcare in Wales. It also shows that if the variables

chosen are indeed effective proxies for different capitals, it is clear that childcare choice is not driven by a simple cost-benefit analysis, as some economic analyses (eg. Paull, 2015) have attempted to show. Across all three regression models, economic factors are predictors of childcare use, but in conjunction with factors that can be seen as cultural and social. The balance of the relative predictive effects would seem to suggest that dispositions, such as Welsh language, social contacts and connectedness, have greater importance in the choice of informal care, while a household's economic situation is a better predictor of formal childcare use. As such, it supports the notion of a particular *habitus* of informal childcare use that can be seen to cut across normal class boundaries defined in narrow economic terms.

Thus, constraints in the form of restricted capitals that can be quantified and identified as important could be said to restrict parents' abilities to operate within the childcare *field*. Of course, such factors can only be used to 'explain' the statistical probabilities or tendencies of parents as a whole, or within specified sub-groups. Thus, quantitative analyses would seem to leave unclear the ways in which structure and practice are linked at the individual level. A deeper understanding of the agents and their relationship with the *field* requires greater attention to aspects such as biography, life history and detailed information about the logic and motivation underlying how they practice within the *field*. This is undertaken in the next chapter, where qualitative data are examined to assess how the narratives of agents resonate with the accounts presented here, and relate to official or other common discourses.

The quantitative analysis also leaves a number of questions that would benefit from qualitative investigation that will support a deeper understanding of issues:

- How does the relationship between family size and maternal employment rates play out in narratives of childcare in Wales?
- Are households using both formal and informal care better able to afford childcare, or are they just better informed, and does a lack of information result in those only using informal care perceiving formal care to be unaffordable?
- Do dual-adult households use more informal childcare than lone parents because they have more social support available creating more social *capital*? Despite ostensibly having less social support, is the higher volume of informal childcare used by lone parents indicative of a more intensive type of support provided?

These questions are examined in the next chapter and further discussed in the concluding chapter.



## Chapter 6 Parents' *habitus* and informal childcare

In this chapter, the focus is on analysing data relating to agents (parents), and investigating how they operate within the *field* of childcare. It contributes to Level 3 of Grenfell's methodological approach to *field* analysis (2014), where the actual individual agent within the *field* of informal childcare is analysed, with a focus on their background, trajectory and positioning. In essence, it is about how parents' *habitus*, and their economic, cultural and social *capitals* relate to their attitudes, dispositions and behaviour within the childcare *field*. As Grenfell writes:

"This level is expressed in terms of individual features of the characteristics of individuals, but only in so far as they relate to the field, past and present. In other words, we are interested in how particular attributes, which are social in as much as they only have value in terms of the field as a whole. *Habitus* directs and positions individuals in the *field* in terms of the *capital* configuration they possess and how this resonates, or not, with the ruling principles of logic of the *field*." (Grenfell, 2014)

Data collection therefore requires an initial gathering of personal – *habitus* – accounts as a way of building up an ethnography of *field* participants which can subsequently be analysed with respect to *field* positions, structures, and their "underlying logic of practice" (Bourdieu, 1977), and, most importantly, the relationship between *habitus*, *capitals* and the *field* (Bourdieu, 1984, p.101). As Grenfell also notes, a 'bottom-up' approach to research involving biographical and ethnographic data allows for the inductive analysis required to assess the interaction between *habitus* and *field* (Grenfell in Silva and Warde, 2010, p.22).

From narrative interviews, the themes of interaction between personal decisions, cultural expectations and public policy are illustrated. These interviews illuminate parents' ordinary childcaring practices, including the relationships and correspondences between individuals, groups and structures that operate within the *field* of childcare, but also intersect with the *fields* of child-rearing, family and work. According to Reay, a person's individual history is constitutive of *habitus*, but also is the whole collective history of family and class to which they belong (2010, p.434). A deep understanding of the agents and their relationship with the *fields* requires greater attention to aspects such as biography, life history and detailed information about the logic and motivation underlying how they practice within the *field*, and how this resonates with official or other common discourses. In doing so, the value of using Bourdieu's theoretical insights to illuminate and understand the logic of the practices these parents reported can be tested.

## Interviews with parents

Evidence presented in this section is drawn primarily from interviews with parents in the three localities of Blaenau Gwent, Ceredigion and Wrexham. Some additional data is drawn from fieldwork notes that were made based on informal discussions with parents at locations (such as parent and toddler groups) during the process of distributing the screening survey. Fifteen parents were interviewed in each area, chosen from some 190 screening surveys completed and returned. Subjects were chosen first across the three areas, and then sampled to represent parents in differing circumstances related to the research questions. This included parents using formal, informal and a combination of both types of care; lone parents and couples; and parents across a range of incomes.

In many ways, the interview samples reflected the profiles of the case study areas (see page 32) and, in doing so, established a good correspondence between the sampling and the main research questions for which the locality areas were chosen to provide contrast.

As described in Chapter Two, a *Thematic Analysis* approach has been taken in analysing the data. Thematic Analysis was favoured for its conceptualisation of research as an inductive process, which allows immersion in the data prior to analysis and theorising. The method therefore sits comfortably with the overall Bourdeusian methodological approach of this study.

From reflecting on the interviews that I undertook, along with the process of transcription and reading of the translated Welsh language interviews, and then re-reading transcriptions for coding, patterns of experience emerged from within the data that form a number of themes. Given the narrative, and in most cases biographical structure of the interviews, these are presented under the headings of Background, Trajectory and Positioning (Bourdieu, 1992, pp.104–107).

## Subject background

One of the benefits of a qualitative element in approaching the research question, is the ability to collect background information about subjects that in many other studies of childcare choice is often limited. Studies (Hansen and Hawkes, 2009; Bryson et al., 2012; Rose, Elicker, Kensinger Rose and Elicker, 2008) often refer to concepts such as 'disadvantaged backgrounds' when discussing family background, with constructions of such terms usually based on socio-economic status or the educational qualifications of parents themselves. There is seemingly little research that has assessed in detail the relationship between participants' own upbringings, from which they derive some modes

of thinking, types of dispositions, sets of meaning and qualities of style (Reay, 2004, p.58) and the formation of an individual *habitus* that might inform how they operate within the *field* of childcare.

### ***Childhood recalled***

Interview participants were asked to describe their own childhoods with a focus on their experiences of being cared for, either by their parents, informally and in formal childcare. With participants of a similar age, many of them reflected on childhoods which were contemporaneous. Some recalled childhoods that were 'idyllic' (Amy) while others described growing up free and unpressured:

"I think it was the case of where we lived, we lived in a very nice location and the fact that I had my siblings quite close to my age, to me that was the most positive. You know, you've got, you like to make friends there and the fact that actually you didn't have to go to childcare every evening you could go home after school." (Deina)

"I just remember coming home from school and there being sandwiches and cakes on the table and if friends were coming over, biscuits with their names on. It sounds so cheesy but those really are the things that I remember most. I realise now how lucky me and my brother were." (Fran)

"I pretty much grew up in quite a relaxed atmosphere, if you get what I mean. We were allowed to go to the local shop to get sweets, and go down to the park in and out." (Hannah)

Others recalled childhoods that they described as very 'ordinary' but still very positive:

"I guess that we were quite ordinary. There was nothing different, just run of the mill, a typical family. We didn't really want for anything although looking back now, we probably didn't have a great deal." (Lisa)

As Ricouer (1991, p.5) suggests, while participants are best placed to reflect on their own stories, the respondents' self-reflective and post-hoc analysis can create a gap between a "life lived and a life recounted" and therefore should not be relied upon as evidence without corroboration. In this context, however, participants' recollections are important signifiers of the values, attitudes and dispositions that they currently hold. For example, the narratives are not used to suggest that there was a golden age of childhood, but there may be in the minds of our participants, a contrast between their children's current experiences and their own upbringing. This becomes clearer when participants talked about their own parents' working patterns, and what this meant to them.

Most of the parents interviewed were born in the 1980s and 1990s, a period of economic and social change in the family. As Brannen and Moss (1998) wrote, there was increasing integration of women

with children, particularly with young children, into the labour market as a result of the decline of the male breadwinner and the need for two incomes to support working class families, in particular. Yet, despite a rising number of women working outside the home, childcare services had yet to grow to meet these new demands (Finch, 2003, p.3).

This is reflected in our subjects' narratives. In the case of Joanna, both of her parents worked and she clearly remembers the difficulty of making childcare arrangements:

"[my father] worked as a carpet fitter and a bread delivery man and a painter and decorator and a bit of everything. Mum ran her own hairdressers. She'd started when she was 15 and was 27 when she had me. She carried on though...she would drop me off at my Nan's in Johnstown then drive back to Wrexham to work and then pick me up later. It was quite a round trip." (Joanna)

Yet when Joanna's brother was born two years later, her mother gave up work for a time and sold the hairdressing shop. She subsequently took a job as a 'school dinner-lady' which Joanna thinks was to fit around their school day, but, most importantly for her, it meant that her mother was able to either pick her up from school, or be at home when she got home from school.

"Well, we went on the bus to school, because she worked there too, so she'd get us up, get us to the bus and she would finish and go home and we would get the bus home and she would be there. I always wanted my mum to pick me up from school. I remember that, if she came and picked me up from school I was really chuffed." (Joanna)

The pattern of mothers working – part-time or full-time – supported by informal care but then 'giving-up' when a second or third child was born was a common story told by participants. Aimee's story is similar to Joanna's.

"Dad worked full-time, mum worked full-time until my younger brothers came along then she stopped working when I was 5 or 6. She was a machinist. She sewed the fancy bits on lingerie – she was quite proud of that. Dad was an electrical engineer. He worked full-time, shift patterns all-sorts. What I remember when my mum was working was that I was shipped off to my Nain and Taid's [Welsh grandparents] for the day. Although she had the family around, it wasn't enough for her to continue to work. She wanted to be at home because I think the twins were a handful, and I didn't help either." (Aimee)

Aimee goes on to suggest that her mother's financial worth to the household was less significant than her father ("Dad was the one with the main income, the breadwinner") and so it was not a problem when she 'gave-up' work. For her, though, the benefits were clear:

"The best thing about my childhood? Mum being around. Dad was often away with work, but Mum was always there." (Aimee)

The experience, or the recollection of the experience, of full-time home care as a highly positive aspect of their childhood was talked about by a number of participants. In the cases of both Fran and Joanna, it would seem to have an impact on their own attitudes towards parenting, work and care, as will be seen later.

While most interviewees spoke about maternal care, Hannah's mother worked full-time and she was cared for mainly by her father, but this reversal of the predominant gender and caring role was clearly seen as abnormal, even in retrospect:

"...he was the town firefighter. So, without sounding too mean, I was pretty much brought up by my dad. Because my mum was always working, so it will be my dad who was doing the school run, and picking me up from school and my mum was only—we only ever saw my mum on evenings and weekends." (Hannah)

Hannah's story was the only one amongst all the transcripts to have included a father's primary involvement in care, but a number recalled joint care and work arrangements:

"My mum worked, she was a music leader, I think, two nights a week just for a couple of hours each. Each night she would go to it but then my dad was home to look after me." (Carla)

There were fewer stories told by participants of having been brought up in a family with two parents working full-time throughout their childhoods, perhaps indicative of a working class bias within the sample. Alex's parents were more middle class, and her mother worked full-time as an optician throughout her childhood, while her father was an engineer. She recalled that both she and her sister were looked after by a childminder, but pointedly said that this had "done her no harm." She believed that the fact that both her parents worked meant that they never wanted for anything as children. Claudia's parents, on the other hand, described a work / care situation that according to La Valle et al. (2002, p.8) is not uncommon:

"I don't think mum worked when I was really little. But then Mum and Dad both worked in a factory just in the next village but I think they did shifts so that one of them was there for me

and my brother. I remember my Dad would pick us up from school a lot. I think he must have been working nights then slept when we were in school.” (Claudia)

While it cannot be generalised, it is interesting to note that in the small number of cases where participants' parents had worked atypical hours, neither informal nor formal care was recalled as being received. As La Valle et al. (2002, p.61) conclude in their research, while parents were mainly happy with such arrangements, it was nevertheless a choice that might not have been made in a context where other childcare options were not available.

The narrative of the subjects' own mothers 'giving up work' (Kate, Tania, Joanna) to care for them when they were very young was common in both working-class and middle-class families.

“Initially, I know when I was very young—we talked about this recently—she used to take me to work with her because the family business was based at my Grandparents' home and then when they moved into more formal office premises Mum decided it wasn't a suitable environment for babies or a young child to be. She was really doing a few hours here and there, so she decided then that she wouldn't work so she stayed at home for a couple of years then. Eventually, she went back and worked in and around university life around London.”  
(Marie)

In almost all the cases, subjects talked about their mothers 'going back to work' and gaining employment once all of their children were in full-time education. Nonetheless, this pattern needs to be set within a time-period which preceded the “reconfiguration of public and private responsibility for the financing and provision of child care” and the 'defamilialization' of care (Mahon, 2002a, p.343), but also preceded the widespread introduction of early education provision in Wales, as discussed in Chapter Four. An additional observation is that, in Wales, women's participation in the labour force was lower than, for example, in England, suggesting that the stories of our subjects' childhood experiences were not uncommon. In 1992, when many of the interviewees were growing up, 1 in 5 women in Wales did not work because they were looking after their family, whereas in 2010, by the time many of them were having their own children, the figure was 1 in 10 (Prichard, 2013). Such changes are likely to mean that the trajectories of the interview subjects are likely to be different than for their mothers, but it is interesting to examine whether the work and care dispositions of their parents impact on subjects' later behaviours as mothers themselves. Barón, Cobb-Clark et. al. (2008) found in their research in Australia, that there is some intergenerational transmission of *attitudes* towards work, welfare and individual responsibility, and concluded that young people's attitudes were indeed shaped by socialisation within their families (Barón, Cobb-Clark and Erkal, 2008).

Unsurprisingly, in the context of the point in time, few interviewees recalled experiencing anything other than maternal or informal care in their own childhood. Alex, as previously mentioned, was cared for by a childminder, but for the remaining few that had experienced formal pre-school childcare, this tended to be in 'traditional' playgroups:

"I used to be in a playgroup but my mum used to come with me. I'm sure our mums were there with you. I remember going to that it was in the, right between [Wrexham]. I used to go there, I remember that." (Emma)

In contrast, more than two-thirds of the interviewees refer to being cared for informally as a child, mainly by grandparents, although in some cases wider family networks were employed:

"I can remember being looked after by my grandparents and the fun that we had." (Aimee)

"I remember spending a lot of time at my Nan's house. She did us dinners and everything." (Jade)

"I was looked after by my cousins who used to be childminders. It was the best of both worlds really, I was cared for by the people who loved me most, my family, but they were also qualified to do what they do. My mum and dad only wanted the best for me. They worked everything around us as children, and I don't think you can ask more than that really." (Amy, translation)

"We lived in Glasgow city centre, most of my family lived in the same place, even the same block, though my nan just lived 5 minutes down the road. My Dad wasn't around and my mum always worked. Everyone shared everything, including looking after children!" (Claire)

While not common, there were a small number of instances of non-family informal care. Mostly it was talked about as being only for short periods or emergencies "...you could always knock on the neighbour's door and say, Oh, could you just look after these for a minute?" (Lori), or, more significantly, as Laura recalled, friends helping each other out:

"My mum used to have some other children as well, an old friend's children, just when they were working as well. So we always had loads of kids at home, and we had our friends to play with, so it was quite good." (Laura)

These participants' stories about their own childhoods are interesting from a number of perspectives. First, as will be seen, they illustrate both how little, and how much, the practice of childcare has changed within the localities inhabited by the subjects, and how the *field* of childcare intersects and conflicts with the *field* of parental – and mainly maternal - labour-market engagement. Secondly, the

narratives provide a starting point to assess the impact of family history, practices and values on how the subjects subsequently operate in the *field* of childcare. The extent to which interviewees have accumulated *capital* – in all its forms – from childhood, can be examined in the formation of both individual and group *habitus* deployed in later life. Bourdieu (1977) argued that young children learn a set of cultural repertoires from their parents (including language use, manners, preferences and dispositions) which act as markers of status. The actions of the previous generation in passing on economic, social and cultural *capital* that can be used by their children – in this case our interviewees – has been discussed by Reay (2004), Vincent et al. (2008), Duncan & Edwards (1999) among others, and can be clearly seen in their accounts. While the participants' parents' generation had less choice in constructing anything but pre-determined gender roles, the individualisation of gender relations in late modernity, and the ability of some to create 'lifestyles' might be apparent (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2004, p.503). For example, in the case of Joanna, she clearly admired the efforts that her hairdresser-mum made to continue working after she was born, yet her reflection on the time her mother was working to 'fit around' her children was something she valued very highly. According to Beck, "...as the traditional social ties, relations, and belief systems that used to shape people's lives in the narrowest way are today losing more and more of their significance" (2004, p.502), Joanna should have had choices that her mother did not. Yet, in her case, with the freedom to choose a 'lifestyle' away from the constraints of gender expectations, she might have been expected to take a different trajectory to her mother:

"I had him [first child] and loved staying at home. I loved being a 'stay-at-home' mum."

(Joanna)

Joanna subsequently started working part-time in the same school in which her mother still works, and would seem to have successfully replicated her own childhood in terms of work and care. The strength of *habitus* supported by inherited cultural and social *capital* would seem to have been stronger than 'second-modernity deviations' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2004, p.506) in this situation.

The role played by parents in social *capital* building on behalf of their children, where the ideas and social practices of parenting may privilege and celebrate particular ways of being a parent, or being a working parent (Braun, Vincent and Ball, 2008, p.90) are visible in the narratives. These in turn may have currency in later life as a particular disposition towards work or care. In the stories of parents' childhoods (eg. Aimee and Amy), the proximity of family and other social networks was often converted into cultural and economic *capital*, by enabling both parents to work. Participation in local social networks such as those described by Laura, may also have helped to either mitigate or reinforce structures of privilege or disadvantage that were passed on by mothers to daughters (Bourdieu, 1973).



## Trajectories

Interviewees were all asked to describe the time between the end of childhood (taken as leaving school) and when they had their first child. For some parents, this was no time at all, while for others there was a considerable gap. In the context of assessing the formation of a parent's *habitus*, a 'normative' trajectory might be from school, to further education and work, followed by developing relationships, family planning and having children. What is clear from interviews is that life rarely follows such linear pathways. Jenny, for example, was brought up by a single parent and spent much of her childhood caring for a disabled sibling. In her words, she 'escaped' as soon as she could leave school, and moved in with her partner when she was 16. She was pregnant shortly afterwards but had a miscarriage, was pregnant again when she was 17 and had her first child when she was 18 - by which time her partner had left her. While there is more to Jenny's story, it illustrates the difficulty in assessing the choices being made by parents assuming that they are in any way a homogenous group that might act in predictable ways. It is on this association between 'position' and 'disposition' that, according to Crossley (2005, p.86), much of Bourdieu's work hinges. The social space occupied by those parents interviewed, *positions* them differently according to their portfolio of *capitals*, resulting in *dispositions* towards a particular course of action. As Reay writes, "...individuals can be adjacent to each other in social space yet have very different ratios of economic to cultural *capital*. These differences are a consequence of complex relationships between individual and class trajectories." (2004, p.58).

### ***Education and work disposition***

In this section, four interviews (Lesley, Jenny, Ffion and Alana) are used to illustrate differing trajectories of education to work to highlight the complexity of actors' positions which can result in similar or differing dispositions. The term 'work disposition' is used in this section to mean the overall extent to which a person is disposed to working or the strength of their motivation to work, for whatever reason or combination of reasons (Bell et al., 2005, p.23).

The first case is Lesley, who lives in Blaenau Gwent:

"I come from a working class background, I suppose. My dad was an engineer, a tooling engineer. He worked full-time. My mum worked at a mix of jobs, but she was in administration."

With working parents – and working grandparents close by – Lesley describes being cared for “within the family” when she and her siblings were not in school. She stayed in school until she was 18, then, after a gap year, studied town planning at university, and then went into employment:

“When I was probably in my early-to-mid-twenties, I was very much focused on getting my career up and running and wanting to move around and get experience of jobs in different places and build my career and get where I wanted to go with that.”

Lesley had her first child when she was 34:

“It was definitely a planned pregnancy and very pleased but there was a huge amount of conflict within myself, I suppose, regarding work and how I was going to resolve that. I always knew I didn't want to give up work but at the same time I knew I wouldn't be going back full-time because I really felt my priorities were changing with a baby coming along.”

She returned to work at the end of maternity leave, using a complicated combination of flexible working (both her, and her husband), a childminder, a day nursery and her mother, and now works full-time.

Next, we return to Jenny, who describes her childhood as ‘quite chaotic’, with her single parent mother struggling with mental health issues, which meant she never worked, and a disabled brother. Jenny therefore had no experience (that she can recall) of receiving childcare, but from an early age she was a carer herself. She left school with few qualifications. Jenny now lives in social housing on the estate where she grew up and, prior to meeting her, the situation she described on her screening survey filled me with negative preconceptions. Yet Jenny was one of the most positive and motivated parents that I interviewed. At age 20, she was a lone parent with two children under the age of three from two previous partners and was working as a childminder. She talked openly about wanting a life that was ‘different’ to that of her mother and some of her contemporaries:

“I never wanted to sit at home on benefits. When I was childminding I used to take all the children for walks and all the dogs and a pushchair. I can't think what people used to call me. There's that girl with all those kids, but I was working and I've always, always wanted to work and to work with children. So it's either teaching or nursing.”

She joined a childminding network and was able, through that, to gain a Level 3 qualification that then opened the door to an access course that has since enabled her to gain a place on a nursing degree course. A combination of Welsh Government and NHS funding allows Jenny to use a day nursery for

three days a week when she is training, but this is complemented by two days when her mother cares for the children.

The third case is Ffion, who was brought up by two parents in Northamptonshire, but now lives in Ceredigion. Her father worked full-time in a tyre factory while her mother gave up her secretarial job to care for Ffion and her brother when they were small, but returned to work when they were both in school. She recalls being cared for by her grandmother while her mother worked. Ffion left school when she was 16 and went to an agricultural college where she took a three year course in equine studies: "When I was at school I was obsessed with horses, and when I left that was it. My whole life after that was horses." She charts a career that was clearly driven, as she gained specialist qualifications and experience before eventually settling in Ceredigion running her own equine business with her husband. She said that children weren't really on the horizon, but if they had been, she had thought she would have been able to combine her business with childcare. However, the business and her marriage failed, and Ffion described how she became pregnant with a new partner, while waitressing and cleaning: "It changed drastically at that point so I literally grabbed jobs I could just to stay afloat really". Since the birth of her daughter, Ffion has not worked:

"I always said if I was extremely well qualified or well paid in a job, or a job that I really love I would have carried on working, but I was earning minimum wage and not really earning enough, to keep everything going. We made a conscious decision you know and I knew that that was the decision I'm going to make, that I was going to be a full-time mum".

The fourth interview is with Alana, who was born and brought up in a village in Blaenau Gwent. She describes a close-knit community:

"My parents both worked full-time so basically they relied on grandparents to look after us. Mum worked shifts and dad worked shifts, they just alternated between them so grandparents were there just for the in-between bits. Really like they are now for both of my two."

She left school at 17 with 'not bad' qualifications, and gained employment in a series of administrative and junior office roles. She had her first child when she was 20, and although she was living with her partner, the pregnancy was not planned. She hadn't thought seriously about work and childcare options until just before she was due to return:

"Yes, we did have to think about it eventually as we were both working, he's working shifts and I was like, "How are we going to manage?" I wanted to go back to work but we didn't

actually physically come to think of any child minders or anything or day nursery because mum offered – in time then. I was very lucky. Before I was due to go back to work three months, mum gave up her job and retired, she ended up being a full-time nanny then while I went back to work.”

Alana now has two children, is a lone parent but still works full-time. She talked of some regrets at having worked full-time through her children's early years:

“I would have loved to work part-time, even now. You miss out on picking them up from school and bits like that. I am lucky now I get to take them to school, but when they were little, I didn't. The playgroup and things like that, it would start at half past nine, finish at half past eleven. In my working hours, I couldn't get out to do it. I would have liked to have spent more time with them.”

The interactions between home background, the processes of education and parents' educational careers is evident in all four interviews, but not always in the ways that might be expected.

Lesley's trajectory conforms most closely to what might be seen as a middle-class course, having been brought up in a dual-earning household, gone to university and settled into a career that was very important to her. After having children, this changed and, as she said, “Your priorities instantly change once you have a family. All those energies and efforts that you put into your job they can't be put direct in the same way.” Nonetheless, Lesley continues her career and arranging childcare by others is essential to this. Jenny, like Lesley, also has two children, will shortly have a degree and a career, and broadly uses the same combinations of care to support her career ambitions. Yet her background and her route to her current position is in stark contrast to that of Lesley.

Both Lesley and Jenny would seem to have strong work dispositions, and it might be argued that Jenny has the greater motivation. Pungello et al. (1999, p.78) explored the association between mothers' work disposition and commitment to employment and childcare use. They concluded that higher socioeconomic status was linked to higher work and career commitment, while women with lower socioeconomic status were less likely to demonstrate a strong disposition towards anything other than the economic aspects of employment. The evidence from interview subjects recalling their mothers' work and care situations would suggest that nearly thirty years ago this might have been true, but in a generation there has been considerable change both of policy and expectations. The trajectories of Jenny and Lesley reflect what Mahon (2002a, p.244) identifies as childcare shifting from the private to the public domain. In previous generations, both Lesley's and Jenny's mothers had little choice but to

give up work to care for them when they were young, whereas they both now primarily use formal childcare for their own children.

### ***Work and care 'choices'***

Yet, as Ffion's story illustrates, 'choice' is rarely equal. As Mahon (2002a) writes, within the current UK welfare model (as opposed to a Swedish or Danish style 'egalitarian' model), parents are faced with the choice between 'homemaker' status and paid employment (2002a, p.353). Nonetheless, they are choices that were not always available to their own mothers. Not all of the four interview subjects, however, had the necessary *capitals* to follow through their preferred positions. Lesley's educational cultural *capital* enabled her to mainly set aside the economic impact of buying-in childcare from the market, while Jenny's strength and motivation might also be seen as cultural *capital* with which she has been able to enter training and gain the financial support to pay for care. Yet Ffion, who had similarly strong career motivation, found herself through circumstances to have her choices limited by the low value of her cultural *capital* in the community where she lived (there was no demand for her qualifications and experience in horsemanship).

"I would consider working, but if somebody says, Ffion, can you come and clean my toilet, would you do it like, 9 to 5, and get someone else to look after your child? Cleaning somebody's toilet isn't worth it...If I'd been able to keep working with horses I would have been able to look after [daughter] and work at the same time. I'd have been working doing something that I enjoy most and working with her at the same time."

Ffion's experiences would seem to be at odds with Hakim's (2011) account, in which she argues that women now have 'genuine choices' over their careers and their reproductive lives. Reflecting Beck's (1992) theories, according to Hakim, differences in mothers' decisions about work or care reflect differences in *life-style* preferences between a work-oriented career or marriage-career, in which employment takes second place (2011, p.454). Yet Silva (2005) might suggest that Ffion's caring role indicates cultural *capital* in a different form. She argues that caring is just as valuable as other cultural *capital*, but because as 'gender *capital*' it is hidden, it is valued less, and therefore is less convertible to valuable 'economic cultural *capital*' (2005, p.100).

Alana's position contrasts with the other three in a number of ways that are interesting. The expressions she used in the interview suggest that she was perhaps the least work-orientated of the four cases and, in different circumstances, might have taken the option to work less, or not to work at all. However, in her situation, the social *capital* endowed by her parents is transferred into economic *capital* that allows her to continue to work full-time without the considerable costs of bought-in

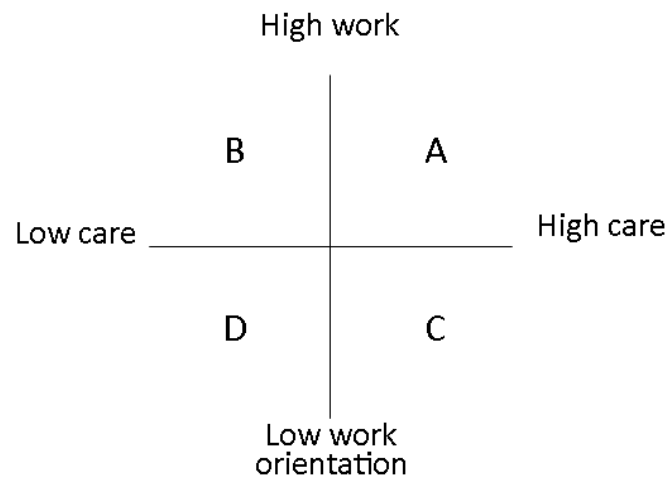
childcare. In line with Wheelock and Jones' (2002b) research, like most parents, Alana's decision to use informal childcare was not based only on economic rationality, and she talked about her parents providing "love" and a "home environment". As suggested by Land (2002) and Wheelock & Jones (2002b), in many parents' eyes, relatives better provide the emotional security and involvement that young children require. Alana's story also illustrates the tension between the economic framing of childcare policy, where the focus is on encouraging mothers to engage in the workforce, with 'gendered moral codes' that place mothers at home (Duncan et al 2004). Moral codes, according to Duncan and Edwards (2009), operate as mothers simultaneously express pride in and enjoyment of their role as 'mother' and 'homemaker', and frustration, guilt and stress when they find it hard to cope with work and caring responsibilities.

"Whatever you do, as a working mum I've always felt guilty that I've not always been there but at the same time I do know I'd probably would get quite resentful about not working at all and being home and giving everything up that I've worked for, as well." (Alana)

### ***Differing attitudes towards work and care***

When analysing the interview transcripts, there seemed to be patterns within the attitudes of parents towards work and care across the three locations. Even accounting for variations in household incomes and educational background as Pungello et al. (1999) suggest, different work and care disposition trends seemed apparent. To investigate these frames of interest further, Bell et. al.'s (2005) analytical tools are useful. They found that, in making decisions about childcare and work, a mother's personal disposition towards work or towards care is an important factor in decision-making, and that these dispositions can be categorised within a matrix where the work disposition and care disposition can be viewed as continuums upon which mothers' attitudes can be plotted. This reflects Bourdieu's approach in thinking about fields in more general terms, expressing the *field* figuratively with two intersecting axis representing economic *capital* and the other, cultural *capital*, as is done in Figure 16 (Bourdieu, 1998, p.270). Each quadrant represents a social *field*, each of which has '*distinction*' (Bourdieu, 1984) which, based on individuals' positions in social space, can be clustered according to the same or similar characteristics or correspondences highlighting the presence or absence of a group *habitus* while indicating the power relationships that draw individuals to cluster (Grenfell, 2014). The presence of outliers, suggested Bourdieu, also shows that *habitus* is not deterministic, showing that individuals are capable of 'free play' within fields rather than being subject to the "mechanical forces or rational action theory" (Bourdieu, 1988, p. 25). The matrix in Figure 16 can therefore represent both the parental positions on work and care and their portfolios of economic and cultural *capital*.

Figure 16: Typology of parents' work/parental care dispositions (Bell et al. 2005)



In Sector A are parents with a high work disposition but also strongly disposed towards providing maternal care. These were mothers who, by their own admissions, 'wanted it all', such as Alana and Sarah.

"I always kind of wanted to work, but even now I think I would like to be at home with them."  
(Lisa)

"I think sometimes I was jealous as I'd arrange a nice baby group for [grandparents] to go to and I'd be thinking that should be me doing that and I did want to be home but I did realise that I couldn't be a stay-at-home mum. Looking back, I think I could of afforded to stay at home but I think I would have struggled to get back into a job afterwards." (Sarah)

These are the mothers for whom tensions between care and work were found to be greatest and who were most likely to compromise one ideal for another. As Lisa says:

"...somedays even now I think I would like to be at home with them, to always be there for school pick-ups and drop-offs, when they're poorly and everything, but other days I think I get the balance right. I wouldn't want to be full-time. I'm the kind of person who always questions what I'm doing, and I'm always reflecting on what as a parent I'm doing the right thing." (Lisa)

Some of the mothers interviewed in this category, including Sarah, expressed strong feelings about informal care as "*the next best thing*" to maternal care, with grandparents preferred as having the same norms and values (Wheelock and Jones, 2002b).

In Sector B are mothers with a high work disposition and a lower disposition towards parental care, such as Lesley. These parents were those that were in the workforce, or committed to being so after

maternity leave or a career break. Work for them was an intrinsic part of their identity, saying "...I couldn't be a stay-at-home mum" (Rachel) or "I always knew I didn't want to give up work" (Rhian), and therefore they had fewer conflicts in combining work and care than those in Sector A.

In Sector C are those mothers with lower work and higher care dispositions. Some viewed motherhood as a 'job' in its own right, and felt that undertaking work outside the home would impinge too much on their maternal role. These mothers were often the most forthright in justifying their decisions in the context of child development or children's happiness, and felt that working would be detrimental to their children.

"I want to be there for them even if we haven't got as much money. You can never replace the love for your child with stuff." (Leanne)

*"It's my personal choice not to use childcare. I want to stay at home and look after them myself. You can't have that time back with them when they're little."* (Donna)

In Sector D were those who were not strongly motivated to join the labour market and generally stayed at home with their children, but did not necessarily value maternal care highly. Indeed, they often saw value in non-maternal care as being an opportunity for children to develop socially and cognitively.

"I take him to [Flying Start] because they just go in and they form bonds really early and the parents have got friendships as well. So I think, it gets him used to doing a little bit more constructive, you know listening, sharing and sitting down whereas at home if you are an only child, you don't have to share your toys with anybody do you. So when they go to school it's a bit of a culture shock." (Abigail)

Attitudes to work and motherhood were also found to be affected by the behaviour of other mothers, particularly as mothers move in circles where social feedback effects are intensified, tending to mix with others of a similar social and employment status to themselves:

"It's only a little village we live in, up in the valley...It's a nice community, it's a nice happy place, there's some really nice mums...a lot of mums that don't work because of childcare, they say because the cost of childcare is ridiculous. So it's a lot of mums like me at home, a lot of single mums that stay at home with their kids...It's nice. We meet up and our kids play together and it's alright." (Elaine)



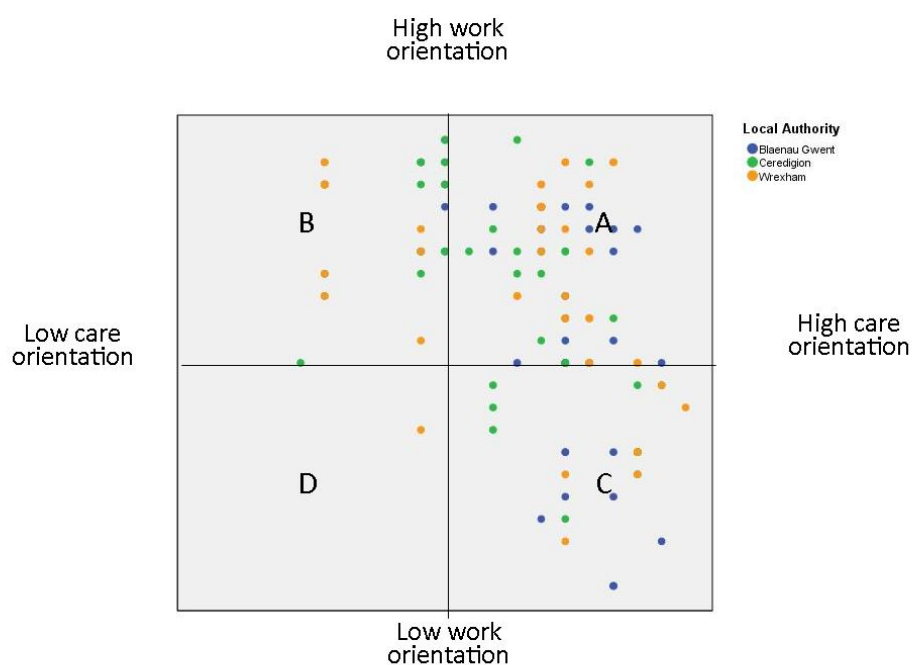
These parents often expressed their low work disposition in fatalistic terms, saying that childcare was either too expensive or not available to them to allow them to work:

“...if you don’t have relatives, you can’t work.” (Carla)

“I can't really recall there being any local childcare available to me and as I don't drive I can't see how I can work.” (Elaine)

Using Bell et al.’s (2005) typologies, the content of the 45 interview transcripts were coded within NVivo for key words and phrases that indicated care and work dispositions, and then given a 1 to 10 score for each category. The benefit in analysing data in this way is that it focuses on the beliefs and values that parents expressed through their narratives, rather than assuming dispositions from behaviour. Matrix coding within Nvivo (Silver and Lewins, 2014, p.89) illustrates how dispositions were distributed across the four sectors of the matrix, while colour coding highlights the locality of each participant.

**Figure 17: Work / care dispositions of mothers interviewed by case study area**



The analysis shows that, most commonly, mothers’ dispositions were towards both work and care, (Sector A) with few parents expressing low care and low work dispositions (Sector D). Those who were orientated less towards work were most often still very care-orientated (Sector C). Between the locality areas, there were some clusters indicating differing norms and attitudes. In Wrexham, mothers were found to be more work-orientated but were also highly care-orientated (although there

were some significant outliers). These parents were therefore the most likely to experience the greatest conflicts in balancing family, care and employment, as illustrated by Alana and Lisa (see above). They were also those who talked about childcare as having a developmental as well as a custodial function (Hansen, Joshi and Verropoulou, 2005, p.1), recognising the role that childcare, like education, has in cultural reproduction (Reay, 2004, p.58):

“If even I wasn't working I think I'd still send her to [day nursery] for the benefit she gets. I can really see how she's come out of herself since going. I'd be more worried about her going to school next September if she just been at home. She's really ready for it now and she'll do really well.” (Charlotte)

In Blaenau Gwent, while mothers were found to be the least work-orientated, they were the most care-orientated - although it is difficult to be clear whether this was due to adapted norms feeding back from limited choice and opportunity in an area with the lowest rate of employment and very little formal childcare available. To confirm this, a longitudinal aspect to the study would be necessary to gauge dispositions before parents had children and then afterwards. This was, however, done by Himmelweit and Sigala (2002) in their study examining mothers' childcare decisions. Although examining social rather than geographical groups, they concluded that, in this situation, mothers adopt the behaviour which is characteristic of, and thus normative for, the groups they belong to or closely identify with (2002, p.10).

In Ceredigion, work disposition was found to be evenly spread along the axis, but mothers were the least care-orientated. These parents definitely wanted to work and did not necessarily want to provide full-time childcare themselves (although, again, there were some significant outliers). Notable in Ceredigion were the number of self-employed mothers, such as Fran:

“I knew that I couldn't and wouldn't go back to work full or even part-time, so I set up my own business as a picture framer. My daughter has her own space in the workshop with me. I know it sounds awful, but I've made her a kind of pen with lots of toys and cushions and stuff and she knows by now that mum has to work.” (Fran, translation)

Ceredigion parents experienced fewer pressures between work and care, and were more prepared to use non-parental care, and informal care rather than formal care, to support work, but this is set within the context of the difficulties faced by families in rural areas. Carys was returning to work as a Health Visitor after the birth of her second child when she was interviewed, and provided an interesting perspective:

“Many families in Ceredigion are so used to providing their own childcare that they are bemused when I ask them about it! They have no idea what should be provided, or even that they might have the right to ask for it. Where childcare providers do exist, they seem to be fully stretched and at full capacity...Some parents who farm find childcare a problem even though they’re at home during the day. Lambing time is really difficult because there’s no one to look after the children. One mum I knew was a dairy farmer said that as their day started at 5 o’clock how was she going to find someone to come in to look after the children at that time?” (Carys, translation)

There are clear parallels here between Ceredigion and Halliday and Little’s (2001) study of rural childcare in Devon, where they found that for rural families, childcare was an organizational minefield, requiring constant adjustment and negotiation, and where childcare choices took place within a shifting picture of provision (2001, p.435).

Forry et al. (2013, p.20) conclude in their literature review of childcare decision-making, that variation in parental priorities has been associated with socio-demographic features of the community as well as social networks within neighbourhoods. Huff and Cotte (2013, p.94) also suggest that community characteristics influence parental choice of childcare, including the quality and quantity of childcare supply, the characteristics of the parents’ employment and social networks, and the quality and availability of childcare information. Yet in Chapter Five, once employment was controlled for, regression analysis found no significant relationship between localities – as defined by local authority areas - in Wales and parental choice. However, a stronger link was found in the survey data between choice and social networks which are likely to operate at a more local level.

Two dynamics are therefore evident from this analysis of the data. First, is that parents with similar *capitals* in different spaces can have very different dispositions towards work and care as a result of both external constraints and a *habitus* modified by membership of social groups. This is apparent from the stories of Elaine from Blaenau Gwent and Jenny from Wrexham. Both clearly had difficult childhoods, received only paternal care and became young lone parents themselves with little educational *capital*. Yet Jenny, as discussed on page 177 has a high work disposition, has always tried to work and is set on a career. Whereas Elaine’s work disposition, as evidenced by her comments on page 183 is much lower because of the external constraints around childcare and work where she lives, and also the reinforcement she gets from being a part of a social group with other mothers in the same situation. Jenny,

Secondly, space is important for another reason in Ceredigion, as parents operate within a rural childcare *field*. As found by Brown & Baker (2014, p.51), traditional class groupings in Welsh-speaking areas have less currency, supporting the evidence from interviews suggesting that *capitals* operate in a different way. Alternatively, the rurality of the area may reduce any class advantage as was observed by Halliday & Little (2001) in their study of childcare in Devon. While the statistics show that employment opportunities in Ceredigion are far greater, the economic *capital* that this endows a Wrexham parent with to choose from a range of childcare options is replaced in rural areas by valuable social *capital* in the form of informal care and other social support networks. Yet this is only the case for some parents, leaving those without access to networks of support disadvantaged.

Differences between work and care dispositions found between the localities would therefore seem to indicate different norms and attitudes, while the profiles of each locality (see page 32) can be seen to provide additional explanation. A high disposition towards work in Ceredigion is unsurprising given it has the highest proportion of working parents, greatest job density and where adults are more likely to have higher qualifications. Blaenau Gwent, on the other hand, has the lowest proportion of working households with children, few employment opportunities locally and more people have low qualifications. This suggests first, that *capitals* are likely to be inequitably distributed amongst individuals across the three areas, resulting in differing locality *habitus* forming. Secondly, values and dispositions derived from family, neighbours and friends will result in differing norms and practices within each area. Thirdly, it would seem likely from interview accounts that external constraints of *fields* such as limited choice and availability of both employment opportunities and childcare in an area such as Blaenau Gwent contribute to an adapted *habitus* inclined more towards care than work. The same is true in Wrexham, where different conditions in the childcare *field* - notably the more extensive availability of formal childcare - result in parents having greater opportunities to utilise the *capitals* they possess.

### ***Changes in employment***

The point at which mothers return to work (or not) is a key moment in the narratives and has been discussed widely in literature (eg. Pungello and Kurtz-Costes, 1999; Skinner, 2003a; Himmelweit and Sigala, 2004; Bell et al., 2005). However, Skinner (2003) suggests that there are drivers to change at two points in time. There is first a fundamental decision about whether to return to work after maternity leave, but secondly, there is often a subsequent time when parents make changes to the number and type of hours spent in employment (Skinner, 2003a, p.36).

This is described in detail by Lesley who charts the changes in employment hours across two pregnancies with a flexible employer (other interviewees were not so fortunate):

“I think you realize that it’s very difficult to have everything and do everything really well. I knew before [first child] came along I went down to working three days a week, so I thought that would be quite a good compromise. I thought my employer was quite happy with that, but then it got quite pressured and I went back to full-time after 6 months...When I had [second child] I dropped two days and I’m still part-time but only very recently I’ve increased my hours now to thirty hours a week so I do four full days. Arrangements at work are changing, so I’m going to work at home more often and things like that because we all have enjoyed this and at work we were fed up, but in some ways it’s a bit easier. My husband is now unfortunately working in London so he works away for three days a week, Monday to Wednesday but he is home on a Thursday and a Friday so I tend to work half on Tuesday to Friday pattern on those days.” (Lesley)

As is clear from Lesley’s interview, simply having more children also acted as a driver to change working hours, while for other interviewees, having a second child was often a tipping point where change was closely tied to childcare costs. Some mothers interviewed cited the rising cost of formal childcare associated with having second or third children as a reason for temporarily giving up paid work or changing their hours:

“When we had [child 1] my partner- he was working. I was getting my child benefit, and child tax credit. That was more than covering [day nursery]. It was more than covering it, it wasn’t excessive, but it just wasn’t feasible to put [child 1] and [child 2] into the care, because I would be basically working to cover it, with what I was earning.” (Christie)

Even for some mothers using informal care, the extra burden on grandparents was felt to be too much:

“I had every intention of going back to work after I had [child 1] because I’m not one of those people that can sit still and I spoke to mum about it, and she agreed that, within reason, she would help out wherever she could. And my boss was really good in the sense that he put me on shifts that worked around that. I stayed there as long as I could but then [child 2] came along and I couldn’t ask mum because she was working too, so I stopped then.” (Hannah)

For others, such as Lesley, the complications created by a lack of integration in the early education and care systems caused difficulties in combining care and work:

"I would meet the childminder at school when I dropped my daughter off and dropped the baby off with her, and she would then do the after school pick up. We would then pick up from her house at half past five because I did twenty-two hours a week to start with, so I worked three, quite long days. It wasn't demanding to finish early to pick up from school or anything like that and I'd always worked a distance from where we were living as well, so you've got that travelling time still. So we did that until my son was at school a year. Although the year before when he was eligible to do the pre-school thing, he did do his afternoons at the local pre-school." (Lesley)

Skinner (2003) categorises the problems that Lesley describes as 'coordination points', the complex management of which can have effects on parents' working patterns (2003a, p.39). The success of the management strategies that were adopted by parents such as Lesley in arranging formal and informal support with these coordination points was reflected in her working hours. On the other hand, non-working mothers such as Lisa (page 198) had faced greater problems with coordination because they could not arrange support with coordination points when in employment. For parents of pre-school children, in particular, the problems faced as the result of a fragmented childcare and early education system in Wales are manifest.

## Positioning

Thus far, the focus of investigation using narrative accounts has been on how parents' backgrounds and early trajectories form individual and class *habitus*, and supply forms of *capital* that can be deployed in childcare decision-making. In this section, the focus is on examining how participants position themselves within the *field* of childcare, further examining the effects of existing and modifying *habitus* and changing *capitals*.

From examining the data, a number of common patterns of experience emerged relating to factors that were highlighted as being influential with regard to parents' experiences of choosing or using formal and informal care. From coding, several frames were identified that are discussed in the following section. These included narratives around the processes of parents choosing childcare, how the availability of both formal and informal care affected their choices, the extent to which paying for care was important, how decisions were arrived at within the family, how family size and structure affected choices, whether work dispositions were central in decisions, and how relationships between parents and informal carers were important.

### ***Choosing between formal and informal care***

In the previous section, parents' narratives show that while some parents will use only formal care, and others will use just informal childcare, most use a combination of both. This can be portrayed positively as a complementary arrangement, or as deficit management with one care arrangement supporting the shortcomings of the other. It also needs to be acknowledged that, as many of the interviews show, use of types of care and combinations change over time as family size increases, employment conditions change or as children's needs are modified. As much of the literature examining childcare decision-making often accepts (Bryson et al., 2012; Rutter, Evans and Rutter, 2012; Forry et al., 2013; Meyers and Jordan, 2006), the issue of 'choice' is intrinsically and conceptually difficult to examine empirically, as it depends on an almost infinite number of structural and internally derived variables within which the choices are made. This is where a Bourdieusian approach can be helpful in differentiating between 'position' and 'disposition', where the *positions* parents find themselves in according to their portfolio of *capitals* result in different *dispositions* towards a particular course of action (Crossley, 2005, p.86). Rather than deductively focus on what literature or data suggests are factors that have previously been shown to be important, in this section the inductive approach of framing the narratives is deployed to focus on the patterns of experience that emerge from the interview data; these indicate where parents position themselves in relation to the childcare choices they make.

As already observed, parents often expressed their choices about combining work and care in terms of values or identities that are an important part of *habitus*. It has also been noted that the extent to which their positions can be deployed is dependent on the *capitals* they possess. This was demonstrated in the case of Ffion (page 178) who would have liked to work and care, but whose considerable cultural *capital* in the form of qualifications could not be converted into economic *capital* in her circumstances, leaving her with limited options. The same is true when examining how the research participants made choices about whether to use formal or informal care, or combinations of both.

### ***Availability of informal care***

While the choices that parents made were rarely uncomplicated, the accessibility of informal carers was clearly one of the most fundamental factors in parents' decision-making. The case of Alana (page 178) was not uncommon among parents using informal childcare where maternal grandparents often stepped-in when other options were found to be too complex or unaffordable. Ceri was not fully appreciative that issues become much more complicated after a first child arrives. As much as she had thought about childcare, she admitted that the reality of finding suitable care was much harder than

anticipated. As a Welsh speaker living in rural Ceredigion, the choice of formal provision available to her was very limited:

“I don't know what I'd do if mam and dad hadn't offered to help. They are going to be a god send I can just see it. It's such a big thing thinking about going back to work and leaving your child. You need someone you can trust and who you know won't let you down. I wish I didn't have to go back at all but I know I have to.” (Ceri, translation)

Likewise, Liz had not anticipated the situation that she found herself in and was happy to take up her mother's offer of informal care:

“[My daughter] was unexpected. She wasn't planned and it did throw us in to a bit of a whirlwind. It was also a new relationship at the time so we were looking at moving into a house together and setting up home. I'm really lucky to have lots of family close so we made a conscious decision that I would come back to work, and mum offered to have [daughter] so I came back after 4 months and at that time mum was more than happy to have her full-time.” (Liz)

The proximity of close relatives – and grandparents in particular – was found to be the most significant factor in the choice of informal childcare in Rutter and Evan's (2011) study, and was further suggested as a significant predictor of childcare use in the regression analysis in Chapter Five. The extent and proximity of social networks appear to have high value in the *field* of childcare, but as illustrated by Laura, do not only extend to family. Laura had been using a day nursery for her two children, but her eldest had become increasingly unhappy in the setting:

“My mother-in-law had them on Friday night they were staying there. She talked to him about this, about the nursery and he said 'I don't want to go to the nursery', he started crying; he hated it that much. It was awful. I couldn't, I just rang and said they can't come back. So when I finished work, and then luckily my husband went to the pub actually and spoke to a friend of his, whose girlfriend who used to be a childminder, so she's got them now. So it works out really well. [My husband] was like, 'Oh ring Rosy I'm sure she will have them for you, she'll sort something out'. It must be two and a half years she's had them and she's now my best friend, it worked out fine.” (Laura)

Laura's story is interesting from a number of angles. It highlights the importance of social networks in the childcare decision-making process, which in Laura's case, resulted in her establishing new childcare. Other accounts from interviews emphasise social networks as important in less direct, but



equally important ways, where informal networks provide much of the information about local childcare that parents subsequently use for decision-making. This has been highlighted as important across a wide range of studies (eg. Chaudry, 2004, p.55; Pungello and Kurtz-Costes, 1999; Forry et al., 2013, p.14). Laura's account also suggests the ad-hoc, almost serendipitous nature of many childcare decisions. According to Layzer et al. (2007 in Forry et al., 2013, p.13) 41% of parents surveyed for the National Study of Child Care for Low-Income Families in the US made a choice about childcare in just one day, although it is unclear from the research whether these were first-time decisions, or decisions about modifying existing arrangements. In these narratives, parents were asked about their first-time childcare decisions, with no obvious pattern emerging in the time taken to make decisions, but in concurrence with Layzer et al.'s findings (2007), post-hoc satisfaction with the decision originally made was not related to the time spent making it:

"I would never change our childcare decisions. Its what's best for us all. I work, my partner works and she gets to spend time with us both and still gets to mix with other children." (Amy, Translation)

"It was the right decision to make at the time with all my children. It was based on how our lives were working then, and that's the important bit." (Claire)

### ***Availability of formal childcare***

The extent to which the availability of formal childcare seemed to be a constraining factor within parents' decision-making was a theme that emerged from the data, but with some variations across the three localities in line with both parents' perceptions and the actualities of childcare supply.

In Wrexham, amongst those parents interviewed, the availability of formal childcare was a secondary consideration based on the assumption that there was plenty to choose from. Having made the choice to work, mothers then set about choosing the childcare that best met their needs from a range of providers available to them in an area with a high volume of available places. Here, some parents were able to make a consumer choice when looking for childcare:

"... we looked around a lot of nurseries. It did take us a good few visits to decide on the right one, but as soon as [my daughter] entered that setting she felt at home, she was taken off and introduced to everyone and didn't want to come away. She was ready for it." (Aimee)

Middle-class parents like Aimee talked more frequently about quality playing a part in their childcare decision-making. They were likely to have visited a number of settings before making their choices, and talked about choosing settings based on reputation, and how 'happy' their child would be.

Likewise, Hannah's situation, as part of a full-time working-couple with a relatively high income endowed her with the economic *capital* to make an uninhibited choice:

"...price isn't really a big issue, it is slightly, but I wouldn't say a big issue. Obviously it can't be too extortionate; otherwise it's not worth it. More than anything, I want my kids to be happy and comfortable with it, because if after a few days they turn around and say 'Mummy, we don't like it,' then I'd be really reluctant to send them back." (Hannah)

Parents on lower incomes had less consumer power and their choices were restricted, meaning they often had to make serious trade-offs in choosing childcare. Laura had used a day nursery for her son which she found to be of poor quality and had moved him to another (more expensive) setting, but was forced to take him back to the first setting on grounds of cost:

"Well, the quality is important but then again, it's like depending on if you can afford it, isn't it? I would never, unless you would have pushed me, the second time have gone back. I swore to myself never put him in there and then I did because that's the only way I could afford to work." (Laura)

In Ceredigion, where there is less formal childcare available, many parents said that this restricted their options. Sarah said that her childcare decisions were based on what was available in the area. There was a limited choice of private day nurseries, and those available had limited spaces:

"Some people have booked in [to a day nursery] even before they're pregnant. That's the way it goes down here." (Sarah, translation).

Parents in rural areas of the county, such as Deina, said that childminders often provided the only formal provision:

"Where we live there is not that much of a choice you see; there is only one child-minder within a certain area. In other places you'd go look at three or four child-minders and then choose the one you want whereas where I live, it was the case of well, and unless you want to drive miles out of the way, that's it." (Deina)

In Blaenau Gwent, the county in Wales with the least amount of formal childcare provision, it could be expected that the availability of formal childcare would be a primary constraint for parents in making decisions about family, work and care. Most of the parents interviewed knew that there was not much available:

“If you need full-time childcare, unless you have family available, you would need a childminder. Nothing else in Abertillery that you could use. I know there are a few childminders but I have heard that it is difficult to get a place with a childminder.” (Tania)

“There is nothing in this area, but I think there’s a nursery in Blaina.” (Claudia).

The evidence from parents across the localities supports the small amount of other research that has been carried out examining the relationship between choice and availability of formal care provision. According to Forry (2013, p.22), based on US evidence, the accessibility of formal providers is a strong correlate of childcare choices. In the UK, Rutter and Evans (2012) suggest that the availability of both formal and informal care is a significant factor in parental decision-making, while Chaudry (2011), again in America, found that for parents on low incomes, travel beyond their community to seek additional childcare opportunities, was unmanageable. What is evident in Wales, is the inequity in provision between different areas which restricts the options that parents have when they are faced with choices about not only what kind of care to use, but whether to use care at all – and often therefore whether they can work or not.

### ***Affordability***

The cost of formal childcare was highlighted by many parents as an issue that affected how they thought about childcare decisions. For those such as Ffion (page 178), the balancing of childcare costs against earnings was cited by her as a major factor in becoming a full-time carer. This was repeated by other parents, such as Jade, a lone parent in Blaenau Gwent who was not working and did not use childcare, but had some perception of the cost, and how it affected her options:

“I don’t know [about the cost of childcare] but think it’s quite expensive, about £35 per day. You’d need to have a tidy job to pay that. You’d also need to be working a lot of hours to make it worthwhile.” (Jade)

Yet the affordability issue was not limited to locality, nor wholly to economic circumstances, as Beverley and Hazel explained:

“My nursery fees are around £500 to £600 a month. And even though I get help from tax credits, I’m still paying hundreds. Because obviously they need to go all day, every day I’ve got no choice, but it’s crippling. It might be worth it when they go to school but at the moment I’m working for almost nothing.” (Beverley)

"It is dear, but I've been fortunate that I've had family to support me. I think if I'd had to put the children into childcare more than the one day there would have been no point in working."

(Hazel)

Some parents were aware of tax credits and other support to reduce the cost of care for low income families:

"I'm pretty good with my money so you know I try to work it out how to budget. You get some of it [childminder fees] paid for you anyway with tax credits so it wasn't too bad for me."

(Lyndsey)

Yet others were not convinced:

"Tax credits put people off working when they don't get much more to work. I know a lot of single mums who are better off financially by staying at home. There should be more incentives to work." (Brenda)

As discussed in Chapter Five, the evidence around affordability as a driver of childcare choice is extensive, if not conclusive. The assumption that informal care is chosen as a low-cost or no-cost option by parents, and is therefore used more widely in lower socio-economic groups is found in other studies (Bryson et al., 2012; Chaudry et al., 2011; Forry et al., 2013), but was not present in data from the National Survey for Wales (see Chapter Five) and nor is it apparent as a primary driver of informal childcare choice from the interviews with parents across the three localities.

### ***Paying for informal care***

Returning to Laura's story (page 191), hers is also the only example found in the 45 interviews of non-familial informal care. Land, writing in 2002, suggested that in working class families, employed mothers would pay their mothers, relatives or neighbours to provide childcare, but there is little hard evidence from more recent literature (Bryson et al., 2012; Evans and Rutter, 2012; Brady, 2016) to support this. While some mothers spoke of this anecdotally, especially in Blaenau Gwent and Ceredigion, Laura's was the only first-hand evidence of regular payment being made through an informal arrangement. As Laura paid Rosy, who was not at the time a registered childminder, the practice is also technically illegal (CSSIW, 2011) making it a difficult area to research both practically and ethically.

### ***Decision-making within the family***

Laura's story (page 191), indicates another pattern of experience emerging from data regarding the decision-making process within families. "...Ring Rosy - I'm sure she will have them for you," Laura's husband reportedly said, indicating clearly with whom the responsibility for arranging childcare lay. As discussed previously, all available evidence shows that mothers are the primary childcare decision-makers within families, with strong links between mothers' employment and work, and wider decisions around caring. Despite the increase in women's employment in Wales (Prichard, 2013, p.6), interviews with mothers showed that, even where traditional work / caring roles were reversed, fathers still had a very limited involvement in choosing childcare. While fathers were sometimes involved, their level of engagement was limited:

"When I was pregnant I did go around nurseries on my own. I reserved a place in the nursery at [college] as I thought that was going to be handy. He didn't come and look at it with me."

(Lisa)

Some of the mothers interviewed (for example, Aimee and Liz) were the primary breadwinners in the family, but, despite having more caring responsibilities, they said that male partners still had little input into the choice of non-parental childcare. Liz worked full-time, with her partner working part-time around some caring responsibilities based on economic rationalities:

"...he was always in kind of a shop-assistant, customer service role, so we always knew that my role was going to be more important for the family." (Liz)

Even so, Liz took full responsibility for arranging childcare:

"I would like to say that [choosing childcare] was truly joint but in all honesty, although he came along with me to look at the settings, he probably left it to me because I knew what we were looking for. He was comfortable with the choice that we made in the end but probably the reasons that I rejected some of the childcare, he probably would have been quite happy with them" (Liz)

As identified by Forry (2013, p.12), there has been little research that examines the role of fathers in childcare decisions (an exception is Ceglowski, Shears and Furman, 2010), whereas the evidence from this study would suggest that a recent Welsh Government policy document highlighting "fathers' increased role in parenting" (Welsh Assembly Government, 2011b, p.31) falls wide of the mark when it comes to making childcare choices in dual-parent households.

The gendered nature of childcare decision-making is supported by a considerable body of empirical evidence presented both here and in wider literature, and therefore childcare choices are bound to be heavily influenced by gender-based expectations. Despite some of the interviewees having transcended traditional gender roles in employment, when it comes to caring, many seemed to be still influenced by notions of the past, in what Moss & Lewis (2006) call a notion of idealised motherhood. As a consequence, according to some writers, healthy and successful child development is still seen as intrinsically linked with 'good mothering' rather than 'good parenting' (Ball, Vincent et al. 2004b). The tensions that this causes when set against pressures for women to pursue careers, to be positive female role models to their children and to contribute to household finances was clear in the accounts of interviewees. As Lesley says (page 176), "Whatever you do, as a working mum I've always felt guilty."

### ***Number and ages of children***

As has already been discussed in the cases of Lesley, Christie (page 188) and others, having more children, and children getting older, act as drivers for change in the preferences and practicalities of childcare choice.

Many of the interviewees described how their mothers had been involved in caring for their first born child, but that when a second child was born, the relationships changed – from both perspectives. Mothers such as Hannah (see page 188) said that asking grandparents to look after two very young children moved the nature of the relationship from being a labour of love to more of a chore. This was complicated by whether their firstborn was also their parents' first grandchild. As more grandchildren were produced, parents often said they felt less able to call upon grandparents to provide significant amounts of care. Sue was a lone parent who had her first child at seventeen, and her mother had helped out considerably as she returned to education and then worked. Living in Blaenau Gwent, she said a number of times that informal care was her only option both on grounds of cost and availability, especially as she did not drive. When she had her second child, however, her mother still helped with care, but Sue expressed some regrets:

"I think with one child, I would prefer just my mother. But now that I have the two, and it's more likely that I'll have the third somewhere in the future, I'd probably opt for professional childcare. Just because they're more qualified, more able to cope with the amount of stress of numerous children and all the kids are in one place at the same time. Well, my mother. She does get quite ill in the morning. So it wasn't something that I really wanted to put any stress on her. But she said I'd really love the company during the day. But she also now has another

two grandchildren so sometimes it's difficult for her to free enough time to care for all of them as she can't have them all at the same time." (Sue)

Patterns also emerged in interviews of informal care at specific ages, often compensating for the lack of formal childcare. In particular, when children were aged three and they became eligible for 10 hours of early education (or 15 hours in Flying Start areas), mothers were more likely to consider a return to employment. With wrap-around childcare not widely available, informal carers were found to be important in bridging the part-time school day and the working day:

"I drop her off in the morning and my mum she picks her up from school at lunch and brings her back here. When the youngest goes she'll do the same." (Rachel).

Yet for other parents, it created added complications as seen in Lesley's case (page 188) and in Lisa's case as follows:

"At the moment it's easy because the grandparents come out and pick them up and then [partner] picks them up at half past four after work. But when it comes to school time, they're going to have to pick her up, to take her to school first and pick her up again and then take her back. My mum's got two other grandchildren that she picks up every day from school and the two schools, they're miles apart. I live about five or six miles away from where my sister lives." (Lisa)

With the expansion of after-school care when their children were in primary school, parents had fewer problems in balancing care and work, but informal care still played an important part throughout the primary school years and even the early secondary school years:

"The other big problem with childcare around here is my other daughter is 11 and she is now in secondary school, what do you do? I work until six o'clock every day. She used to go to my mum's, but 11, it's a tricky age isn't it because they are not old enough are they to go home on their own, but there's nowhere else." (Kate)

Aimee spoke both about how her choice of childcare and choice of school for her children were linked. Her approach was unusual in the interview sample, and probably only possible in Wrexham where the choices were available to her:

"I looked at all of the local schools in the area and looked at what childcare provision they had as well as I knew there was no other way to do it. My partner's hours had increased again so we needed a school that provided the whole package. So I found a school that had a before-school club, a wrap-around club for nursery class, an after school club and a holiday club and

I checked that they took them from nursery class in all the settings. I'd been to the school and I liked the atmosphere so it was a consideration, the schooling, but the childcare was most important. There are about 3 schools that I could have gone to although the others had the whole package she wouldn't have been able to start in the before and after school provision until she was in reception class and that would have caused us huge problems. [When she started] she would go to breakfast club at 8.15 in the morning. The same staff provide the care throughout the day. She'd go to nursery class in the morning then playgroup wrap around care in the afternoon then after school club until I finished work then I'd pick her up at 5 o'clock." (Aimee)

Narratives in other interviews suggest that the integrated package of education and care identified by Aimee is very rare, but clearly not unknown in Wales, yet would seem to provide the ideal solution for many parents' school-aged childcare needs.

### ***Family types***

Ten out of the 45 parents interviewed were living alone with their children. Some had become lone parents following relationship breakdowns after they had had children - others had children without having lived together with the fathers. The interviews with lone mothers showed that they rely on informal childcare to a greater extent than couples, a finding that is in line with other studies, such as Bell et al. (2005). Nonetheless, while the situation of being a lone parent meant that they faced more external constraints than couples in their choices, values were still evident in their decision-making, with the tensions between work and caring a consistent theme. Work disposition was found to be no lower or greater than mothers in couples. Positive dispositions to work were found to be high for the same reasons other mothers gave - because of inherited values and beliefs, a key element of their identity, or because of its high social value. What was visible in the accounts of some lone mothers interviewed, however, was the expression of work disposition as part of providing their children with a 'positive role model'. Lisa had always worked, using a combination of informal and formal care, but following her second child had post-natal depression and took a short career break. But she recalls the importance of work in coping: "I thought it was really important to get on with something else rather than just focus on the children". She also spoke about wanting her children to be "proud" of her because she was working and "having a purpose" rather than just looking after them:

"It's always been important to me to be a good role model. Especially as I've got two girls, I want to show them that women not necessarily should but can work, that they can have jobs and they can have families, even run a home successfully, and it's always really mattered to



me that I've had jobs that I've enjoyed and had a nice career rather than just shop work or something, but I've worked hard to get where I am and I've always gone on evening courses and stuff. I like the children to know that I'm still learning and that's important to me." (Lisa)

For Lisa, working enabled her to change her view of herself, and it is therefore a critical element in the formation of a *habitus* that contributes to the way in which she makes childcare and work decisions. Unlike mothers in couples who sometimes spoke of work as providing them with "independence", "confidence" or "self-esteem", Lisa's account highlights the value of work as an important element of cultural *capital* that she wanted to pass on to her children in the same way as she previously described her parents passing down a strong work disposition to her.

While lone parents faced many of the same constraints as mothers in couples, their choices were often more limited in trying to accommodate work and care. Abigail described how the desire to work only part-time was primarily "parent-centred", because she was nervous about returning to work and wanted to do so gradually ("a little job in the mornings"). The idea of working a large number of hours made her worry about coping with work alongside her caring responsibilities:

"I did think I'd wait until [son] was in school before going back to work but I really needed to get out of the house a bit. When he was two they said he could go to [playgroup], and my mum said she'd pick him up so I looked for a little job in the mornings. I worked in Tesco which was good, but it did stress me out, because I'd never left him before and it playgroup was only term-time so I had to ask mum in the holidays too." (Abigail)

All of the lone parents interviewed were using or had used informal childcare, and in most situations the maternal grandmother was the main provider. In a few cases, both sets of grandparents were involved in providing care, even though the parents were no longer together, highlighting an interesting dynamic. Hazel in Ceredigion had relied on both sets of grandparents for informal care, and expressed her concerns following the break-up of the relationship with her partner:

"We're not together any more so the childcare thing got a bit more complicated. I was a bit concerned about his mum [after we split up], but we still have a good relationship, his mum she still helps me as much with the children and was concerned about whether that would be awkward." (Hazel)

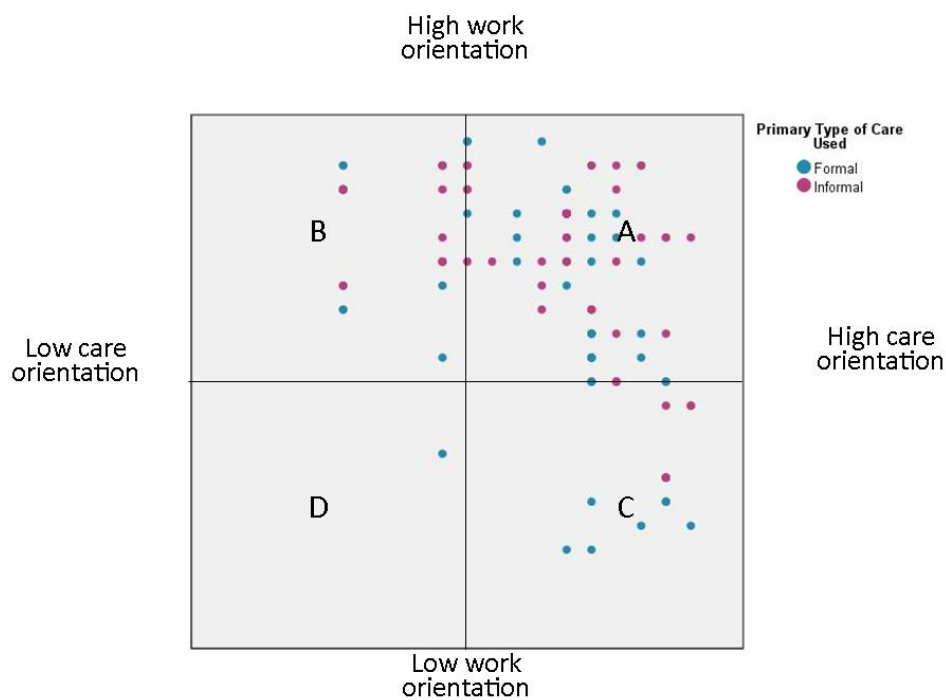
In the interview sample, single mothers who had been in a relationship with fathers after the children were born were more likely to be in contact with them, and in some cases still shared some caring responsibilities. This ranged from occasional weekends and holidays to regular arrangements where

children spent part of their time with their father, or where he dovetailed care arrangements around his and the mother's work. In the context of childcare, the notion of single parents as a group with homogenous needs is therefore misplaced, but a key theme emerging from their accounts is that single parents are alone, and thus face specific obstacles and challenges.

***Work disposition and choice of childcare***

Interview data was analysed using Nvivo Matrix Coding and Bell et al.'s (2005) typologies, mothers' work dispositions were compared against their primary use of informal or formal care. This finds that while there was no obvious difference in caring disposition between those using formal and informal care, parents using informal care had a much higher work disposition.

**Figure 18: Work / care dispositions of mothers interviewed by primary care type**



In the context of the interviews and what is known from quantitative analyses (Chapter Five), this might be unsurprising given that informal care is most commonly given, and in the greatest volume, by grandparents for very young children whose mothers are returning to work after maternity leave. As has already been discussed, the use of informal care then commonly drops with the birth of a second child in the family, increasing the likelihood of mothers taking further maternity leave or temporarily giving up work. At this point, as illustrated by Ffion's story, dispositions can change and mothers can become less work - and more care - focused.

In all areas, logistical considerations—such as the local availability of care, the cost of childcare, and opening hours - were more important considerations for low income families' decisions because of the constraints that they faced, not because they were connected to what parents actually wanted for their children's care.

### ***Language***

Most of the research into parental preferences around Welsh language provision for children has focused on choice of Welsh-medium education rather than choice of childcare (Jones, Martin-Jones 2004, Hodges 2012, Bush, Atkinson et al. 1981). However, research by Jones and Morris (2007) suggested that in Wales, some parents make choices about childcare to enhance both cultural and linguistic transmission, with the objective of maintaining status within society. To investigate this, parents interviewed were asked about language and whether it had any influence over their choice of childcare – whether formal or informal, or Welsh, English or bilingual. Writing about choice of education, Hodges (2012) categorised parental motivations as economic, cultural, educational or personal, and content analysis of interview responses was coded using these headings. Ten Welsh-speaking families were interviewed (all in Ceredigion), including seven where both partners in the couple were native Welsh-speakers, and three where one non-Welsh-speaking parent (the mother in all cases) was with a Welsh-speaking partner. In addition, English-speaking mothers in all areas were asked about language choice and preferences.

Children from the Ceredigion families interviewed where Welsh was the main language spoken in the home were all living in areas where there was an amount of Welsh-medium childcare available (Ceredigion County Council, 2015). This tended to be sessional provision in *cylchoedd meithrin* which are often the only group-care settings in many areas of the county. Few of these families used Welsh-medium formal daycare provision, but, instead, most were using or had used informal care with grandparents where they needed to support work. Language transmission was not found to be an issue that was consciously considered by these parents. It was a 'given' within the *habitus* inhabited by these parents that children who spoke Welsh in their home would also speak Welsh with them, their grandparents, in pre-school and in school itself. Alex had used a local childminder to support her full-time work, and it was natural that she was Welsh-speaking:

"I don't think I even thought about it. I knew [the childminder] anyway, so it wasn't an issue."

(Alex, translation)

For parents like Alex, the density of Welsh-speakers and of community networks<sup>31</sup>, and the availability of Welsh-medium childcare provision was not a constraining factor. Brown and Baker (2011; 2014) have written about the Welsh notion of *buchedd* being similar to Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, representing a particular way of life, way of behaviour and "...sense of identity conferred, of being part of a particular culture or community" (2014, p.47). They compare life in the Welsh-speaking heartlands to peasant life in the *Bearn*, where Bourdieu was brought up and where he identified that the distinctive language, as in Wales, formed symbolic and cultural *capital* that had considerable transferable value within the community, but little outside. Where Wales differs from the *Bearn*, according to Brown & Baker, is that with devolution and the development of uniquely Welsh institutions and civil society, the cultural *capital* gained through speaking Welsh now has a wider currency (2014, p.51). This was recognised by parents in Ceredigion, both Welsh and English speakers, expressing a desire for their children to be able to speak Welsh to gain social or economic advantage:

"I think if you live in Wales you need to speak Welsh. I don't and if I want to stay within this area, there is a lot of jobs I can't apply for and you know, the necessity is you must be able to speak Welsh. And so it's up to them, I am giving them a choice if they want to stay within this area they're not going to be excluded from any of the job opportunities." (Kate).

Some parents in Ceredigion (eg. Ceri, page 191) expressed frustration at the lack of formal Welsh-medium provision. Sam was asked about her knowledge of childcare in the Aberporth area:

"There used to be a day nursery in Cardigan but I've heard it's closing, and anyway, it was very expensive. I think there are some childminders in the area, but I can't name one, and I've heard that most have a waiting list. The only childcare in [area] is the *cylch meithrin* which only offers 5 mornings or 4 afternoons depending how old your child is, but that doesn't help. Ideally there would be a Welsh-medium day nursery that I could use, then I could look for work. Instead I'm going to wait until [son] is in school, but even then, unless they start an after school club that's no good either." (Sam, translation)

Within the Welsh-speaking families interviewed, informal childcare was widely used, and aside from the case of Alex, all were using grandparents as their primary form of care. Although, when questioned, parents said that they felt it was important for their children to be brought up speaking

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<sup>31</sup> Morris (2007) in her study of networks and young people on Anglesey found that Welsh-speakers had the densest social networks.

Welsh, as with Alex's choice of childminder, their decision to use Welsh-speaking grandparents for care was an embedded, unconscious disposition.

Three English-speaking mothers interviewed in Ceredigion had Welsh-speaking partners, and here a different dynamic was evident. While childcare choices were similar – mostly a mixture of informal care and sessional Welsh-medium childcare – it was a more conscious selection, with parents expressing in interviews the economic, cultural and intrinsic value of Welsh language provision. Claire expressed a strong desire for Welsh-medium childcare provision, so all her children have attended *cylch meithrin*. She works part-time but has only recently done so, and said that even if she didn't work she would want them to go to the *cylch*, even if it's for a few hours a week as she believes that it's important that they mix with other children. Also, because her husband is a fluent Welsh-speaker, she said that he wanted their children to hear more Welsh in the community.

“I'm very conscious that I'm an English speaker in a very Welsh-speaking community. All [husband's] family speak Welsh and I really want [my son] to have the ability to speak both languages, so it's been important. He went to nursery and now that he's in school he's now teaching me how to speak Welsh. He's fluent and I think it's amazing.” (Claire).

This supports Hodges' (2010) evidence of “double transmission”, with parents learning Welsh from their children, and also Jones and Morris' (2007) findings that, in similar families, there is a “language decision-maker”. Which parent makes the language-related decisions is decided as part of the parents' negotiation of their power relations, roles and responsibilities in the household, but in multi-lingual families it was most often found to be the Welsh-speaker (Jones, Morris 2007).

For non-Welsh-speaking parents, choice of Welsh-medium childcare was found to be a more complex issue with distinct variations between the case study areas.

In Ceredigion, there was a much more normative approach to choosing Welsh-medium childcare. Although the proportion of Welsh-speakers in the county is falling, it is still close to 50 per cent and is the third highest in Wales (ONS 2011). The majority of childcare in Ceredigion is Welsh-medium - either purely Welsh-medium or bilingual (Ceredigion County Council, 2015) - and 70 per cent of primary school children are taught through the medium of Welsh (StatsWales 2013)<sup>32</sup>. This combination leads to norms and values being shared by parents which transcend linguistic divides.

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<sup>32</sup> However, Ceredigion's language policy is focused on primary education and the county has no Welsh-medium secondary schools.

English-speaking mothers said that they sent their children to Welsh-medium childcare - particularly *cylchoedd meithrin* - as preparation for Welsh-medium education:

“We started off with the *Ty a Fi* for both children. My son is what 11 weeks and he goes already. Personally it was my choice to take them from about six months and toddle in Welsh so that you got bombarded with the language then.” (Deina)

Jackie, whose daughter attended a *cylch meithrin*, feared that her child would stand out as being ‘English’ if she started school with no Welsh:

“Yes, it had crossed my mind that I was a bit concerned with you know getting picked-on for not speaking Welsh. We used to go to the *ty a fi* and then she started at the *cylch* which is great as she’ll be going to school with most of them.” (Jackie)

Unlike parents in other areas, non-Welsh-speaking parents in Ceredigion expressed little concern about their inability to support their children in Welsh language early education. Some had used relatives and friends for informal childcare in support of their children’s language development, supporting Baker and Prys-Jones’ (1998) evidence of bilingual education bridging generations, as Ffion recalls:

“The aunts and uncles, when they look after [my child] they try and speak Welsh to her which is great. It gives her more exposure to it.” (Ffion)

Discussions with groups of parents in Aberporth and Aberaeron suggest that Welsh language provision was broadly welcomed, and parents were happy with the county’s language policy. They felt that children were well-supported when learning Welsh in formal childcare settings and that this helped them to fully integrate.

As Hodges sets out in her 2011 study of Welsh-medium education and parental incentives, some parents choose Welsh-medium schools for economic reasons because they associate speaking Welsh with economic success and wider employment choices (Hodges 2012). However, she found in her study of parental choice in the mainly English-speaking post-industrial Rhymney Valley, that cultural incentives were more important. In a rural area with a much stronger Welsh-speaking community and a policy of bilingualism in primary schools, the educational and consequential economic incentives were, unsurprisingly, found to affect parents’ attitudes. Nonetheless, in areas with a greater proportion of Welsh-speakers and more progressive Welsh language policies - such as Gwynedd,

where over 98 per cent of pupils receive Welsh-medium education (Hunaniaith, 2014) – these effects are likely to be even greater.

In Wrexham<sup>33</sup>, while parents said that they would like their children to be able to speak ‘some Welsh’, few chose Welsh-medium childcare or education. The main reason stated was that they feared they would not be able to support their child and that this would have a negative effect on the child’s education. Emma had enrolled her child in an English-speaking playgroup and was planning to send her child to an English-medium school:

“I’d like [my daughter] to be able to understand maybe a little bit but I wouldn’t want her in a Welsh school. I’ve got a family member that moved to Wrexham from down south when she was about eight or nine and her mum and dad sent her to the Welsh Junior school and she really struggled, especially with homework. Her mum and dad couldn’t help her because they didn’t understand how to help her and I know she really struggled.” (Emma)

Because children were going to learn some Welsh compulsorily in school, parents interviewed in Wrexham did not feel that there was any particular advantage in Welsh-medium childcare, and other variables were felt to be more important in their decision-making:

“I’d like them to be able to speak Welsh, but I also wanted them to go to a Catholic school, because I am Catholic. That is why I put them there [in a playgroup attached to a Catholic primary school].” (Joanna)

While some parents did recognise that there might be economic advantages to be gained from bilingualism, none of those interviewed saw this as a significant enough incentive to pursue Welsh-medium childcare and education. Proximity to Wrexham seemed a factor for this parent, who had Welsh-speaking family, but spoke little Welsh herself:

“Corwen is really on the border, isn’t it? Just a few miles down the road, you’ve got very strong Welsh-speaking communities, and then you’ve got Wrexham which is all English but it’s where the jobs are. In Corwen, you can speak Welsh or you can’t.” (Hannah)

Lara, who was interviewed in Wrexham, but originally from Sweden, gave an interesting perspective. She had chosen English-speaking childcare but a Welsh-medium school for her son with the following reasoning:

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<sup>33</sup> Where 13 percent of people speak Welsh (ONS 2011) and where only 3 percent of childcare places are categorised as Welsh-medium (Wrexham CBC 2011).

"[My son's] fluent in Swedish, fluent English, fluent Welsh because he's picked the Welsh up so quickly, he has three languages already. When he started school he spoke English and Swedish so his brain's already adapted to, I think, for the Welsh, he just picked up and it's really good. It didn't determine where I put them up in childcare, I think it determined when I put them in school because it's Welsh-medium, but not the nurseries. I think, when he started school he was only three and I think before that is too young to learn a third language really." (Lara)

None of the parents interviewed in Wrexham had made choices between formal and informal childcare on the basis of language. How much this is driven by, or is reflected in, the Council's education policies are open to question. Wrexham Council's Language Policy for Schools Maintained by the Local Authority (LA) "...aims to ensure that pupils gain the educational stimulus afforded by bilingual education". Primary schools are all technically bilingual, although "...the degree of bilingualism may differ from school to school" (Wrexham CBC, 2014). What this means in practice is that, in the majority of the schools, English is the main medium of instruction, with Welsh taught as a second language (StatsWales, 2015).

In Blaenau Gwent<sup>34</sup> there was limited interest shown by parents interviewed in Welsh-medium childcare or Welsh-medium education, and only one of the parents had made the choice of provision on the basis of language. Many parents in Blaenau Gwent shared the concerns of those parents in Wrexham who were worried about their inability to support children in Welsh:

"We're not Welsh-speaking so we wouldn't be confident in supporting our children with their learning. I work in an English-medium school - children have moved to my school because they've struggled in a Welsh-medium school and learning through the medium of Welsh." (Claudia).

While some parents interviewed recognised that there could be an economic advantage, they did not think that it was important enough to modify their choices:

"I am not really sure how important being able to speak Welsh would help my children in the future when it comes to getting a job. If the proof is there that it benefits job applicants then I would push for it definitely." (Lyndsey)

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<sup>34</sup> Where 7.8 percent of people speak Welsh (ONS 2011) and where only 4 percent of childcare places are categorised as Welsh-medium. The 2014 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment survey found a greater number of Polish-speaking parents than Welsh-speaking parents in Blaenau Gwent (Blaenau Gwent CBC 2014).



As found by Hodges (2012) in her study in neighbouring Caerphilly, parents' cultural identities can be strong enough to make a difference even if economic incentives are not sufficient to influence choice. One parent who was using Welsh-medium sessional care for her children had made it a positive choice:

"I would have loved to have been able to learn Welsh when I was in education and I would love my three children to speak it. We're Welsh and should be able to speak our language. They don't teach it enough in South Wales and they should. We go to the Meithrin and they love it." (Jenna)

These comments also illustrate Hodges' (2012) notion of a 'lost generation' of people who did not have the opportunity to learn Welsh themselves, but placed a high cultural value on the language.

Nonetheless, most of those interviewed in Blaenau Gwent seemed ambivalent to Welsh, although Lesley expressed a more negative tone:

"I'm not opposed to them being exposed to some Welsh language. It is part of the culture, of the country, and I understand why people want to keep it going. I'm not opposed to it at the primary level. I suppose I'm more concerned about how it's going to affect their education if they get into senior level because I'd rather that they were focusing their time on subjects that's going to be real benefit to them in the future...Speaking Welsh is a nicety but French or German is more useful in the outside world." (Lesley)

As in Wrexham, the attitudes expressed by parents in Blaenau Gwent are perhaps reflective of, and reflected in, the language policies in place in the local authority. Blaenau Gwent Council's Welsh Language Education Policy "...aims to ensure that pupils of all ages are given the opportunity to learn Welsh" (Blaenau Gwent CBC, 2014), yet just 3 per cent of pupils receive Welsh-medium education (StatsWales 2015).

## Conclusions

The narratives in this chapter are presented within the context of Bourdieu's methodological approach to *field* analysis (Bourdieu, 1992, pp.104–107). The involvement and engagement of parents within the *field* of informal childcare has been the focus of study with the purpose of gaining a greater understanding of parents' *habitus*, and how this interacts with accumulations of economic, cultural and social *capitals*. How this relates to their attitudes, dispositions and behaviour is the central question for this chapter. Through techniques of thematic analysis, the intention has been to develop

a meta-narrative that organises subjects' narratives to tell a wider story that can be used in answering the research question (Davies, 2008, p.260). In this final section, therefore, the approach of Bourdieusian methodological analysis is revisited to provide a structure for a narrative that illustrates how the social trajectories of individuals differentiate themselves from one another (Grenfell in Silva and Warde, 2010, p.21).

The purpose of examining the life history of participants was two-fold. First, as a methodological approach, it encourages participants to engage in story-telling from an obvious and familiar starting point, and to enable them to easily structure their narratives. Secondly, it provided some indicators as to the resources and *capitals* that their formative years had provided them with and that are part of a developing *habitus*. In particular, the focus on the care and work situations of their own parents was seen as most likely to provide interesting parallels with subjects' maternal lives. As Bourdieu notes, the strongest elements of the *habitus* occur when distinctive dispositions and practices are acquired in early childhood (Bourdieu, 1990, p.139).

In examining the backgrounds of participants, their recollections of their own mothers' work and care situations would seem to reflect accurately other historical and statistical accounts of a period in transition prior to the development of childcare policies in the UK in the late 1990s. The interview narratives reflected a time when mothers were increasingly working, yet still performed the role of principal carer for children, and were the parents who took time out from formal employment to care for young children (Paull, Taylor and Duncan, 2002, p.2). While not idealising full-time motherhood, parents' reflections on being cared for at home were often highly positive. The influence that this had on some of the interviewees was clear in many cases. Some mothers replicated the work and care balance of their own childhoods, while the upbringing of others inspired them to do this differently. Following the trajectories of care experienced by mothers as children, and their subsequent care choices between informal care and other care types, there were no distinctive patterns of cause and effect. However, in the context of the time when childcare choices were severely restricted, this is perhaps unsurprising.

Despite nearly twenty years of childcare policy and strategy development in the UK (see Chapter Four), the narratives of parents showed that for many, the *field* of childcare has hardly changed. The process that Mahon describes as the "defamilialization" of care (Mahon, 2002a, p.345), in which the state increasingly assumes responsibility for care as the pay-off for women increasing their labour-force activity, would seem to be incomplete. Although many more mothers in the interview sample now use formal care arrangements than their parents did, many families are unable to rely on the market or the state to deliver the quality and quantity of care that they need, or would like. The notion of a

post-modern society in which women are able to construct reflexive biographies (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991) and choose identities, is not seen in the evidence.

Like their mothers before them, parents' own trajectories highlighted the extent to which their life-choices were restricted. Choices were limited by internal requirements such as work and care dispositions, by how they perceived themselves as mothers, and by external forces such as the availability of childcare of the right kind, of acceptable quality and what could be afforded. Often the same patterns of work and care were spoken about across the generations, yet the pressures have changed, with greater expectations that mothers engage in paid labour when their children are younger (Rafferty and Wiggan, 2011, p.288).

Parents' trajectories once they left school varied considerably within the narratives. Education as convertible cultural *capital* emerged as a strong theme from within the data, yet it was not always the predictor of future disposition towards particular care types. Other studies have suggested that informal care is linked to lower socio-economic status and education (Pungello and Kurtz-Costes, 1999; Fagan, 2001; Rose et al., 2008), but amongst participants in this study, informal care transcended such boundaries. The situations that subjects found themselves in when they became mothers created unequal opportunities to deploy *capitals* accumulated from families, education, work and life experiences. Other analyses of class, economic status or education might have suggested an inclination towards homogenous behaviour, but this was not apparent from examining parents' stories as a whole.

Dispositions towards work and care was a further theme that developed in accounts once subjects had become mothers. The analysis of this reflects Bourdieu's (1998) approach to understanding how *capital* contributes to the *habitus* of actors within a particular *field*. The extent to which participants were orientated toward both work and care places them within a sector of the childcare *field* that in itself becomes a sub-*field* of practice. This shows that the majority of mothers' dispositions occupied positions aligned with a positive care positioning, with work disposition providing much of the variation. According to Randall (1995), little inclination towards expressing a low-care disposition is likely given the tenacity of an 'ideology of motherhood' that remains a powerful influence in both the public and private spheres (1995, p.331), despite the social conditions that created it having long vanished. Nonetheless, as Skeggs (2004a, p.21) notes, the disposition towards an idealised notion of motherhood is embodied within the *habitus* and any mother that expresses a low-care position would therefore be in danger of expressing "heretical views" (Bourdieu, 1991a) in the context of a prominent discourse of maternal care. Yet, where most mothers were positioned within the high-care and high-work quarter is where the greatest internal conflicts are likely to exist. These struggles were clearly

expressed in many interviews. Reay (2004) writes about Bourdieu's concept of *capitals* in the context of emotions. While she acknowledges that Bourdieu did refer explicitly to *emotional capital*, he describes the practical and symbolic work which is mainly undertaken by women and generates devotion, generosity and solidarity (Bourdieu 1998 in Reay, 2004, p.57). Writing about education, Reay describes the intense emotions, both positive and negative, that were observed in mothers' involvement in their children's education – "Guilt, anxiety and frustration, as well as empathy and encouragement were the primary motifs of mothers' involvement" (Reay, 2004, p.61). The same can be seen in mothers' accounts of childcare. Reay's ideas suggest that the struggles mothers face in reconciling work and care might be seen as the deployment of emotional *capital* at the expense of other *capitals* – or vice versa. Middle-class working mothers such as Lesley (page 176), sacrifice emotional *capital* in the pursuit of creating economic and cultural security for their children by investing in high quality childcare, and thus spend some economic *capital* to spare themselves losing more emotional *capital*. Working class mothers such as Leanne and Donna (page 183), on the other hand, are constrained in ways which mitigate against the acquisition of both economic and cultural *capital*, and while they might deploy emotional *capital*, their children are disadvantaged and it therefore has little material value. As is also clear from the accounts given in interviews, fathers or male partners have far less invested in childcare. While many are involved, they keep a distance from childcare decision-making suggesting that emotional *capital* is decidedly gendered.

The locality analysis undertaken highlights the part that space plays in how actors operate in the childcare *field*. Depending on where they live, parents' *capitals* are seen to have different values. Their ability to deploy economic and cultural *capital* (and therefore the currency that it forms) is dependent on the external constraints of employment and childcare opportunities. Localised norms and values acquired through social contacts alongside the network of family support that can provide informal childcare, contributes to more or less social *capital*. This forms a *habitus* that results in parents adopting practices of "distinction" (Bourdieu, 1984) within the local childcare *field*.

Work and care dispositions were seen to be most significant when mothers make initial post-natal decisions. Yet, as suggested in other research, as children develop and families grow, those changes result in modifications of behaviour and disposition, highlighting the fluidity in *habitus* that Bourdieu describes (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1989 p.50). These were not, however, the only factors identified by interviewees that define the relationship between parents' *habitus* and how they are positioned within the childcare *field*.

The narratives illustrate how the *positions* parents find themselves in according to their portfolio of *capitals*, result in different *dispositions* towards a particular course of action. Structurally, for example,

the availability of formal childcare was found to be highly diverse across the three localities where parents lived, while individualistically, the availability of informal care was defined in most cases by family proximity and situations. In most cases, parents' practices followed a particular logic that might be assumed from the positions they found themselves in. Where there was more formal childcare available, more use of formal childcare was evident. This finding is supported by previous research and by quantitative analysis (Chapter Five). No reverse effect around informal care was found, however. The levels of informal care use across all three localities was found to be similar, and no connection was found between socio-economic status and informal childcare use. This contrasts with previous accounts. A similar situation is found in parents' accounts of the effect of affordability on choice of informal childcare, challenging the assumption that informal care is chosen as a low-cost or no-cost option by parents and is therefore used more widely in lower socio-economic groups. Nor was use of informal childcare found to be strongly associated with either work or care dispositions.

The use of informal care across social classes as both primary and complementary care was highlighted in the patterns that emerged in interviews. When children were three and four-years-old, informal care was found to both complement formal care and early education, and compensate for the lack of integration between the two. Interviewees highlighted the structural limitations of the childcare *field* as it intersects with early education, creating logistical problems for many parents. As discussed in Chapter Four, multiple policy frames are used to manipulate the 'rules of the game' of childcare and early education, resulting in parents facing significant challenges in traversing *fields*, particularly when children are receiving part-time early education and requiring full-time care. Parents without flexible informal care available are placed at a significant disadvantage.

In investigating the role of Welsh language in childcare decisions and choices, important differences were found in subjects' narratives related both to the languages spoken by parents and the spaces they inhabited. In Ceredigion, almost half the population speaks Welsh, where primary education is mainly Welsh-medium and most childcare provision is Welsh-medium or bilingual. Here, the choice of Welsh-medium childcare was both less of an issue – because it was normative for many families – and yet more of an issue, as both English and Welsh-speaking parents expressed a positive preference for Welsh-medium childcare and education. Parents justified their preferences in cultural, social and economic terms with multi-layered benefits identified for their children, and in some cases for them as well. In the other areas, few parents said that language was an important factor in their childcare choices and subsequent choice of primary education. Where they did, it tended to be expressed as having a cultural rather than the economic and social values that were spoken about by parents in Ceredigion.

While this chapter has examined various aspects of parents' narratives related to childcare and work, the Bourdieusian analysis provides the framework in which the data can be contextualised. While childcare has been analysed previously in Bourdieusian terms (eg. Ball, 2003; Ball et al., 2007; Vincent, Braun and Ball, 2008), the view from literature that would seem to present the most suitable fit with the research question and data presented in this chapter is Himmelweit and Sigala's (2004) research suggesting that mothers focus on their identities to explain the 'choices' they make. The notion of "identity" they use is "something at the core of each individual which unifies the fragmentation of experience" (2004, p.461) as characteristic of themselves, to indicate how they approached the decisions they face, so that only certain options were under consideration because of who they were. As is evident in these interviews, mothers construed the decisions they faced "constrained by both internal requirements and external circumstances" (2004, p.461). It can be argued, however, that what they are describing as the conscious construction of 'identity' might also be seen from another perspective as the *habitus* of the individuals involved, and the conflict in decision-making is the playing out of the relationship between *habitus* and the social *fields* of work and care. As Bourdieu (1990) makes clear in making any decision, the range of choices available depends on the position that the actor occupies in a particular social *field*. At the same time, which choices are visible is the result of history, as previous experiences will have shaped the individual's vision. Which choices are made therefore depends on the range of options available at that moment, the range of those options that are visible and viable, and the dispositions or tendencies (*habitus*) to choose some options (1990, pp.52–65). Bourdieu also accounts for the element of reflexivity (Bourdieu, 1992, p.231) in parents' decision-making as seen in Ffion's account, where from a work-orientated position, she adapts her position to be able to justify her circumstances:

"I love [being a stay at home mum]. Obviously I didn't do earlier. Yes, I love it. I wouldn't change it for the world. I think the lifestyle is a lot more chilled out. I used to be very busy. Here, there and everywhere. I enjoy being with [daughter] and doing special things you know going to the playgroups and meeting some of the girls, I've met so many people I haven't met before. I'm a different person. I'm a lot calmer. I'm a lot happier I think." (Ffion)

Himmelweit & Sigala term this reaction 'feedback' where, "...neither identities nor behaviours are fixed, but adapt to each other in a process of positive feedback, both at an individual level and at a social level" (2004, p.471). According to Bourdieu, however, choices made will in turn shape future possibilities, for any choice involves foregoing alternatives and sets individuals on a specific route that further shapes their understanding of themselves and of the world around them. The structures of the *habitus* are thus neither fixed nor in constant flux (1991b, pp.37–42).

In the next chapter, the three levels of Bourdieusian *field* analysis are brought together to assess the links identified in this chapter and the previous chapter between individuals, the *field* structure (as analysed in Chapter Three) and the positioning both within and between fields that form the conceptual framework for this research.

## Chapter 7 Conclusions

The aim of this research is to examine the childcare field in Wales and, within it, the choices that families make between formal and informal care. This chapter seeks to address the extent to which the aim has been met by first approaching each of the research questions set out in the introduction, bringing together evidence from the three main research elements of policy review, quantitative analysis and qualitative investigation, and discussing the implications of the findings. Secondly, reflections are made on the research process, with the limitations of the study set out and shortcomings acknowledged. Finally, recommendations are made for further research.

While summaries have been made within the relevant chapters and some conclusions drawn, in this section, the sum of the research enterprise is utilised to extract the key messages.

### ***How is the practice of informal childcare in Wales accounted for?***

As suggested in the literature, this study has found that the concept of informal childcare is multi-faceted, distinguished by the function which it serves, the positions of those engaging with it, and the range of different practices which make it up. Revisiting the working definition finds that the underpinning assertions are supported by empirical study. First, informal care as non-parental care enables a basic boundary to be drawn that was not found to be challenged. Secondly, the evidence supports the position of informal care being positioned at a distance from both the state and the market. While the boundary was not always well-defined, no significant evidence was found of payments or contractual obligations existing between parties, while policy has been seen to distance the state from informal care, leaving it within the private realm. The 'invisibility' of informal care is, however, a double-edged sword. While it is not subject to regulation nor general interference from the state, this means that users and providers of informal care have no representation in policy formulation as part of policy networks and are not considered in policy impact assessment. That informal care is more often portrayed in policy documents as a positive choice made by some parents, rather than a necessity born out of the short-comings of formal care and early education policy, is a further negative aspect of its status (findings from this study suggest that it is both).

Where both informal and formal care are located within and between the *fields* of childcare and education in Wales is in many ways no clearer from this study. Evidence shows that the *fields* are clearly distinguished by custody and cultivation functions in some policies (regulation, inspection etc.),



but the distinction is not made in much of the political and policy *rhetoric*, nor in some practice (such as Flying Start). Nor is it significantly differentiated in the minds and actions of parents.

In examining the processes which underpin informal childcare use, the evidence from both the quantitative and qualitative research supports a number of common conclusions. First, is the important relationship between care and work. Employment is found to be the best predictor of childcare use in Wales, with a stronger predictability for informal care. Examining the work and care dispositions of parents supports this finding, particularly when mothers make initial post-natal decisions. At this point, evidence shows that informal care can either be a positive choice or a fall-back position, but either way, it is a very common option for those with access to informal carers.

Analysis of data using Bourdieu's analytical tools finds that childcare choice is not driven by a simple cost-benefit analysis and, as predicted by Bourdieu, parents' wider interests are placed over calculation as the prime motivator in decision-making (Bourdieu, 1992, p.119). Within the NSW data, stronger predictions of informal childcare use were more likely to be related to indicators of social and cultural *capital* than economic rationalities. In interviews, although affordability was found to be an important consideration, it was not a primary driver. The assumption made in literature that informal childcare is primarily used as a low-cost option is found not to be the case in Wales. Allied to this finding, and consistently found in the data, is that informal childcare in Wales is a practice that transcends socio-economic and class boundaries, although motivations may differ.

The literature suggests that childcare choices can be constrained by factors such as low incomes, limited childcare options, work schedules, affordability and a lack of information. This study concurs, recognising external forces such as the availability of childcare of the right kind, of acceptable quality and cost, but also highlights internal dispositions such as work and care orientations, and how women perceive themselves as mothers. Particular attention was paid to mothers' work and care orientations, finding that many had strong dispositions to both, creating the greatest potential for internal conflict and thus complicating decision-making. Biographical evidence in interviews notes that the same patterns of work and care were spoken about across generations, yet finds that the pressures have changed, with greater expectations that mothers engage in paid labour when their children are young. As predicted by theory, evidence of reflexivity in parents' decision making was found where work-care dispositions were adapted according to circumstances. Narratives illustrate how when parents move between *fields* – such as education, work, parenthood and childcare - they become aware of the options that exist in the different *fields* and therefore become more reflexive about the practices they can pursue and the choices they can make (Savage 2005, p.142).

### ***What are the common characteristics of families that practice informal childcare?***

This study finds, as have others, that informal childcare use is widespread across Wales. Where findings differ is in showing that formal care is used by only a small proportion of families. However, this study concurs with previous research in finding that informal care is most commonly received by younger children within smaller families.

Understanding why informal care is used has been a focus in this research and where Bourdieusian theory has proved particularly helpful in framing the investigation.

### **Economic Capital**

Whether the economic circumstances of families can be correlated with use of formal care, informal care or combinations of the two, is contested in the literature. This study finds from both quantitative and qualitative investigation that while a household's positive economic situation is a predictor of formal childcare use, dispositions that form *habitus*, along with social and cultural *capital* - such as Welsh language, social contacts and connectedness - have greater importance to those parents who choose the practice of informal care. Within this analysis, nonetheless, are embedded inequalities where parents have unequal opportunities to deploy *capitals* accumulated from families, education, work and life experiences. Yet, these inequalities are not always class-based as might be expected, with social *capital* formed by the proximity of available informal carers, having an important, transferable economic value in this *field*.

### **Cultural Capital**

While cultural *capital* has been seen to be highly important in education choice, its role in childcare has been less clear. In contrast with what might be expected, this study found that measures of cultural *capital* play a much greater part in predicting the use of informal than formal childcare use. In particular, there is a strong association with language where those with the highest Welsh language skills are also those most likely to be using more childcare, and particularly more informal care. This is found to be related both to the languages spoken by parents, and the languages spoken in the spaces they inhabit.

Parental education as convertible cultural *capital* emerged as a strong theme from within the qualitative data, yet, despite also being found in the quantitative analysis, was not, perhaps surprisingly, a consistent predictor of disposition towards particular care types.

## Social Capital

As already mentioned, the relationship between social *capital* and informal childcare would seem to be straightforward. Inter-generational care arrangements, in particular, are shown to have significant and tangible economic value both in terms of savings on formal childcare, but also in providing complementary childcare that is shown to enhance working hours and therefore earning potential. The finding is important in the context of Lowndes' (2000) thinking, that social *capital* and childcare form a reflexive relationship where patterns of informal networks increase opportunities for economic activity and therefore increase demand for childcare.

While helpful in constructing biographical narratives, following the trajectories of care experienced by mothers as children and their subsequent care choices, found no distinctive patterns of cause and effect. Yet, as childcare and maternal work patterns become more normalised and embedded in society, this might be an interesting area for future research.

## Spatial Habitus

Childcare practice and the physical spaces in which it takes place were found to have an inconsistent relationship. The study finds that informal childcare use is indeed widespread across Wales, and at levels that are higher than in England. Yet while more formal childcare provision in an area is linked to higher *use* of formal childcare, greater use of informal childcare does not necessarily lead to less formal care provision. This was observed in both the survey data and in interviews across the three localities.

What was clearly observed in this study, however, is that parents' *capitals* are seen to have different values in the childcare *field* in relation to the localities in which they live. Parents' ability to deploy their economic and cultural *capital* is dependent on the external constraints of employment and childcare opportunities. Localised norms and values acquired through social contacts, alongside social networks that can provide informal childcare, contribute to more or less social *capital*. As suggested by Ball et al. (2008), this forms a *habitus* that results in parents adopting what Bourdieu describes as practices of 'distinction' (1984) within the local childcare *field*.

## Gender

Little evidence was found to suggest that childcare and childcare choice is anything other than a highly gendered practice. This finding can be criticised, quite rightly, in the context of the selection of research participants in this study, but on the available evidence, fathers or male partners have far

less invested in childcare. While many are involved, they keep a distance from childcare decision-making.

### ***Are there any distinctive aspects to informal childcare practice in Wales?***

This study has demonstrated using a Bourdieusian analysis that there are a number of distinctive aspects to childcare generally, and to informal childcare in particular, in Wales. This finding challenges other research and commentary that approaches UK childcare as a homogenous *field*. Distinction is found in how the *field* is structured and boundaried; in the *capitals, habitus* and practices of agents operating within it, and in the relationship between these elements.

The inconsistencies and fluctuation in the framing of childcare policy in Wales provides some evidence of further distinction. The social justice and pedagogical frames that underpin Foundation Phase and Flying Start are set apart from childcare, which is framed as an anti-poverty measure where parents – and in particular mothers – are required to participate in labour outside the home. The consequences of those policies are evident in this study in the different motivations of parents using informal care. There are parents in well-paid work with the necessary *capitals* who *choose* to use informal care as an option, and those in low-paid work with less *capital* who have *no option* but to use informal childcare. It might be said that the same inequities exist elsewhere, but in Wales the interface between universal and mainly state-provided early education and a restricted marketised childcare sector creates different dynamics. These dynamics are likely to be a part of the explanation for why this study finds that in Wales, parents are more likely to use informal care, and much less likely to use formal care. A further contributory factor lies in the previously mentioned finding that disconnects levels of formal childcare provision from informal childcare use in Wales. This suggests that informal care is an active choice that is not replaced by increased formal provision.

This study finds a relatively weak link between measures of social classification and informal care use in Wales - unlike in England, where informal care has been found to be more commonly used by families with higher incomes and of higher social grades. Related, is the finding that informal care use in Wales is not significantly related to parental qualifications as it is in England.

The relationship between the Welsh language and childcare is shown in this study to be an important consideration on a number of levels. The strong correlation between informal childcare use and parents' language abilities illustrates a dynamic that will not be present in other parts of the UK<sup>35</sup>,

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<sup>35</sup> Studies of some migrant communities have highlighted distinction (eg. Williams & Gavanas in Lutz 2016) but the focal point of study is most often integration through acquisition of a new language rather than transmission of mother tongue or minority languages.

while the relationship between language transmission and childcare choice, and the value of Welsh childcare provision as valuable cultural *capital* are both findings that distinguish practice in some parts of Wales.

***What are the implications from this analysis for childcare and more broadly, education and welfare policies in Wales?***

The extent of informal childcare use in Wales comes as no surprise, but the strength of the relationship with employment is mainly overlooked in policy because the practice has low visibility. That parents in Wales are more likely to be in employment if they have informal care available to them than if formal childcare is accessible, is important given the current anti-poverty focused policy in Wales. An obvious, if unlikely, strategy to reduce barriers to employment would be to increase incentives to informal care. Yet, as has been shown, the most disadvantaged parents are those with no informal care available to them and who find accessing formal care most difficult. Solving this through subsidising access to existing marketised formal care is the basis of current policy (Welsh Government, 2015b). However, it is problematic. The formal childcare infrastructure to deliver this has been shown to be absent in many parts of Wales, and there are questions about the quality and flexibility of provision (Graham 2014). Furthermore, for those parents looking to enter the labour market who do have access to informal care and who might normally use it, state subsidies are likely to just substitute informal care with formal care, with no proportionate return in economic benefit (Havnes and Mogstad, 2011 in Lloyd and Potter, 2014).

In a closely related point, this research has also highlighted the important role that informal care plays at the interface between childcare and early education, where for pre-school children in Wales, informal care is found to both complement formal care and early education, and compensates for the lack of integration between the two. Because most children in Wales are in school part-time at age three, market-driven care is restricted by limited demand – unlike in England where the majority of early education takes place in the non-maintained sector. In Wales, therefore, parents without access to flexible, informal care are, again, found to be considerably disadvantaged. This situation is found to be directly related to the contestation of childcare policy, its political and ideological framing and the incoherent delivery model. Despite calls from many political parties, by key actors and policy networks, and consistently in policy documents, the aspiration for an integrated approach to early childhood education and care in Wales that would provide the solution to many parents' problems - and benefit children the most - remains unfulfilled.

Early childhood policies have often been cited as examples of a distinctive approach in Wales, and it might be argued that Wales is closer than other UK countries to developing an integrated system that

might conform to the definition of Early Childhood Education and Care. Foundation Phase provides a pedagogical focus for early learning, while Flying Start establishes an important principle of direct state funding for childcare. Yet there are shortcomings in both. By themselves, the limited hours offered by Flying Start and part-time Foundation Phase provision limit parents' employment opportunities, while weaknesses in implementation have been identified as reducing pedagogical, developmental and economic outcomes.

Language was found to have an effect on parents' choices in particular situations, and confirmed previous research suggesting that childcare is an important factor in language transmission, with informal care being chosen by some parents to ensure or enhance language acquisition. In Welsh-speaking areas, this was found to be a positive choice by both Welsh and English speakers, with both groups recognising economic and cultural benefits; yet, in non-Welsh-speaking areas, the Welsh language was often considered negatively. Current Welsh government policy seeks to support parents to raise children bilingually (Welsh Government 2013), yet this research suggests that a one-size-fits-all policy in Wales will not succeed. Within areas where Welsh is spoken by any sizeable proportion of the population (such as Gwynedd, Ynys Mon, Ceredigion etc.), both formal and informal childcare has an important part to play in both inter-generational language transmission and language acquisition by the children of non-Welsh-speakers. In areas where little Welsh is spoken, policies are needed to increase parents' awareness and understanding of the Welsh language, and strategies required to 'sell' the benefits of bilingualism to a sceptical audience. The important role played by informal carers in supporting families, needs to be recognised within Welsh language policies.

Throughout this thesis Bourdieu's theories have provided a framework in which the *field* of childcare has been deconstructed to provide explanations of the relationship between individuals and the structures that exist around them, and it is Bourdieu that I turn to in making some final remarks. This research finds that the childcare *field* in Wales has 'distinction' (Bourdieu, 1984) in a number of ways. Data have shown that parents practicing within the *field* do so according to their *habitus* and accumulated *capital*, which combine to create distinctive preferences and practices. It should therefore be no surprise to find that, given different social and economic conditions, childcare in Wales is different. It should also not come as a surprise that childcare practice in Wales is not homogenous but is made up of distinctive and indistinctive behaviours that relate to the positions occupied socially, culturally, economically and spatially by parents. Yet there are clear patterns of childcare practice that emerge in this study from both quantitative and qualitative accounts. This is explained by Bourdieu in examining the state of play within the current social arena (1989, 18), which

in the context of childcare, involves contemporary societal expectations around work and care - for mothers in particular. The need to work and the ability to care requires increasing mediation by the state which can either facilitate or hinder childcare choices and subsequent practice. This is where a further distinction lies. The policy analysis highlights an incoherence in both the political and ideological framing of childcare in Wales. Despite childcare being presented as 'child centred', reflecting a social justice and pedagogical approach, economic considerations are at the forefront of policy. This directly affects the boundaries of the childcare *field* where support for childcare is not universal, but provided mainly for those on low incomes, in deprived areas or those seeking to enter employment. Further distinction is clear in an incoherent delivery model of childcare and early education. First, the targeting of childcare support towards specific groups means that others must rely on market-led childcare which is often perceived as being difficult to afford and difficult to access. Secondly, part-time early education in schools – mostly without complementary care arrangements - is a further and indiscriminate cordon around the *field* boundary. Both these factors are observed to result in parental practice within the informal childcare *sub-field* which accommodates work and caring responsibilities and preferences. Those with no access to the informal childcare *sub-field* are restricted in their options and are considerably disadvantaged. It can, therefore, be seen how the boundaries of the childcare *field* – containing both formal and informal *sub-fields* – are constrained by the rationale for, and methods by which, the state seeks to influence the *practice* of parents. In Wales, both rationale and methods are distinctive, but I would argue that this is more by default and less by design.

## Limitations and reflections

First, it needs to be acknowledged that the broad scope of this research has been a primary limitation both in terms of the topic and the methodology. The discussion in Chapter Three highlights the conceptual complexities of examining the field of childcare and the difficulties therein of examining it as a whole. There were, during the research process, a number of opportunities to revisit the original proposal and re-scale the enterprise. This has, nonetheless, been part of my own academic development in learning to prioritise depth of study over breadth of topic. A further contributory factor in approaching the topic with breadth, is my own (and Bourdieu's) epistemological positioning. This required me to use mixed-methods, where the combination of methods was rationalised in terms of quantitative data providing generalizable and externally valid findings, in which internally valid contextual understanding of qualitative research could be set. While I believe that the results justify the means, the combination of breadth and mixed-methods has created both practical and conceptual challenges.

The choice and extensive use of Bourdieu's theories leaves little room for alternative explanations - a number of which I would have liked to explore in greater depth, but was precluded from so doing by the self-imposed restrictions of a wide field of study.

The use of a secondary data source rather than undertaking primary quantitative research means that the extent of analysis is limited by the variables collected, in this case, by the National Survey for Wales. While specific questions were contained in interviews related to childcare, the formulation of the questions did not always meet the needs of my research questions and variables were not always defined and categorised in the same way. Also to be considered are a number of questions that contained risk of bias, including non-response and, particularly, recall bias when respondents were asked to remember instances and volumes of childcare use. The use of the NSW data further highlighted limitations in the set of variables, with unknown variables potentially limiting the conclusions that can be drawn from examining correlations and predicting effects.

There are clear weaknesses in a post-hoc analysis of the qualitative element of this research. While the interviews were planned as narrative encounters, analysis of the data emphasises shortcomings in some of the encounters where key biographical details were omitted. This resulted in not all of the interviews being available for a comparative analysis of trajectories that were to prove key to the interpretation. In hindsight, a looser topic guide for interviews might have been more helpful in allowing subjects to tell their stories with fewer interruptions.



Reflections on the research encounters as situated and negotiated, suggest how unconscious processes might have structured relations between me, as a male researcher, and the female subjects of the research. It might be argued that a man examining the experiences of women cannot provide access to truths about the social world in the same way as can a female researcher. Discussions with Lowri, the other (female) researcher interviewing for this study, and comparison of our experiences found this to be the case, but we also concluded that while there were differences in the encounters, as different versions of the truth we both felt that they were no less valid. Talking to parents about their childhoods and then their own experiences of parenting provided a distinctive and valuable perspective which, in some cases, caused individuals to reflect and use the occasion to try and understand their lives themselves. A number of participants said that they had never before dwelt on the stories that emerged, particularly around the relationship between their early and later lives. It was also clear that the relationship between researcher and interviewer varied within the interpersonal dynamic of the occasion, and in some cases, the things that were going on in our subjects' lives. Interviews that took place in subjects' homes while their children were present and often requiring attention created a different dynamic than other interviews that took place in neutral locations without children. The way in which each interview developed often indicated within a very short space of time the quality of material that was created. An opening question that asks subjects to "tell me about your childhood" was easy for some to start with, while others required gentle persuasion through a number of probing questions. Many parents – such as Jenny, Joanna and Ffion – were willing to share intimate details of their lives with a 'professional stranger' (Agar, 1996), while others were more reserved, and some less open and willing. A number of tactics were used to make subjects feel comfortable, including, where appropriate, details of my own background, experiences, knowledge and situation. The approach was discussed with Lowri before she conducted the Welsh-medium interviews, and we spoke again afterwards to share our experiences. Her position as a single mother of two small children and mine as a previously lone father also with two, albeit slightly older, children seemed in our discussions to have resulted in 'different' if not equally valuable relationships. Lowri reflected that her situation may have resulted in more empathetic relationships with interviewees, where they shared worries and concerns. My experience was of participants being more matter-of-fact, if no less forthcoming.

A notable limitation of this research has been the lack of success in engaging with fathers and male partners regarding their stories, experiences and engagement within the childcare field. While the literature points to childcare decision-making as a predominantly female activity, the evidence comes mainly from women's voices. That men are not participating may be due to a situation of reverse causality, yet this was not investigated in this study.

Finally, ideally this research would have engaged with informal carers themselves, who form a key part of both the informal childcare *field* and the decision-making process. However, to have done so would have further extended the breadth of the study. Given a considerable recent literature that, through both quantitative and qualitative methods, has sought the views and experiences of informal carers, and grandparents in particular (Finch & Mason 1993, Wheelock, Jones 2002, Skinner and Finch 2006, Grey 2005, Rutter and Evans 2012), it was a pragmatic decision to omit this area of investigation. There has also been a small survey of grandparents in Wales which examined both informal care practices and profiled carers themselves (Ivens and Akhtar 2011) which is referred to in the study.

### ***Further research***

This study has highlighted a number of areas where further research would prove both interesting and useful.

The biographical element of the qualitative research that touched on intergenerational patterns of childcare use and work orientations provided an insight into the extent to which Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* might juxtapose with theories of individualism and post-modernism. To examine this in more detail would ideally require access to qualitative longitudinal data, although evidence from, for example, the Millennium Cohort Study once the subjects reach adulthood, might also provide useful insights.

This research's finding that fathers and male partners are rarely involved in childcare decisions, while supported by other studies (e.g. Ball and Day 2013), highlights a gap in evidence, particularly from within the UK. While a number of studies have examined men's changing roles in Scandinavian countries, a qualitative study of childcare decision-making would provide useful evidence of change that might be expected given structural modifications to the welfare system and women's labour force participation.

There is also scope for further qualitative investigation that would provide a greater understanding of the role that both formal and informal childcare has in Welsh language transmission. The focus of previous research has been mostly on education and parental choice of schooling. This research has suggested that parents' views on language are often formed or adapted when their children are very young, and influence their choice of early childhood care and subsequent education. Again, this finding requires research amongst different cohorts and in more areas of Wales to develop a wider picture of attitudes and behaviour towards language transmission and the part played by both formal and informal childcare.



# Appendices

## Appendix 1. Screening Survey



### Informal Childcare Research



#### *Tell us about why you use childcare – or why you don't.*

We want to talk to parents about who they choose to look after their children when they can't and how this affects people's work and home lives.

If you would be willing to help us, please read the accompanying information leaflet and complete this short questionnaire.

***We guard your privacy: your information will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act and University guidelines. Your contribution will be used for research purposes only. Individuals will not be identified in any reports.***

#### 1. Are you the parent or primary carer of any children aged 14 and under?

Age Group	Total number of children	Age Group	Total number of children	Age Group	Total number of children
Aged 2 or under	<input type="text"/>	Aged 5, 6 and 7	<input type="text"/>	Aged 11 to 14	<input type="text"/>
Aged 3 and 4	<input type="text"/>	Aged 8,9 and 10	<input type="text"/>		

#### 2. Are you . . . Female Male

#### 3. Do you have a spouse or partner who lives with you? Yes No

#### 4. Please tick the boxes below that apply to you and your partner (if applicable) about work:

	You	Your Partner		You	Your Partner
Work full-time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Work part-time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self-employed full-time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Self-employed part-time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work shifts or unusual hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Student or on a training scheme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### 5. Please tick the boxes below that apply to you and your partner (if applicable) if you do not work:

	You	Your Partner		You	Your Partner
On maternity / paternity leave	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Taking a career break	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Looking after the home / family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Looking for work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unable to work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Retired	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### 6. Do you receive of any of the following (please tick all that apply)?

Income Support	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lone Parent Income Support	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employment and Support Allowance	<input type="checkbox"/>	Job Seekers Allowance	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working Tax Credit	<input type="checkbox"/>	Working Tax Credit <i>Childcare</i> Element	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child Tax Credit	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disability Living Allowance for a child	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please turn over....

**8. Within the following bands, what is the total amount of money coming into your household each month (after deductions)?**

£500 or less	<input type="checkbox"/>	£501 - £1,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
£1,001 - £1,750	<input type="checkbox"/>	£1,751 - £2,750	<input type="checkbox"/>
£2,751 - £4,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	£4,001 or more	<input type="checkbox"/>

**9. What languages do you speak at home with your children (please tick all that apply)?**

	You	Your Partner
Welsh only	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
English only	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Welsh and English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> (please specify) _____

**10. What languages would you like your children will speak when they are adults?**

Fluent Welsh	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fluent English	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some Welsh	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some English	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	_____		

**11. Thinking of the child(ren)'s grandparents (if alive) or closest adult relatives, how close do the nearest of these live to you (please tick only one box)?**

Within 5 miles	<input type="checkbox"/>	Between 6 - 30 miles away	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over 30 miles away in the UK	<input type="checkbox"/>	Outside the UK	<input type="checkbox"/>

**12. What childcare have you used in the last six months (including the summer holidays) for any of your children (please tick all that apply)?**

Nursery class in primary school	<input type="checkbox"/>	Day Nursery or Crèche	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ysgol Meithrin / Pre-School Playgroup	<input type="checkbox"/>	Registered Childminder	<input type="checkbox"/>
Breakfast Club	<input type="checkbox"/>	After School Club	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Holiday Club	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nanny / Au Pair	<input type="checkbox"/>
Babysitter	<input type="checkbox"/>	Grandparents	<input type="checkbox"/>
Older brothers or sisters	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other relatives (aunts, uncles etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neighbours	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	

**13. What is your home postcode?**

*Thank you. We really appreciate your time.*

*Please provide your name and telephone numbers below so that we might contact you to arrange an interview.*

**First Name:**

**Surname:**

**Home Telephone**

**Mobile Telephone**

## Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet



# Informal Childcare Research

## *Participant Information*



### Tell us about your childcare choices...

We want to talk to parents about who they choose to look after their children when they can't and how this affects people's work and home lives.

The past fifteen years has seen a big increase in families where both parents work. The Welsh Government has tried to help families by increasing the amount of 'formal' childcare – provided by day nurseries, out of school clubs, childminders – but many parents choose 'informal' childcare provided by relatives or friends.

We will be interviewing parents and carers from different backgrounds, in different areas and in different situations based on the answers you give on the accompanying questionnaire.

The research will help us and other organisations understand the childcare choices that people make and what these mean for the way that childcare is developed and how families can be best supported.

This leaflet gives you more information about the research and hopefully answers most of the queries you might have.

### Why do you want to interview me?

Although we know quite a lot about how many people in Wales choose to use different types of childcare, we don't know much about why parents and carers make the choices that they do. Therefore, the kinds of things that we would like to talk to you about might be:

- Your own childhood and life.
- Your family life.
- Where you live and the community that you're part of.
- Why you choose to use the childcare that you do - or why you don't?
- The things that are important to you in choosing who looks after your children when you can't.

### What will the interview be like?

The interviewer will want to hear from you about your life and your experiences related to children, work and family life. The interview will be very informal – more of a conversation than an interview and definitely not like a job interview! The interviewer will have some topics that they want to ask you about but most importantly he or she will want to hear your story, your opinions and your experiences.

The interview will probably last between an hour and an hour and a half and with your consent, will be recorded using a tape or digital recorder. You can choose to be interviewed in either Welsh or English.

### **Where will the interview take place?**

The interviewer will come to your home or somewhere else that is convenient to you if you prefer. We are being supported by Wrexham Council in this research so if you prefer, we can arrange your interview at one of their premises such as a school, leisure centre or childcare setting.

### **What happens to the information I give?**

The information that you give will be drawn together with what other people in the research tell us, in a thesis study. Once this is completed, a number of papers may be published that can help the Government, local Councils and other organisations to understand why people make different choices and how families can be better supported.

### **Our responsibilities to you**

**We will guard your privacy:** your participation will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act unless you make it clear that a child is at risk of harm (see below). Your contribution will be used for research purposes only. Individuals will not be identified any of the reports or papers published and all personal information provided during the interview (names, organisations, places) will be made anonymous. Before the interview, we will ask you to sign a form confirming that you are willingly participating in the study. All information generated in the course of the research will be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of five years after the completion of a research project.

**We respect your wishes:** participation in the study is voluntary. If you do not want to take part, just let us know when we contact you. You may also change your mind and withdraw from the research at any time. You may refuse to answer any questions that are put to you.

**We answer your questions:** we will be happy to answer any questions you may have about the research at any time.

**Child Protection:** Everything you say during an interview will be treated as completely confidential unless information is given of risk of harm coming to a child. If this were the case, the researcher will follow the Wrexham & Flintshire procedure for safeguarding children which may involve informing Social Services.

If you would be willing to participate in this research, please complete the accompanying Survey Form, giving your contact details.

To thank you for your time, those completing an interview will receive a £20 shopping voucher.

#### **Contacts:**

Researcher: David Dallimore 01492 641321 / 0789 999 4143. Email: [sope10@bangor.ac.uk](mailto:sope10@bangor.ac.uk)

*The researcher is a post-graduate student studying for a PhD at Bangor University under the supervision of Professor Ian Rees-Jones, who can be contacted on 01248 382222*

Wrexham Family Information Service: 01978 292094

## Appendix 3: Invite for Interview Letter



# Informal Childcare Research



School of Social Sciences  
Bangor University  
BANGOR  
Gwynedd  
LL57 2DG

Dear .....

Thank you for completing the Informal Childcare survey form and indicating that you would be willing to be interviewed as part of my research. This letter gives you more information about the research and hopefully answers most of the queries you might have.

I want to talk to parents about who they choose to look after their children when they can't and how this affects people's work and home lives. I hope to achieve this by talking to you about why you choose to use the childcare that you do - or why you don't – and the things that are important to you in choosing who looks after your children when you can't.

As a participant in the research process at no time should you feel uncomfortable or provide information that you don't want to. Any information you disclose to me during the interview is strictly confidential unless it involves you telling me about a child who may be at risk of harm or that there is a risk of harm to yourself. All names will be changed; even the location of interviews or meetings will be given pseudonyms (false names). All information generated in the course of the research will be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of five years after the completion of a research project.

You have said that you will be available for interview on [day, date] at [time] at [location]. If this is inconvenient or your plans change, please do not hesitate to contact me and I will do my best to re-arrange the interview at a better time for you. The interview will probably last between an hour and an hour and a half and with your consent will be recorded using a tape or digital recorder. Your participation in this research is voluntary and you can decide at any stage – even during the interview – not to take part.

To thank you for your time, you will receive a £20 High Street shopping voucher after the interview.

Before the interview I will need you to have read and signed the accompanying written Consent Form.

In the meantime, if you have any questions, please not hesitate to contact me on 01492 641321 / 0789 999 4143. If you need any information about local childcare or other services you can contact XXXXX Family Information Service on [FIS Number]. If you are concerned about this research you may raise the matter with Professor Ian Rees-Jones, who can be contacted at Bangor University on 01248 382222.

I look forward to meeting you.

Yours sincerely,

David Dallimore



## Appendix 4: Consent Form

### CONSENT FORM



### Informal Childcare Research

David Dallimore, Phd Student Bangor University  
 Contact: sope10@bangor.ac.uk / 0789 999 4143

**Please initial box**

- |    |   |                          |
|----|---|--------------------------|
| 1. | I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant Information Sheet for this study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. | I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.                        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. | I understand my personal details such as phone number and address will not be revealed to people outside the project.                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. | I understand that all personal information provided during the interview (names, organisations, places) will be made anonymous.           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. | I agree to the interview being audio recorded.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. | I agree to take part in this study.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Please tick box**

**Yes      No**

- |    |   |                          |                          |
|----|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 6. | I agree that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. | I agree that the information I provide in this study may be stored (after it has been anonymised) in the UK Data Archive and may be used for future research. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature

## Appendix 5: Interview Topic Guide

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this research.

Although we know quite a lot about how many people in Wales choose to use different types of childcare, we don't know much about why parents and carers make the choices that they do. Therefore, the things that I'd like to talk to you about are:

- Your own childhood and life.
- Your family life.
- Where you live and the community that you're part of.
- Why you choose to use the childcare that you do - or why you don't?
- The things that are important to you in choosing who looks after your children when you can't.

Before we start I just need to confirm that you give your consent and be able to answer any questions that you have about the research and the interview.

Can you please confirm your name and postcode:

Can you confirm that you understand and agree to the following:

1. that you are being interviewed voluntarily and that you know that you can end the interview at any time?
2. that your personal details such as phone number and address will not be revealed to people outside the project?
3. that all personal information provided during the interview (names, organisations, places) will be made anonymous?
4. that you agree to the interview being audio recorded?
5. that you agree that your words (but not your name or any personal details) may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs?
6. that the information you provide may be stored (after it has been anonymised) in the UK Data Archive and may be used for future research?
7. that everything you say during an interview will be treated as completely confidential unless information is given of risk of harm coming to a child. If this were the case I will follow the local procedure for safeguarding children which may involve informing Social Services?

## Interview Guide

- Can you tell me about your own childhood and life?
  - Did parents work?
  - How were you cared for as a child?
  - Were you looked after by your grandparents or other relatives?
- What do you feel was good and / or bad about your own up-bringing?
- Why do you think your parents made the choices that they did about your upbringing?
- Can you tell me about your life when you left school / home – before you had children?
  - What kind of work
  - Ambitions or aspirations?
  - Where did you live and work?
- Can you tell me a bit about where you live now and the community that you're part of?
  - Language
  - Norms / values
  - Aspirations
- Tell me about when you had your first child?
  - Work issues
  - Finances
  - Relationships
  - Did attitudes to work change after having children?
- Tell me about the childcare that you've used for your children (or why you haven't).
  - Settings
  - Informal / formal
  - Good or bad things
- Can you tell me your story about choosing childcare for son/daughter?
  - Who else was involved in the decision? How did he/she/they participate?
  - What did you think about or consider when you were deciding?
  - What was the easiest part of your decision?

- What was the most difficult aspect of your decision?
- Who else did you consult/where did you search for information?
- What do you think about other types of childcare (other than those they're using)?
  - Day nurseries
  - Nannies / au pairs
  - Ysgol Feithrin
  - Playgroups
  - Out of school clubs
  - Childminders

(Try to establish perceptions of quality, cost, reputation etc.)
- What do you think are the most important things to look for when you're looking for childcare?
  - Professionalism of provider / reputation
  - The providers' caring role
  - Capacity for children to socialise
  - Language
  - Cost
  - Convenience and reliability (location, opening hours)
- Why do you choose to use the childcare that you do - or why you don't?
  - Choice or necessity (tensions)
  - Associations with quality
  - Values
- Finally, if you were to go back in time to when your first child was born, would you still make the same choices about childcare?

Thank you again for your time.

## Appendix 6: National Survey for Wales: Analytical Framework

	Name	Label
Childcare Use	InfCareTot	Uses informal childcare*
	FormCareTot	Uses Formal Childcare*
	CCEver	Ever needed childcare*
	CCFr	Average, number of hours per week family or friends look after child, unpaid*
	CCSatInc	How easy or difficult is it - to afford childcare for child
	CCSatHrs	How easy or difficult is it - to get childcare for child
	CCSatHol	How easy or difficult is it - to get childcare for child during school holidays
	CCSatASch	How easy or difficult is it - to get childcare for child after school
	CCSatWL	Welsh language formal childcare available
	CCSatQual	Satisfaction with quality of formal childcare
	AgeChldCareSelect1	Age of selected child
Economic Capital	DvHhType	Household Type
	DvTenurGrp	Tenure (Grouped)
	DvWIMDOvr5	Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation - overall score (in quintiles)
	DvEconStat	Economic Status
	DvEmpStat	Employment Status
	DvChMatDep	Children in material deprivation
Cultural Capital	ArtsVisit	Attendance at arts events in past 12 months
	DvHiQual	Highest educational qualification
	HeritVisit	Visit to a heritage site in past 12 months
Social Capital	DvWbSatLifeGrp2	Overall satisfaction with life (Low or High)
	WbFrFam	How many close family/friends you can talk to about private matters, or call on for help
	SCVal	I feel valued in society
Symbolic Capital	DvWelLang1	Welsh speaking ability
Geography	DvUrbRur	Urban/Rural classification
	DvUniAuth	Unitary Authority
	DvAsEcArea	Assembly Economic Fora Area
	CountBirth	Country of birth
Habitus	Dv2011OAC	ONS Output Area Classification
	DvACORN	ACORN classification
*Dependent Variables		

## Appendix 7: Additional Data Tables and Figures

Figure 19: Pre-school Childcare Rates by Local Authority.

Includes all registered childminder, full day care, sessional care and crèche places. CSSIW December 2014 and ONS Population Estimates June 2015

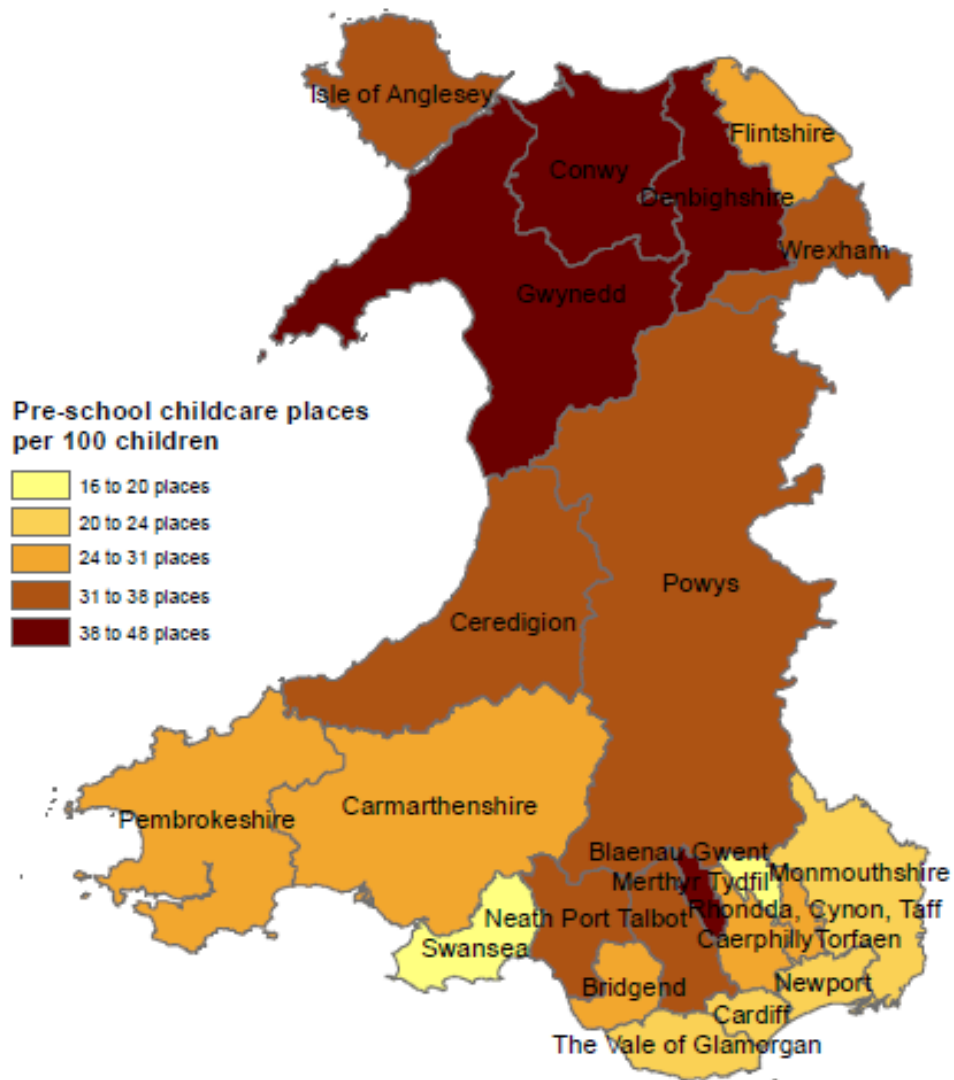


Table 37: Need for childcare by householders' local authority area (NSW 2015)

		Childcare - Ever need childcare			
		All Households	n=	Employed Households	n=
Derived variable - Local authority	Isle of Anglesey	59%	34	80%	54
	Gwynedd	60%	58	66%	107
	Conwy	51%	59	67%	76
	Denbighshire	58%	39	68%	60
	Flintshire	55%	75	70%	108
	Wrexham	47%	96	55%	119
	Powys	55%	48	64%	76
	Ceredigion	46%	39	54%	50
	Pembrokeshire	34%	94	41%	93
	Carmarthenshire	46%	120	62%	131
	Swansea	49%	131	68%	155
	Neath Port Talbot	55%	70	82%	92
	Bridgend	40%	94	54%	106
	Vale of Glamorgan	55%	69	77%	98
	Cardiff	49%	186	63%	227
	Rhondda Cynon Taf	49%	162	71%	192
	Merthyr Tydfil	46%	35	64%	39
	Caerphilly	49%	103	69%	124
	Blaenau Gwent	38%	40	53%	36
	Torfaen	46%	57	63%	67
Monmouthshire	50%	49	60%	67	
Newport	50%	80	66%	101	
Sig.		$\Phi_c = .113 \text{ } p < .005$		$\Phi_c = .180 \text{ } p < .001$	

Table 38: Need for childcare by householders' local authority area – all households using childcare (NSW 2015)

		Childcare - Ever need childcare					
		Uses any childcare	n=	Uses Formal Childcare	n=	Uses Informal Childcare	n=
Derived variable - Local authority	Isle of Anglesey	59%	82	25%	81	49%	82
	Gwynedd	60%	145	26%	146	50%	145
	Conwy	51%	121	25%	121	36%	121
	Denbighshire	58%	92	24%	93	48%	92
	Flintshire	55%	165	26%	165	41%	165
	Wrexham	46%	181	25%	181	36%	181
	Powys	54%	106	21%	106	40%	106
	Ceredigion	46%	72	24%	71	33%	72
	Pembrokeshire	34%	142	18%	142	23%	142
	Carmarthenshire	46%	222	18%	222	42%	223
	Swansea	49%	257	17%	257	44%	257
	Neath Port Talbot	55%	154	18%	154	49%	154
	Bridgend	39%	157	13%	157	35%	156
	Vale of Glamorgan	55%	154	25%	154	44%	154
	Cardiff	47%	366	25%	366	35%	366
	Rhondda Cynon Taf	49%	320	14%	319	46%	320
	Merthyr Tydfil	46%	65	11%	65	43%	65
	Caerphilly	49%	201	20%	201	40%	201
	Blaenau Gwent	38%	66	6%	66	35%	66
	Torfaen	45%	106	16%	106	39%	106
Monmouthshire	50%	98	23%	97	39%	97	
Newport	50%	160	21%	161	39%	160	
Sig.		$\Phi_c = .114 \text{ } p < .005$		$\Phi_c = .121 \text{ } p < .001$		$\Phi_c = .123 \text{ } p < .001$	

## Regression Analyses

Table 39: Multiple logistic regression of affecting measure of social support (NSW 2015)

		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	3.772	.159		23.763	.000	3.461	4.083
	Tenure (grouped)	-.057	.016	-.067	-3.644	.000	-.088	-.026
	Highest educational qualification	-.025	.016	-.032	-1.573	.116	-.056	.006
	Economic status	-.235	.050	-.089	-4.685	.000	-.333	-.137
	Welsh language ability - can speak, read and write Welsh	.158	.048	.058	3.319	.001	.065	.252
	Culture Score	.002	.018	.002	.086	.931	-.034	.037
	Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation - income score (in quintiles)	.024	.017	.033	1.445	.148	-.009	.057
	ACORN classification	.040	.019	.049	2.126	.034	.003	.076
	Gender	.142	.039	.068	3.657	.000	.066	.219
	Household type	-.036	.026	-.026	-1.401	.161	-.086	.014

a. Dependent Variable: Well-being - How many close family/friends you can talk to about private matters, or call on for help



**Table40: Multiple logistic regression of factors affecting informal childcare use by Local Authority (NSW 2015)**

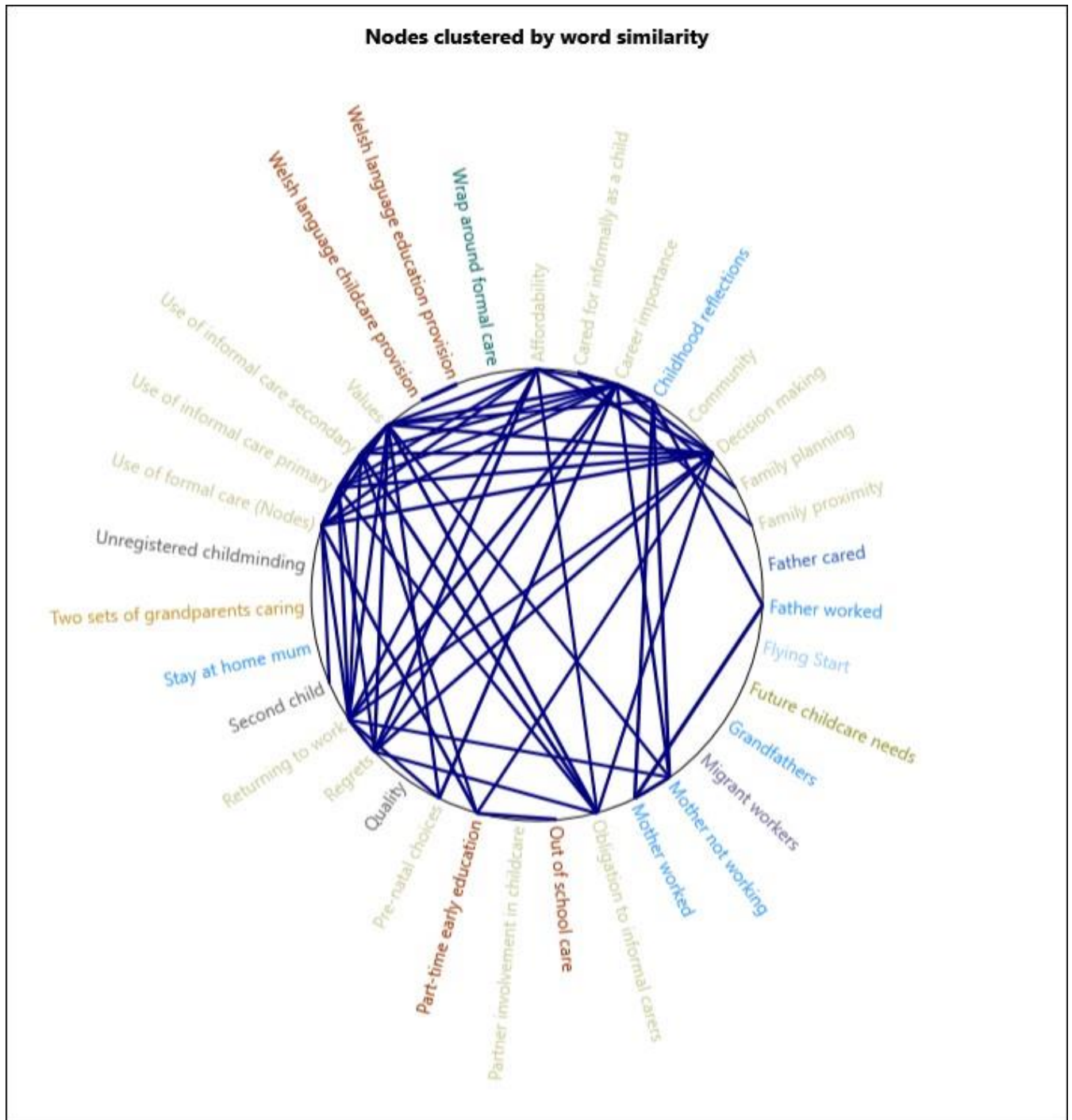
Model		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	-14.950	29.363		-.509	.618	-77.536	47.636
	Employed Households	.551	.089	.811	6.191	.000	.362	.741
	Welsh Speakers	.165	.093	.436	1.777	.096	-.033	.363
	% most deprived LSOAs	.020	.055	.048	.370	.716	-.097	.138
	Economically Active	.116	.299	.075	.388	.704	-.522	.754
	% of adults with low or no qualifications	.192	.196	.195	.978	.343	-.226	.610
	% areas classed rural	-.036	.043	-.186	-.839	.415	-.127	.055

a. Dependent Variable: Informal care

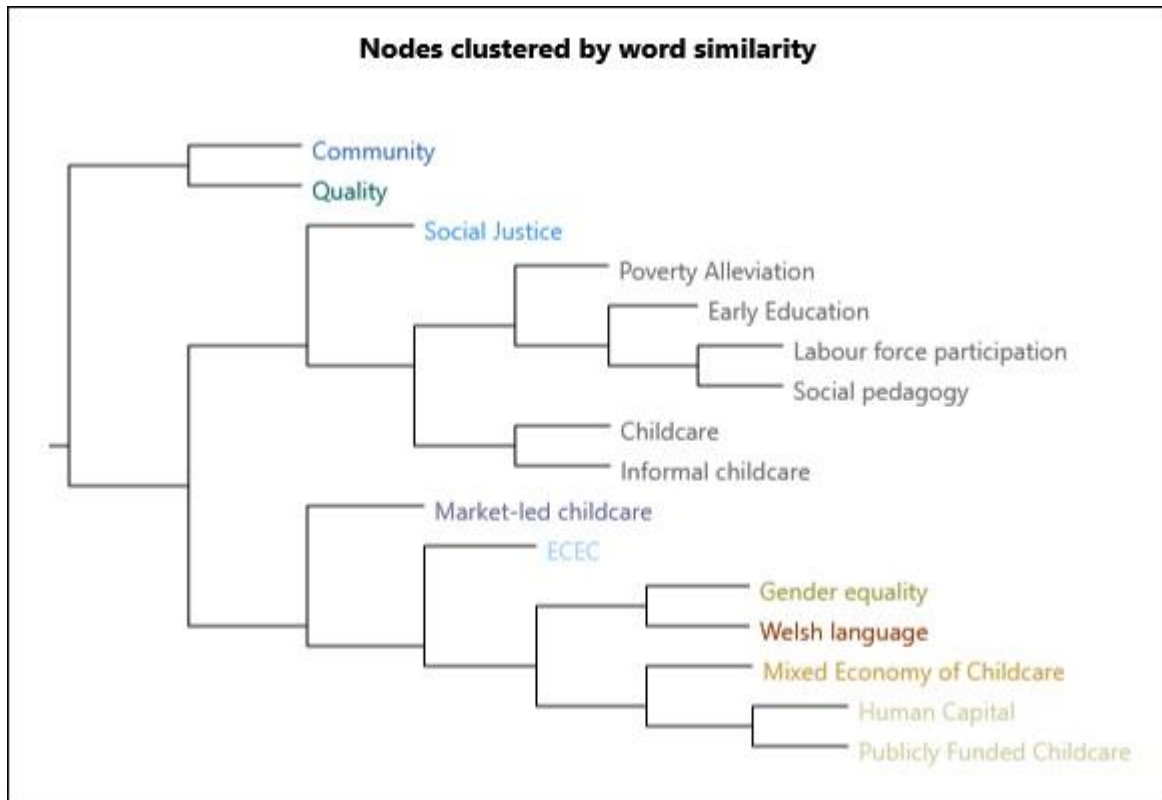
## **Appendix 8: Interview Case Classification Sheet**

Person	Location	Sex	Languages spoken in the home	Cared for as a child	Family Status	Family income	Number of children	Subject Working	Uses informal care	Care orientation	Work orientation
Cases\Abigail	Blaenau Gw	Female	English	Unassigned	Lone Parent	£500-£1000	1	Part Time	Secondary	6	6
Cases\Aimee	Wrexham	Female	English	Parental care only	Lone Parent	£1001-£1750	2	Full Time	Secondary	5	9
Cases\Alana	Blaenau Gw	Female	English	Unassigned	Lone Parent	£1751-2750	1	Full Time	Primary	8	8
Cases\Alex	Ceredigion	Female	Welsh	Formal care	Couple	£2751-£4000	1	Full Time	Equal	4	10
Cases\Amy	Ceredigion	Female	Welsh and English	Unassigned	Couple	£1751-2750	1	Full Time	Primary	6	8
Cases\Beverley	Wrexham	Female	English	Secondary	Couple	£2751-£4000	2	Full Time	Parental care only	3	8
Cases\Brenda	Wrexham	Female	English	Parental care only	Couple	£500-£1000	1	Not Working	Parental care only	6	4
Cases\Carla	Blaenau Gw	Female	English	Parental care only	Couple	£1751-2750	3	Part Time	Primary	6	5
Cases\Carys	Ceredigion	Female	Welsh	Primary	Couple	£2751-£4000	2	Full Time	Primary	7	8
Cases\Ceri	Ceredigion	Female	Welsh	Parental care only	Couple	£1751-2750	1	Full Time	Primary	6	7
Cases\Charlotte	Wrexham	Female	English	Secondary	Couple	£2751-£4000	1	Full Time	Secondary	8	9
Cases\Christie	Wrexham	Female	English	Parental care only	Couple	£1751-2750	2	Not Working	Equal	7	7
Cases\Claire	Ceredigion	Female	Welsh and English	Secondary	Couple	£1001-£1750	2	Part Time	Secondary	5	5
Cases\Claudia	Blaenau Gw	Female	English	Parental care only	Couple	£1751-2750	2	Part Time	Primary	9	2
Cases\Deina	Ceredigion	Female	Welsh and English	Parental care only	Couple	£500-£1000	3	Part Time	Not Applicable	4	8
Cases\Donna	Blaenau Gw	Female	English	Primary	Couple	£500-£1000	1	Not Working	Not Applicable	10	1
Cases\Elaine	Blaenau Gw	Female	English	Parental care only	Lone Parent	£500-£1000	2	Not Working	Secondary	3	3
Cases\Ella	Wrexham	Female	English	Formal care	Couple	£2751-£4000	1	Full Time	Secondary	6	8
Cases\Emma	Wrexham	Female	English	Parental care only	Couple	>£4000	1	Full Time	Parental care only	4	7
Cases\Ffion	Ceredigion	Female	Welsh and English	Primary	Couple	£500-£1000	1	Not Working	Secondary	8	9
Cases\Fran	Ceredigion	Female	Welsh and English	Parental care only	Couple	£1001-£1750	1	Part Time	Not Applicable	5	5
Cases\Hannah	Wrexham	Female	English	Parental care only	Couple	£2751-£4000	3	Not Working	Secondary	8	6
Cases\Hazel	Ceredigion	Female	Welsh and English	Primary	Lone Parent	£1751-2750	2	Full Time	Equal	4	9
Cases\Jackie	Ceredigion	Female	English	Parental care only	Couple	£1001-£1750	1	Not Working	Not Applicable	8	4
Cases\Jade	Blaenau Gw	Female	English	Primary	Couple	£500-£1000	2	Not Working	Secondary	6	2
Cases\Jenna	Blaenau Gw	Female	English	Secondary	Couple	£2751-£4000	2	Full Time	Equal	4	8
Cases\Jenny	Wrexham	Female	English	Parental care only	Lone Parent	£500-£1000	2	Full Time	Secondary	6	9
Cases\Joanna	Wrexham	Female	English	Parental care only	Lone Parent	£1001-£1750	2	Not Working	Parental care only	9	3
Cases\Kate	Ceredigion	Female	English	Parental care only	Couple	£1751-2750	3	Full Time	Not Applicable	6	6
Cases\Laura	Wrexham	Female	English	Parental care only	Couple	>£4000	2	Full Time	Secondary	7	8
Cases\Leanne	Blaenau Gw	Female	English	Primary	Lone Parent	£500-£1000	1	Not Working	Unassigned	9	2
Cases\Leonie	Ceredigion	Female	English	Unassigned	Lone Parent	£1751-2750	1	Part Time	Primary	6	8
Cases\Lesley	Blaenau Gw	Female	English	Secondary	Couple	>£4000	2	Full Time	Primary	4	10
Cases\Lisa	Wrexham	Female	English	Unassigned	Lone Parent	£1001-£1750	2	Full Time	Primary	9	9
Cases\Liz	Wrexham	Female	English	Secondary	Lone Parent	£1751-2750	2	Full Time	Primary	4	7
Cases\Lori	Blaenau Gw	Female	English	Formal care	Couple	£1001-£1750	2	Part Time	Primary	7	4
Cases\Lyndsey	Blaenau Gw	Female	English	Primary	Lone Parent	£1751-2750	2	Full Time	Primary	3	8
Cases\Marie	Blaenau Gw	Female	English	Secondary	Couple	>£4000	1	Full Time	Secondary	5	8
Cases\Rachel	Wrexham	Female	English	Primary	Couple	£1751-2750	2	Full Time	Primary	2	9
Cases\Rhian	Ceredigion	Female	Welsh	Primary	Couple	£1751-2750	2	Not Working	Not Applicable	10	2
Cases\Sam	Ceredigion	Female	Welsh	Primary	Couple	£500-£1000	3	Not Working	Not Applicable	5	7
Cases\Sarah	Ceredigion	Female	Welsh and English	Unassigned	Couple	£1001-£1750	2	Part Time	Primary	5	5
Cases\Sue	Blaenau Gw	Female	English	Not Applicable	Lone Parent	£1001-£1750	2	Full Time	Primary	5	7
Cases\Susan	Wrexham	Female	English	Primary	Couple	£2751-£4000	1	Full Time	Secondary	4	6
Cases\Tania	Blaenau Gw	Female	English	Primary	Couple	£500-£1000	3	Not Working	Primary	4	2

## Appendix 8 NVivo Interview Coding Nodes



## Appendix 10 Nvivo Policy Coding Nodes



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