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Care consciousness: classed care and relational justice

By

Margaret Crean

UCD Student Number: 97 123 048

The thesis is submitted to University College Dublin in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Human Sciences)

UCD School of Social Justice

Supervisor: Professor Kathleen Lynch

January 2016
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Abstract
This thesis is driven by a lived experience of inequality and by an academic interest in exploring the idea that love and care work is central to how social class inequality is lived and challenged. It is informed conceptually by the work on the affective system and love labour as primary care work by Lynch (1989; 2009; 2013) and the work of key feminist theorists that progressed ethics of care theory such as Gilligan (1982), Noddings (1984), Kittay (1998; 1999), Tronto (1993, 2001; 2013) and Held (2006). It also builds on research that shows how resource and class inequalities are inseparable from relational injustices in the lives of poorer women in society (Dodson, 2007; 2009). By placing the affective system as central to people’s experiences of class inequality, this thesis hopes to address a gap in sociological and egalitarian theory that neglects love and care when theorising social class inequality and egalitarian change. It presents issues of relational justice associated with the affective system as a generative rather than a derivative site of injustice.

It examines in particular the contexts in which care and class intersect, exploring the negative impact of a classed-care system on personal well-being and on people’s care relations. It also examines the wider emotional and material inequalities experienced. These injustices are conceptualised as the hidden injustices of classed care. People’s shared knowledge and practices around love and care labour inform a care consciousness that plays a central role in how people engage and challenge these injustices. These concepts are generated initially through autoethnography and further contextualised and ‘tested’ with the stories and life experiences shared in ten interviews and two learning circles with other women living on low incomes, five of whom are community activists. The data generated suggests that the interconnectedness of the hidden injustices of classed care and people’s care consciousness is critical in how people can organise not only for economic justice but for relational justice and affective equality.
Statement of original authorship

I hereby certify that the submitted work is my own work, was completed while registered as a candidate for the degree stated on the Title Page, and I have not obtained a degree elsewhere on the basis of the research presented in this submitted work.
Acknowledgements

None of this would have been possible without the love and support of my family, friends and neighbours over the last six years. I want to specifically thank Professor Kathleen Lynch who has been an inspirational supervisor but also a friend and mentor. Without her care, intellectual lead and practical support, none of this would have been possible. This thesis is written in the spirit of solidarity with all those currently living with the injustices of economic inequality and especially those who conversed with me to make this research possible. I would also like to express gratitude to a good friend Cathleen O’Neill, whose proud working class activism and feminism has taught me so much. This piece of work is also a credit to the memory of both my parents, Thomas Crean and Marie Crean, who struggled against the odds to ensure we had all we needed as children; I hope it makes their struggle worth while. I want to also especially thank my loving partner and anam cara Cathal MacOireachtaigh who has picked up all the pieces over the last six years and supported me in every way to make this PhD possible. Finally, I want to dedicate this piece of work to my children, Saoirse and Fionn, in the hope that anything I can do in my lifetime against injustice can serve their futures.
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Class, care and social change

If three words could describe this research, they are class, care and social change. This thesis is about introducing the affective system into class analysis to challenge how we understand class inequality and egalitarian social change: shifting the paradigm from class to classed care. The study sets out to explore lived experiences of social class inequality from a classed care perspective to identify the injustices in people’s lives when they engage love and care in unequal economic conditions, and to identify the ways in which people could organise to change these unequal conditions.

The choice of topic was influenced by the lived experience of the researcher but also informed by the work on love and care that Kathleen Lynch had developed in the Equality Studies Centre in University College Dublin. Lynch (1999; 2009) and the framework that Baker and Lynch et al. (2009, 2nd ed.) had developed, which drew attention to three levels of care work in society that make up what they termed the affective system: love, care and solidarity work. The egalitarian framework developed in the Equality Studies Centre identifies the affective as a system, thereby analysing love and care inequalities as part of sociological, egalitarian and normative theory, and in terms of its intersectionality with other systems. This thesis is primarily examining the links between love and care and classed inequalities. Solidarity, although intimately linked to love and care, is beyond the scope of this study as it extends beyond face-to-face relations.

The research here also builds on the work of key feminist theorists that progressed ethics of care theory such as Gilligan (1982), Noddings (1984), Kittay (1999; 2002) Tronto (1993) and Held (2006). However, this thesis extends the ethics of care approach by placing care in the wider socio-economic context that shapes care, arguing that care is classed (and racialised1) when care is done in unequal economic conditions. Looked at from this perspective, care ethics is not just about gender

---

1 Although a key issue that needs further examination, this thesis did not analyse the way in which care is racialised as the sample for the empirical research did not have anyone come forward with an ethnic minority background.
equality but also economic equality. To augment the ethics of care to include the concept of classed care, the thesis draws on the work of wider feminist theory such as that by economic theorists like Folbre (1994; 2004) and political theorists like Tronto (1993; 2001; 2013) and Sevenhuijsen (1998).

By introducing love and care into understandings of how social class inequality is lived and challenged, the thesis is also addressing a gap in class theories of emancipatory social change. In addition to the well-researched field of ideological control and class consciousness, a result of the intersection between the cultural and economic systems, this thesis is suggesting that the system of love and care plays as equal a part in the social action that underpins theories of consciousness and social change.

This chapter will provide a more detailed insight into the theoretical framework informing this thesis. It will also illustrate some gaps in current academic thinking and outline the ways in which the knowledge produced by this thesis can influence theories on social class and care injustices and egalitarian social change. It will conclude with an overview of the methodology utilised to explore classed care and social change and a brief outline of the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Theoretical framework

People’s relational lives, and the affective system, play a central role in how they narrate living in unequal societies. This is clear from Green’s research with low income families (2013), Dodson’s work with low income women (1999; 2009), Scott et al.’s work on welfare-reliant women putting children first (2001) and Manoogian et al.’s work with Appalachian Low-Income Mothers (2015). In each of these studies the women were found to put children first in their concerns and action around poverty and economic inequality in their lives.

As noted by Dodson (2007), Henderson & Tickamyer (2008) and Seccombe (2007) mothers face economic constraints that threaten their basic family needs of food and shelter. Green (ibid) conducted research over 6 years with low-income families. Green’s research suggests that love labour plays a role in how people manage inequality when conditions are unequal:
Beyond the literal quilt, the daily work of surviving in poverty can be likened to the creation of a complex tapestry drawing from many resources, performing a multiplicity of tasks and duties, and piecing together one’s own subsistence with the work of caregiving and nurturing for others in meaningful and artistic ways (Aptheker, 1989 in Green, 2013: 53).

People, mainly women, according to Green (2013) do an unspoken labour shift when they patch together their own safety nets from disparate sources of assistance within a context of budget cuts and the growing need for services in unequal economic conditions. Borrowing from Hochschild’s *The Second Shift* (1989), Green uses the term the ‘unspoken shift’ and defines it as that shift which goes beyond daily household maintenance and caregiving obligations. It involves both a different type of labour and the development of specialised expertise to negotiate benefits and services successfully. The labour of the unspoken shift is unique to poor women and is thus directly shaped by the intersections of their gender and social class. These intersections situate the unspoken shift as “women’s work” while ignoring, devaluing, and belittling this labour on the basis of public discourse that imagines poor women receiving public assistance as both lazy and unproductive (ibid: 53).

But what these researchers have shown empirically has lacked a corresponding legitimacy in social theory when making sense of inequality or egalitarian social change. Relegated to the realm of the good life and declared outside the remit of justice (Habermas, 1981), the affective as a discrete system is not included in mainstream sociological theories of how society is structured and functions. Yet the findings in this thesis, detailed in chapters 6, 7 and 8, and the discussions that follow in chapters 9, 10 and 11, affirm the earlier empirical research outlined above and show how love labour plays a significant part in framing how people live with inequality and how they challenge inequality.

Developing a conceptual framework for love and care inequalities is crucial to ensure that the injustices experienced by people caring in unequal conditions is given a legitimate place in theories of inequality and social change. For the purpose of this thesis, the framework for advancing a theoretical understanding of love and care work in society is informed by three key areas: the first is the egalitarian framework developed by Baker and Lynch et al (2009, 2nd ed); the second is feminist theory
specific to the ethics of care and to love as a justice issue; and the third is emancipatory theories of social change. These three areas inform the three literature review chapters and they are discussed briefly below.

1.2.1 The equality studies framework

In, *Equality: From Theory to Action*, Baker and Lynch et al., (2009, 2nd ed) propose key dimensions of equality, one of which is love, care and solidarity. They also identify four different social systems, which include the economic, cultural, political and affective systems. The framework is breaking new ground by emphasising the importance of the affective system; the system concerned with providing and sustaining relationships of love, care and solidarity (ibid: 58-62). Inequality in love, care and solidarity is generated by the affective system but these inequalities intersect with the other social systems. The framework, therefore, provides a way of thinking about inequality that places the affective system as a discrete but intersecting system alongside the traditional sociological systems. It also identifies the range of love, care and solidarity injustices that are generated by the affective system and reinforced by other social systems.

However, it is the wider work on love labour and the affective system by Kathleen Lynch (1989; 2007) that plays a central role in the ideas underpinning this thesis. For Lynch (1989) love labour refers to the love and care for intimate others in your life as primary care relations. Lynch et al. (2009: 40) maintain that the primary care relations include intimate relations where there is a strong attachment, interdependence, and a depth of engagement and intensity. One of the most obvious institutions here is the family and parent child relations.

Using the equality studies framework, and more specifically the work of the affective system and love labour by Lynch (ibid), allows the injustices in love and care that are generated by the economic system to also be identified. The lack of basic resources to do love and care work in unequal economic conditions puts love and care relationships under pressure and generates injustices not usually considered within the realm of economic justice. The literature review in chapter 2 develops this discussion further and illustrates how the theoretical work developed by Baker and
Lynch et al. (ibid), and more specifically Lynch (ibid), provides a way of framing the affective system as a discrete but intersecting system.

1.2.2 Feminist theory and ethics of care

The work on love and care injustices by Baker and Lynch et al. (ibid) compliments the work generated by feminist theorists who have drawn attention to the sphere of social action around love and care in society. Their ideas illuminate key dimensions of love and care in society including a focus on other-centeredness and interdependency (Kittay, 1999), vulnerability (Fineman, 2008) and the role of emotions (Hochschild, 1983, 2013; Ahmed, 2004). Tronto (2013) and Held (2006) develop the ethics of care discussion further by highlighting how care work is remote from political and egalitarian concerns. Like Held (2006), Tronto draws specific attention to the politics of developing an ethics of care.

In addition, some feminist theorists, by drawing attention to the class and ethnic inequalities in care work (Federici, 2012; Tronto, 2013), have argued that the ethics of care is not about recognition of care work but wider politics of redistribution and representation. This thesis is concerned with how the issues of love and care injustice, albeit enhanced by feminist thinkers, have been conceptualised, in the main, as recognition, redistribution or representation concerns. The literature review in chapter 3 deals with these issues in more detail. This thesis, by framing the justice issues associated with the intersection of the economic and affective system as relational justice concerns, implies that this sphere is more than just a site of social action but also a site of politics.

1.2.3 Emancipatory theories of class and social change

As a site of politics based on relational injustices, the affective system is critical to challenging social class inequality especially if, as this thesis proposes, social class inequalities are lived through relational injustices. Positioned as interdependent beings, both in need of care and providing care, people are also positioned within a class system. The fact that love and care is unavoidable and necessary for human survival makes the relations, institutions and practices of the affective system central to people’s lives. This proposition has profound implications for theories of emancipatory social theory and social movement theory that put gender and/or
social class at the centre of consciousness-raising and movements for social change. If people live economic inequality through relational injustices then raising a collective consciousness and organising against these injustices is a key aim for egalitarian social change. This thesis is concerned with progressing this idea and drawing attention to how organising around collective consciousness of love and care can challenge economic inequality.

This thesis places the production of people as central to resource inequalities in society rather than the production of commodities. Illuminating the centrality of relational justice for economic equality also builds on the work on social reproduction by Bakker and Gill (2003) and Mies and Bennholdt Thomsen (2000). The centrality of love and care supports Mies ideas of the ‘other economy’ that produces life and everything necessary to maintain it at the centre of economic and social activity. Of equal interest is work by McMurthy (1999) on the Cancer of Capitalism whereby he explicitly states that:

The emerging liberative agent in the Third World is the unwaged force of women who are not yet disconnected from the life economy by their work. They serve life not commodity production. They are the hidden underpinning of the world economy and the wage equivalent of their life-serving work is estimate at 16 trillion dollars (ibid: 248).

This thesis, influenced by the work of feminists like Feredici (2012), challenges the traditional view of labour by insisting that affective labour, and specifically love labour, is central to any theory of social change connected to unequal economic conditions. Feredici prefers to use the term reproductive labour, whereas this study has opted for love and care labour denoting in particular the primary care labour that happens between families in the affective system. The term affective has been criticised as being too academic (Sayer, 2005) and Feredici (2012) sees moves from using the term ‘productive’ as misleading or undervaluing. However, this thesis takes the position that a new term is needed that removes the associations of ‘productive’ in the narrow and ‘masculine’ way that it is conceptualised in the work of academics and the discourse of everyday interactions. The literature review in chapter 4 develops a more detailed discussion of theories of social change, showing how an affective understanding can enhance organising for egalitarian change.
Overall, a new relational approach and affective perspective to economic justice can be progressed by the theoretical approach underpinning this thesis. This can be achieved by utilising key concepts from feminist thinkers, especially those researching classed care practices, and those writing about the ethics of care, and combining these with a conceptual framework incorporating the affective system. This allows a greater understanding of how social class inequality is lived but also how economic inequality is challenged.

1.3 Challenging non-theory and shifting the paradigm

The literature reviews in chapters 2, 3 and 4, therefore, attempt to provide academic concepts and ideas for theorising about love labour. The findings and discussions in the subsequent chapters, six to eleven, integrate this academic analysis with empirical data and experiential knowledge of doing love and care work in unequal conditions. This is significant when advancing a shift in how we think about class inequality.

The fact that love labour is everywhere, like the problem posed by matter in the physical sciences, means that examining love labour is a complex task not least because it is understudied already, but also because it has become so expected and taken for granted that studying it presents theoretical and philosophical challenges. Love is treated as a non-event in the realms of mainstream egalitarian theory, a concept relegated to discussion of the good life (Habermas, 1981) and removed from political ideas of justice, forcing it into a level of non-theory.

The sociological focus on culture, politics and economics of injustice and the corresponding egalitarian concerns of recognition, representation and redistribution have neglected the affective system that Lynch (ibid), and others noted above, have developed. Bringing an analysis of care at a primary care level, that of love labour, to a theoretical level gives it a status and legitimacy and places the care system, or affective system, on a par with other systems.

As noted above, the empirical research for this thesis also builds on this new theoretical approach to understanding class inequality. The narratives of the experiential experts, not only inform the findings chapters but, through the learning circles (see below), also inform the discussion chapters. Dodson et al (2007: 824)
have suggested that this type of collaborative data analysis be at the core of feminist research.

This collaborative approach to reflecting on data poses challenges (discussed later in the methodology chapter) but it also ensures that the discussion and theory generated has been developed through dialogue with people rather than through papers and solitary data analysis. Dialogue with those living what is being studied is particularly useful for a topic like love labour and inequality, which has been under-theorised. The following quote is interesting as it makes this point by highlighting the hidden role of love and care work in unequal societies:

Women's work and women's labour are buried deeply in the heart of the capitalist social and economic structure. (David Staples, No Place Like Home, 2006)

This quote draws attention to how love labour is buried but yet central to how the economy operates. This intersection is the primary concern for this thesis but it is complicated by the fact that love, for oneself or others, is an understudied form of labour. The boundary between what constitutes love labour and everything else that happens in life, such as market labour, cultural production, political activism and other human actions, remains vague until we view the institutions, relations and practices of this labour as constituting a discrete, yet interconnected, system.

The vast bulk of people in society do not labour for profit and private property accumulation, but instead labour for subsistence (Mies and Bennholdt Thomsen, 2000) and the preservation of themselves and others they do love labour for. When this is relegated to the level of non-theory, then that which matters to people is remote from theory. Traditionally, the challenge to economic inequality, manifested as resource inequalities, be it via income or housing or health, were addressed via the economic system through labour politics. Yet, poorer people or working class people, particularly women in these groups, have struggled and challenged resource inequalities outside of organised resistance or movements. Their daily suffering from resource inequalities is lived out in how they personally cope or care for themselves on a practical, emotional and psychological level; how they care for others or are cared for by others in their families or wider community; and how they relate to other people and other social groups in society.
1.3 Aims

Lynch (2009) maintains that care labour takes at least three distinct forms, namely love labour, general care labour and solidarity work. This thesis is concerned with love labour and more specifically with people doing such labour in unequal economic conditions. It is concerned, therefore, with the generation of injustices when care and class intersect; and with understanding both how people live with these injustices and how people can organise collectively against such injustices.

The primary research question is centred on how the intersection between the care and social class systems in people’s lives structures their experience of living with, and challenging, the unequal conditions in which they are expected to produce and sustain people.

The analysis, by placing the production of people at the core, shifts the way we traditionally think about labour and economic inequality. It requires a paradigm shift in how we conceptualise how people live with inequality and how they organise for social change.

1.4 Methodology

The hypothesis is being explored through this thesis on three levels. On an academic level this thesis is an attempt to introduce love labour, as part of a discrete but intersecting affective system, into the analysis of social class inequality and ideas for social change. On a political level it is trying to explore how to organise around the love and care injustices that matter most to people in their everyday encounters with resource inequalities. On a personal level it is being used to make sense of my own experiences of social class inequality and how resource inequalities, throughout my life, have manifested themselves not only economically but relationally in the love and care relations, practices and institutions in my life.

The methodology, therefore, is driven by academic, political and personal interests. How the data is collected and how it is analysed is as much a part of the thesis process for informing the emancipatory element of the research as the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. In other words, it is not enough to think outside the box when doing emancipatory research but there is a need to act outside the box: to
make the thesis field research an active part of your everyday engagement with social life, especially when the topic you are studying is about your life as you live it presently and have done in the past. Making the thesis part of everyday discussions with friends, neighbours and family, even if not field notes for the actual findings chapters but headnotes for general theorising, was a central part of the lived observations that played an indirect role in the empirical research. The decision in 2013 to use retrospective ethnography as a source of data significantly enhanced this lived observation and allowed me to integrate my own life narrative into the findings and discussion.

This decision to use autoethnography coincided with counselling I had commenced in the same year. Looking back over what I have written since I started personal counselling in 2013, I am struck by the mix of emotional and material memories. I didn’t realise then that the process of using reminiscent therapy to deal with childhood trauma, although painful at the time, would also serve as a primary source of data for my research on growing up in, and living with, inequality. For me, looking back or reminiscing was part of trying to find the roots of the anxiety I had experienced all my adult life. But looking back was more than a personal journey, it was also sociological, as the ‘child’ I wanted to hold and mind in those therapeutic sessions was being shaped and also ‘harmed’ by the systems structuring her life back then. The lack of housing and lack of money that featured in those early developmental years played a large part in dictating the conditions in which I received the love and care needed for emotional, physical and cognitive development. Through my memories, it was clear to me that the autobiographical self was wedded to both personal and sociological life narratives. On the one hand I could talk to my counsellor about personal trauma and relations and events and on the other hand, I could write these same stories in a sociological frame in the autoethnographic notes for this research. This realisation has served to affirm the original aim of the research, which centred on exploring the intersection of care and class in poorer people’s lives.

For this reason, the significance of everyday knowledge and experiential knowledge, retrospective autoethnography has been used as a primary source of data collection for this thesis. This has been augmented by one-to-one interview conversations
where the autoethnographic data was cross referenced with the lived experience of
ten other women who had lived, and were living at the time of the interview, with
economic inequality. Five of these were also activists at a community level and,
although some were employed in this capacity, they mainly spoke about their
activism outside of paid community work. The ideas and concepts generated by the
autoethnographic data and the interview conversations were discussed in two
learning circles that were designed to incorporate dialogue and shared learning into
the empirical research. The learning circles allowed some of the interview
participants to engage in interpreting the data as much as generating data through
their life narrative.

Overall, the research, with a key focus on experiential knowledge, ideas for action
and dialogue, has been guided by an emancipatory approach to research and is in
line with feminist inspired research methodologies advocated by Dodson (2007,
2009) and the communicative methodological approach to research progressed by

1.5 Outline of thesis chapters

The lessons from my own life and the experiences of the people referenced for this
research, whether they are academics, activists or people interviewed by virtue of
the very fact they live with inequality, permeate this research at every stage from the
introduction to the conclusion. There is no escaping the need to reference to my own
and to their experiences to inform the theory and methodology used in this research.
For this reason references are made to the empirical data throughout the literature
reviews as much as in the discussion chapters.

The thesis has three literature review chapters. Chapter 2 is an overview of the
egalitarian and affective system framework used to develop an understanding of love
labour as part of a discrete and intersecting system. Chapter 3 is a brief introduction
to some of the key concepts from feminist theorists who have suggested the primacy
of love and care as justice issues whilst also highlighting the need to present this as
relational justice beyond the traditional justice concerns of recognition, redistribution
and representation. Chapter 4 then deals with social change and theories that see
consciousness as important to egalitarian social change such as Marxist and
feminist theory. This chapter also questions the limitations of false consciousness and other ideas around the reproduction of inequality or movements for social change that fail to take account of the affective system.

The methodology for the research is outlined in Chapter 5, which introduces a diagram to illustrate how the three sources of data collection complement one another. The diagram shows how the findings and discussion from the research culminate at the point of intersection between all three data sources.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 detail the findings. Chapter 6 highlights some of the autoethnographic material and introduces the substantive concepts generated by the grounded theory approach to data analysis. Chapter 7 presents the interview conversations themed by key concepts and linked to the substantive codes identified in the autoethnography. Chapter 8 is an overview of the learning circle discussions and the key themes that presented.

The discussion in chapters 9, 10 and 11 allow the findings to be discussed more theoretically. Each chapter allows one of the three substantive codes to be developed, challenged and proposed. Chapter 9 develops a discussion of the intersection between relational and resource inequalities in the lives of people living with social class inequality, which the autoethnographic study conceptualises as the hidden injustices of classed care. Chapter 10 presents key dimensions of the concept of care consciousness, which is not only an awareness of love labour but the practice of that labour. It explores how care consciousness can be a motivator and an inhibitor of organising for social change, placing it as a contradictory concept in organising for social change. Chapter 11 builds on this idea of organising for change by exploring how care consciousness can play a role in addressing the hidden injustices of classed care. It is about presenting the operational concerns of positioning, place, people and power when organising for relational justice in the face of economic inequality.

1.6 Conclusion

People in their everyday lives produce and manage the human relations that uphold societies. The practice, relations and institutions of love labour is everywhere and it is expected to be everywhere even when it is unspoken and people are without the
resources to do it. This thesis is building on academic work that is trying to shift the academic focus onto this affective system. To do so, we must come to the realisation that theory, and action for egalitarian change, is lacking when the injustices of the affective system remain hidden. Thomas Kuhn maintains that the realisation of new ways of thinking happens after a paradigm shift has taken place rather than before or during the shift:

\[
\text{The techniques which induce a paradigm change may well be described as therapeutic, if only because, when they succeed, one learns one had been sick before. (Thomas Kuhn (quoted in Morick, 1965: 206))}
\]

This Kuhn quote is very apt to end the introduction to this thesis as he captures the dual purpose of the thesis as both a personal and political piece of work. For me, the process has been therapeutic and it has helped me to name and place the inequalities in my own life, which were hidden and buried deeply, into a wider sociological frame. The good and bad memories that shaped my childhood and the adult I have become now have a material as well as an emotional explanation. The shame, familial conflict and dysfunction that played a role in my formative years were not just framed by love and care; they were framed by class and inequality.

Yet, it is through love and care that I lived, and have since narrated, these material inequalities. The interviews and learning circle discussions also suggest that the life-story of a person reared on a low income in an unequal society is not just a story of resource suffering but relational suffering. Relational suffering exists in economically unequal societies, not in the case of lacking love or care, but in the context of care relations for oneself and others being negatively impacted by resource inequalities. Developing this thesis has allowed that learning to move from a therapeutic to a sociological process. It is hoped that the findings and discussion progress an understanding of inequality and social change that builds on the work of others trying to place care as central to social justice and show the sociological and egalitarian gap in theory and action when this is omitted.

In this way, this thesis is shifting the traditional understanding of resource inequality and economic inequality from a class to a classed care perspective. It presents the affective system and the institutions and relations making up that system as a system central to how a person lives with and challenges social class inequality. This
shift in thinking can only be realised when dialogue is open with those tasked with living with inequality whilst producing and sustaining human life. The theoretical and conceptual framework developed through the literature review chapters and the concepts generated by the empirical findings, through the integration of experiential and academic knowledge, combine to challenge traditional approaches to understanding and challenging social class inequality.

There is an imminence and practical reality to love labour that means people have an unavoidable consciousness of the need to produce and maintain affective relations, practices and institutions as well as their own needs for love and care. Academically, there is a mismatch between the experiential expertise of ordinary people in knowing how the affective system structures their lives, with academic theoretical expertise, which ignores this centrality of love and care. This illuminates a point at which sociology as a discipline has become a science directed by the domain of academic experts rather than the domain of a more diverse collective of people that represent wider society and theorise by experiential learning. Empirical research shows that more equal and solidarity-led countries have higher levels of well-being and health (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009) so the benefits of shifting our understanding of inequality to one that includes care will have benefits for people individually but also for society at a structural level. Drawing again on what Kuhn stated above, developing an affective paradigm for conceptualising inequality, therefore, offers therapeutic, political and egalitarian gains.
Chapter 2 The affective system: theorising love and care as a site of social action

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present an overview of the institutions, relations and practices of the affective system as a means to illustrate what makes it a social system on a par with economic, cultural and political systems. As will be discussed in chapter 3, feminist theorists have done much needed work to illustrate and politicise the many recognition, redistribution, and representation equality concerns associated with love and care in society. Yet, amongst all of the concepts and theories, there is a very real analytical gap in terms of a theory or understanding of care as constituting a key social system in the generation and reproduction of inequality in society.

Lynch and Baker et al (2004; 2009) have drawn attention to the system of love, care and solidarity in society. Solidarity exists as the political form of care work but the focus here will be love and care with a specific focus on love labour. The case is made that there are institutions to sustain love and care in all societies; at the micro level, we have the family and households for love, at the meso level, we have schools, hospitals and welfare institutions. These affective institutions are accompanied by affective relations of love and care and the practices to sustain love and care (and in some cases the opposites such as abuse and neglect).

This chapter opens with a brief introduction to the affective turn in social theory, followed by a detailed review of work by Lynch and Baker et al. (ibid) and associated work by Lynch (1989; 2009), which presents a framework for affective inequality. This work will be placed within a wider sociological analysis on social systems to show that what Lynch has identified as a social system in her egalitarian framework can be aptly placed within a sociological framework that views the affective as a social system in line with the economic, cultural and political systems structuring society.
2.2 The affective turn in social theory

There is much written in the context of the affective turn in social theory (Adair, 2002, 2009; Clough and Halley, 2007; Clough et al., 2013). For the most part, however, this turn is overly focused on the emotional, corporeal, psycho-social and bio-political aspects of theorising affect (Berbalet, 2001, Clough and Halley, 2007; Clough et al., 2013; Blencowe, 2011). This thesis is arguing that the affective turn, and associated biopolitical focus, in social theory fails to provide a structural analysis of affect compared to the more politicised and structural analysis of the affective that has characterised the work of feminist theorists within other disciplines such as economics, philosophy and law (Folbre, 1994, 2001; 2008; Tronto, 2013; and Fineman, 2008). Holmes (2004: 210), for example, claims that despite the seemingly clear sociological utility of a politics of anger, the sociology of emotion has been neglectful of the political. Yet the focus on the mind and emotions and the body that the affective turn has brought to social theory has introduced a more nuanced understanding of how people engage with society and social structures.

2.2.1 Emotions as action

The affective turn has managed to bring about a much needed focus on emotions within social theory and thereby provides tools for understanding and theorising how affective and economic inequality is lived. For example, Vivyan Adair (2005) draws strategically, and illustratively, on the work of Foucault, specifically his theories of bodily inscription, to explore her lived experiences as a poverty class woman. Likewise, Loveday (2015:12) focuses on the role of emotions and educational experiences regarding social class. Loveday focuses specifically on the lived experience of shame to help explain how deficiency becomes embodied, naturalising privilege and obscuring the ‘moral economy’ (Skeggs, 2009). In this context, Loveday (ibid: 12) maintains that shame works on bodies in their relationality to other bodies as actors ‘struggle’ over valuable forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986) at stake in the educational field. It is the fundamentally relational nature of social class – as it intersects with other social processes, such as gender – that makes class itself into an ‘affective practice’. 
Like Loveday, Hemmings (2012: 148) also makes an important contribution to understanding the importance of affect in a more political frame. She proposes a concept of affective solidarity that draws on a broader range of affects – rage, frustration and the desire for connection, as necessary for a sustainable feminist politics of transformation. She states that such work highlights the importance of feeling for others as a way of transforming ourselves and the world, and thus renders affect as a way of moving across ontology and epistemology.

The role of affect for transformation and social justice also features in the work of Pedwell (2012: 163 and 2014) who discusses how affective self-transformation, premised on empathy, has been understood within feminist and anti-racist literatures as central to achieving social justice. She explains how it is the radically ‘unsettling’ affective experience of empathy that is conceived as potentially generative of both personal and social change (also see Bartky, 1996 and Davis, 2004). She asserts that:

*Through establishing empathetic identification with those who are differently positioned to themselves, the possibility exists that (privileged) subjects will experience a radical transformation in consciousness, which leads them not only to respond to the experience of ‘the other’ with greater understanding and compassion, but also to recognise their own complicity within transnational hierarchies of power (ibid: 166).*

However, specifically focusing on what she refers to as the transnational politics of empathy, Pedwell (ibid: 165) claims that there needs to be a more critical engagement with the power relations in which ‘the empirical’ and ‘the affective’ are embedded at this current socio-political conjuncture. She warns that:

*The risk of a focus on intimacy, proximity and ‘face-to-face’ encounters in both critical theories of emotion and international development praxis is that attention is directed towards individuals as if they could be extracted from structural relations (ibid: 175).*
Sara Ahmed's work (2004), *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, provides a close reading of the everyday, lived emotions that are part of larger material and discursive structures of the nation-state. Her work proposes emotion as political activity, not simply an excess or an inconvenient distraction from the real work of political organisation. Wetherell (2015) has drawn attention to the many useful ways in which Ahmed has introduced emotion into social theory. Wetherell (ibid: 161) adds to Ahmed's work by reiterating the need to focus on the relational practice of emotion, so, rather than view emotion as outside of people, and purely social, there is a need to hold onto the concept of affective practice. For Wetherell (ibid: 160) how emotion is treated by social theorists has consequences for understanding collective affective action and its politics. This work on emotions, especially the work of Ahmed (ibid and 2010) with a more socio-political frame, is useful in theorising the affective relations in people's lives as a site of action.

### 2.2.2 The body as a site of politics

The affective turn, in addition to the mind and emotions, has also illustrated the role of the body in understanding how society is structured. Vaittinen (2015: 100) draws attention to the body and maintains that through its neediness, the vulnerable body exposes itself as a constant opening of the political. She uses this theoretical point to explain the care deficit of aging in Finland, which she describes as a biopolitical crisis. Her work shows the potential of the affective turn to introduce a new way of understanding that which is political. Rather than conceptualising the care crisis in elder care in terms of labour politics, Vattinen uses the body as the central concern motivating actions around elder care:

*The “frail” bodies of the aging emerge as politically powerful, capable of putting in motion entire political processes that can, by means of transnational biopolitics, reach across the globe (Ibid: 101).*

Her focus on the body, she claims, means that we are forced to move beyond seeing care as simply work and practice and instead see the care-recipient as central to what care is. For Vattinen, this presents a new understanding of care as a *corporeal relation* (ibid: 102). At the core of Vattinen's thesis is the idea of vulnerability:
As a living organism (Isaksen 2002), the vulnerable body belongs to each and every one of us, and I argue that this body is in itself political, even in its bare neediness (ibid: 104).

What Vattinen’s work also does is provide a greater understanding of how care is embodied. She explains that because care necessitates physical proximity, it necessitates movement (ibid: 108). She goes on to explain that for two bodies to be in the same place at the same time, at least one of the two must move (ibid: 108). In the context of analysing the impact of poverty Adair also focuses on the body and she adds to the work of Vattinen by showing how bodies, when positioned in poverty, can also be embodied with lack of care through poverty. Adair (2005: 822) maintains that ‘poverty was written onto and into our being as children at the level of private and public thought and body’. For Adair, the inscriptions of poverty on her body made her of lesser value:

What I recall most vividly about being a child in a profoundly poor family was that we were constantly ill and hurt, and, because we could not afford medical attention, illnesses and accidents spiralled into more dangerous conditions that became both a part of who we were and ‘written’ proof that we were of no value in the world (ibid: 822).

She goes on to talk about the way the body was marker for wider society as to how she should be treated. Unlike the older people in Vattinen’s article, the needs of poorer people’s bodies, for Adair, did not generate a positive political response:

If, as children, our dishevelled and broken bodies were produced as signs of inferiority and undeservedness, as adults, our mutilated bodies are read as signs of inner pathology and indecency as we are punished and then read as proof of the need for further discipline and punishment.

What Adair and Vattinen have done is draw attention to the potential of the love and care system, the affective system, to allow a greater understanding of how agency
and structure intersect in the lives of people as they navigate unequal societies. People, living in vulnerable bodies, and political concerns, are as much driven by bodily needs, emotionally and physically, as they are driven by material and economic needs.

2.2.3 Developing a structural analysis

The work of the ‘affective turn’ is illuminating and offers potential to inform greater understandings of how love and care are central to what is political in human societies. But what is framing biopolitics? This is a key question when trying to develop an understanding of power and conflict in biopolitics. Developing a structural analysis of the wider relations and institutions associated with the affective and the biopolitics in society will complement the gains offered by the affective turn in social theory, which offers insight and analysis into the processes and practices of affect.

2.3 The affective system as a site of social action for producing, sustaining and reproducing human beings

Although the affective turn draws attention to the political dimension of emotions and the mind, it does not provide a structural analysis as to what is framing this biopolitical action. The idea of a system for framing the relational lives of people can be found in the work of feminist and egalitarian theorist such as Baker and Lynch et al. (2004; 2009) who present a structural analysis of the institutions, relations and practices of love and care through emotions and physical and cognitive work. Lynch and Baker (ibid) have referred to this as the affective system. Sayer (2005) argues that the use of the term affective is too cold and academic to refer to the emotional aspects of people’s lives and their normative understandings. However, this thesis is taking a broader view of affect, and the affective system in society, which goes beyond reference to the emotional, and rather incorporates the relations, institutions and practices that sustain love and care in people’s lives. The affective system, then, refers to the social system in society that generates and sustains love, care and solidarity relations as much as the economic system is concerned with generating work relations.
2.3.1 A system that creates humans

Whereas the economic system creates workers, the affective system creates humans. The reproduction, and then the care and nurture, of humans, although varying in different cultures is a practice that will take place regardless of culture (Federici, 2012). As work on biopolitics has shown, these relations are also relations with oneself as well as others. The basis of the affective system, just like the economic system, is the relations and institutions upon which it is based. Of course, such relations and institutions, in turn, interconnect with the other social systems in society.

2.3.2 Systems in sociology

Using the idea of systems to understand social structure is a general approach to theory in sociology and it has been utilised to develop the concept of the economic system and cultural systems by various sociologists (Luhmann, 1996). For this reason, it offers useful concepts for articulating the affective as a system. It provides a basis from which to make the case that the affective constitutes a system.

Parsons, in his major theoretical work, *The Social System*, 1951, defines a social system as

> A social system consists in a plurality of individual actors interacting with each other in a situation which has at least a physical or environmental aspect, actors who are motivated in terms of a tendency to the “optimization of gratification” and whose relation to their situations, including each other, is defined and mediated in terms of a system of culturally structured and shared symbols (Parsons, 1951: 5-6).

The major units of a social system are said to be collectivities and roles (i.e. not individuals as such); and the major patterns or relationships linking these units are values (ends or broad guides to action) and norms (rules governing role performance in the context of system values). The institutions, relations and practices of the affective system as illustrated in the work of Lynch and Baker et al. (ibid) and Lynch
et al. (2009) are composed of the roles, values and norms that structure love and care in society.

2.3 3 Power and conflict

A major critique of Parsons is that his focus on shared values to make action meaningful and give it social order, ignores conflict in society. Conflict theorists consider how society is held together by power and coercion (Ritzer, 2000) for the benefit of those in power. Ritzer strongly critiqued Parsons’ functionalist perspective and framework in *The Family* and the construction of culturally coded gender roles (the instrumentalism of men and expressive work of women), noting that they played a significant role in institutionalising what are gender stereotypes as sociological realities. Feminist theory, in particular, has introduced the concept of power and conflict into understanding of how the family functions and theorists have challenged the image of the family as based on shared interests, consensus and altruistic paternalism as assumed in the Parsonian tradition (Delphy and Leonard, 1992; Greer, 2000).

2.3.4 Intersecting systems

Feminist and critical theorists have maintained that we need a more nuanced application of concepts such as a social system (Walby, 2007). A social system is a structuring of events or happenings rather than of physical parts and it therefore has no structure apart from its functioning (Allport, 1962 in Walby, 2007). Walby (2007: 449) offers an alternative route to the development of the concept of a system through a synthesis of complexity theory with social theory more inspired by the heritage of Marx, Weber, and Simmel rather than that of Durkheim and Parsons. Walby claims that a revised concept of social system is necessary to adequately achieve the theorization of the intersection of multiple complex inequalities (ibid: 450).

For Walby, rather than there being merely a single base to each of these sets of social relations within social systems, there is a much deeper range including the domains: economy, polity, violence, and civil society. Within each domain (economy, polity, violence, civil society), there are multiple sets of social relations (e.g. gender, class, ethnicity) (Walby 1990, 2004, 2008). This approach to the intersection of
social relations is useful when looking at the complexities of affective relations when the economic system and the affective system intersect. Likewise, as we will see below, this thesis also proposes that in addition to relations in different systems, the institutions from different domains also intersect. Walby develops this idea of intersection across systems (2007: 359):

*Each system, whether domain or set of social relations, can have a different spatial and temporal reach. Systems are over-lapping and non-nested. By this is meant that one system is not necessarily wholly contained by another; they do not have to be sub-sets in the way that is required within the notion of a system as made up of its parts. A system does not necessarily fully saturate the space or territory that it is in. This enables us to think of a set of social relations as not fully saturating an institution or domain—it can overlap with other sets of social relations.*

The idea of intersecting systems discussed by Walby has also been presented in the egalitarian framework developed by Baker Lynch et al. (2004) as they highlight the crucial ways in which economic, cultural, political and affective relations have discrete institutions and practices, while at the same time there is an overlap between institutions and practices within each set of relations. This is explored below as it provides the case for considering the affective system as one of these intersecting systems.

**2.4 Egalitarian framework for understanding systems**

Presenting the affective as a system in this thesis is indirectly informed by Parsons original work on systems as sites of social action and shared values and norms. However, the concept of a system in this thesis is more directly informed by the framework developed by Baker and Lynch et al. (2004; 2009). The framework developed by Baker and Lynch et al. (ibid) better enables power and intersectionality to be incorporated into understanding how a system operates. It allows a system to be understood in terms of the institutions, relations and practices that compose it. These are in turn informed by the shared roles, values and norms that underpin these institutions, relations and practices.
The Egalitarian framework developed by Baker, Lynch et al. (ibid) presents a framework for analysing the ways in which social systems intersect. In their work, *Equality: From Theory to Action*, Baker, Lynch et al., suggest that there are four key systems or sets of social relations we must address if we are to promote a more equal society; the economic, political, cultural and affective. Lynch (2010: 9) explains that although the distinction between the four systems is useful analytically, it should be clear from what is said that they are completely interwoven. Inequalities, for Lynch (ibid: 9) are intersectional, or deeply interwoven, because human beings are not singular in their identities. They live in and through different systems simultaneously and have overlapping statuses arising from their age, class, gender, race, disability, citizenship, family and care positions in society.

The affective system is integrated with the relational nurturing (nurtured) identities that people have as carers and cared-for persons. Their decisions are influenced by their love, care and solidarity priorities and values, and their resources and powers to act (Lynch, et al., 2009). So, given the complex character of human relationality, social actions are not simply interest-led in the economic, power and status sense but are driven by affective concerns (Lynch, 2010). Human beings are ethical, committed and emotional, as well as economic, political and cultural; the sets of values that govern people’s actions in everyday life and the emotions that accompany them are central to how people live and define themselves (Sayer, 2005: 5-12 cited in Lynch, 2010: 11).

The following text draws a picture of the institutions, relations and practices that underpin the affective system in society.

**2.4.1 Institutions to generate and sustain love, care and solidarity**

Institutions are part of systems in that they regulate and impact on people’s actions and norms. They play a role in generating and maintaining action at an individual and collective level. The affective system being referred to in this research is organised around providing and sustaining relationships of love, care and solidarity among people at different levels in society. Given that adaptability of a social system to the changing environment is essential, it is notable that affective institutions, such as the family, have adapted with changing social conditions over time.
It is important to be clear about what defines an institution as an affective institution, as there are many institutions with an indirect involvement in care relations and the labour and practice of love, care and solidarity. In actual fact, most institutions associated with the economic, cultural and political systems contain some element of affective relations and affective action or practice. They are, as Walby (2007) notes, overlapping systems. However, it is only those institutions with the explicit aim to provide, maintain and / or reproduce love, care or solidarity that can be defined as affective institutions. The arts, such as theatre production for example are about human interaction and human entertainment. They involve secondary care relations and emotional labour in working together to produce art, but the aim is the production of culture and the emotional resources used to produce it are secondary to the main aim of producing culture. Likewise, the production of commodities is done by economic institutions as the aim is the production of a good or service. This distinction becomes more complex when institutions intersect such that an economic institution is engaged in the production of goods for care in an affective setting or the direct provision of a care service. In this sense, the aim is the provision of a service, which happens to be care but the actual institution could be, and is increasingly an economic institution with the end aim of creating profit. In the case of not-for profit institutions providing care, the main aim is care, so the monetary aspect involved, if care is paid for, is not the sole reason for functioning. In this regard, it is a care institution.

**Intersecting institutions**

However, the intersection between economic institutions and affective relations and affective practice is fundamental when theorising about affective inequalities and relational justice. Institutions in the affective system (families in particular) are pivotal to the politics of the affective system but so too are those institutions that are economic but engaged in the provision of care or production of resources for care. This is critical to developing a fuller understanding of inequalities in the affective system as the inequality can be generated in the economic system but also produce an affective inequality. The affective impact from these non-caring (often market)
institutions becomes hidden if only conceptualised as an economic resource inequality.

The key institutions in contemporary societies directly involved in providing love and care are families, although these relationships are also sustained by networks of friendships, by good relations at work or by neighbours. Of course, economic and cultural resources are utilised in such relations but there are aspects of the affective field of social action, the affective system, that exist as discrete forms of social action purely involving love and care and solidarity.

**Institutions of love and care (or their opposites)**

Affective institutions, although heavily interconnected with other institutions, are still in and of themselves affective spaces and an affective field of social action that can be based purely on relations of love, care and solidarity. So, for example, the family as typified in the work of many Marxist theorists is treated as an extension of the economic sphere in that the labour considerations are to the fore of all analysis, yet the affective relations and affective labour that exist within families are not always connected to the type of labour analysis that Marxists propose. Lynch (2007) in her analysis of the non-commodification of love labour manages to highlight this exact type of scenario. In the labour of love, economic considerations, although always indirectly interconnected, are not the defining factor or base-line unit of the affective relations at this primary level (Kittay, 1999). Dodson and Zincavage (2007: 922), in their analysis of the ideology of the family in the nexus of gender, class, and race in long-term care facilities, found that the family construct institutionalised an expectation of self-sacrifice or of putting “adopted” kin above all else.

**Economic institutions providing love and care**

Yet, despite the family being organised as the primary realm of love and care, the growing need for care of older vulnerable people, and the expansion of women’s waged employment (Folbre 2006: 350), have generated a demand for paid care as an alternative or supplement to unpaid family care. This is especially the case for elder care and childcare. To these factors, Federici maintains that we must add the continuing process of urbanisation and the gentrification of communities. These phenomena have destroyed the support networks and the forms of mutual aid on
which elder care once rested, whereby older people living alone could once rely upon neighbours who would bring them food, make their beds, and come for a chat (Federici, 2013: 235). The care nexus is also adversely affected by globalisation and enforced economic and political migrations whereby caring is now a global business (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2002).

Lynch et al. (2009) refer to paid care work and voluntary care as involving secondary care relations (discussed in more detail in section 3.4). Some of this demand for care outside of the family has been met by institutions and services administered by the Government and not-for-profit NGOs. The aim is the provision of care but there can be money exchanged in the form of paid care, or gifts when care is given voluntarily especially over time. Albeit at a secondary level, these can be defined as affective institutions in terms of how the affective system is structured (see more on structure of affective system in section 3.4). However, the greater growth of care has been in the private sector with institutions and services organised by for-profit bodies (Federici, 2012; Encarnacion, 2014). Here, the intersection of care and economic institutions becomes critical as there are a range of economic institutions involved in the provision of care but not affective institutions. The politics of these institutions need to be thought of as both economic and affective politics. Likewise the production of housing is an economic institution but houses are homes, and are affective resources as well as economic resources. In most cases, care cannot be provided without some form of shelter and this is produced by an economic institution. The housing resource therefore is an affective resource so once again both the politics of the affective and economic systems are involved. What is traditionally conceptualised as a resource inequality (housing) is, in actual fact, also an affective inequality and this has implications for theorising and challenging resource inequalities outside of an economic analysis.

**Institutions marked by gender, ethnicity and class**

So there has been a shift of care from the private realm of the family to publicly organised settings, whether provided by the State, by non-profit or by for-profit bodies. In these settings, the actual labour of caring is done by "strangers" or paid workers, sometimes supplemented by unpaid volunteer workers. Although the private work of care is now in a public sphere, the gendered aspects persist with the
majority of care workers being women (Gutierrez-Rodriguez; 2014). However, the work is also racialised and classed in the public realm with the majority of care work being done by low-income groups and people from ethnic minority groups (ibid).

In addition to the institutions directly providing care work, such as the family, there are a host of other institutions in society that can be described as care institutions in the affective system, such as education institutions and health and social care institutions. Equally, the social welfare or social protection system, although mainly concerned with the provision of cash benefits and other resource supports for people in society, is essentially a care institution as it is fundamentally organised to protect and sustain the welfare of adults and children in society. Prisons in some societies can also be conceptualised as care institutions as the fundamental aim centred on a duty of care to prisoners is to rehabilitate people and provide shelter and sustenance during a person’s loss of liberty.

In *The Autonomy Myth*, Fineman (2005) places the family alongside of other societal institutions, and argues that we shouldn’t think about separate spheres such as public and private, family and market, but instead realise that institutional relationships are symbiotic. This allows the family (which this thesis sees at a primary care level) to be understood as interconnected with other social systems and structures in a way that means change has to happen at all levels in society for change to happen in the family arrangements of care. This is important to keep in mind when theorising the affective system and social change.

### 2.4.2 Care relations

Action in the affective system, in addition to institutions, is also composed of relations between people. For Glenn (2000: 87), a critical aspect of defining care as practice is that care is seen as creating a relationship; as Ruddick (1998: 14) puts it, "[caring] work is constituted in and through the relationship of those who give and receive care." The relationship is one of interdependence. The relations and social actions connected with love and care, although power is involved, are not structured by power. This is one of the reasons that a system is being used in this thesis
instead of Bourdieu’s concept of field as a sphere of human action. Love and care relations require an analysis that encompasses power but also recognises solidarity and altruism. Care relations have complex goals that interconnect not just power and self-interest but also solidarity and altruism.

**Goals for care relations**

Jonasdottir (2004) argues for the treatment of sexual relations as distinct relations as opposed to purely cultural and economic relations. The distinction made by Jonasdottir between the work involved in sexual relations and that involved in economic or cultural relations is important. However, the affective relations referred to in this research are concerned with love and care relations outside of sexual relations and include a wider understanding of love and care relations, which are not just sexual in nature. The affective relations referred to in this research are characterised by emotional connections, other-centeredness, dependency and interdependence (Kittay, 1999) as well as vulnerability (Fineman, 2008). Goal attainment is an aspect of the affective system, like any other system. Just as the economy, through roles and interactions, produces goods for survival, the affective, through role and interactions, produces the nurture and care labour necessary for a variety of purposes, not least of which is emotional and cognitive development and basic human survival from infancy to older age.

**Interdependency**

It has been ‘care feminists’, as will be discussed in chapter 3, who have challenged scholars to redefine citizenship, and indeed human existence and social action, in a manner that respects our emotionality, dependency and interdependency (Fraser 1997; Held, 1995; Sevenhuijssen, 1998; Fineman, 2004; Kittay, 1999; Lynch, 2007, 2009; Tronto, 1993, 2013).

Sayer (2005) presents interdependency as a basis for illustrating how we are relational beings. Whereas Sayer (2005) is more concerned with developing the idea of people as relational beings as part of his analysis of the treatment of the normative in the social sciences, it has primarily been feminist theorists that have utilised this relational concept of human beings to critically engage andro-centric ideas of citizenship, autonomy and social justice (MacKenzie and Stoljar, 2000;
Fraser 1997; Held, 1995; Hobson, 2000; Sevenhuijssen, 1998; Fineman, 2005; Kittay, 1999; Tronto, 1993). Lynch (2010) summarises this idea of redefining our concept of human existence when she explains the basic premises on which an understanding of affective equality is theorised:

First, it assumes that humans live in profound states of dependency and interdependency and are therefore relational beings. Second, it assumes that people are deeply vulnerable at several levels, corporeally, emotionally, socially, politically, culturally and economically. Third, it assumes that people are sentient beings, with relational identities and feelings (both positive and negative) and that these feelings and identities play an important role in informing normative rationality; relational feelings influence choices about what is good and bad, moral and immoral. Finally, it assumes the citizen is a carer and care recipient both in the public and the private domain of life so lay normativity is not the prerogative of the private sphere (Lynch, 2010: 3).

Kittay’s work on love labour (1999) illustrates the profound interdependency of human existence. She maintains that we must recognise the fact that “dependency work,” the paid or unpaid work of nannies, nurses, parents, friends and relatives who change diapers and clean bed pans, is not only inevitable, but is also vital for social reproduction. Kittay’s work draws links between care relations and moral relations, exploring how the onus to care in intimate situations can be replicated in social situations and hence a greater ideal of equality can be reached when applied to moral arguments for equality. Kittay does not name the relational, moral and ethics of care as a social system as such but her work does provide useful concepts to developing the idea of a relational system further.

**Emotional connections**

Christian von Scheve and Rolf von Luede (2005) provide an overview of the different theories of emotion with a focus on the link between emotion and social structure. In doing so, they reference the work of well-known theorists such as Durkheim, Elias, Bourdieu and Weber, whose work also proves relevant to this research. For example, Emile Durkheim when writing about social solidarity offers some useful concepts for theorising the affective system and affective relations. For Durkheim,
emotions play a role in social order and are the glue that holds society together (Durkheim 1893; 1897). Equally, for Weber, emotions or what he refers to as affective action, plays a role in human behaviour. In addition, Elias developed a theory of social control based around emotions and norms and Bourdieu’s work linked emotions to habitus and the way in which a person knows and works the social world around them. Sara Ahmed's work (2004), *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, provides a close reading of the everyday, lived emotions that are part of larger material and discursive structures of the nation-state. Ahmed concentrates on the influence of emotions on the body and the way that bodies relate with communities, producing social relationships that determine the rhetoric of the nation. For Ahmed, emotions are not private but socially organised and without an emotional exchange social groups will not be created, nor will social action take place.

While Ahmed focuses on the political role of emotions, Hochschild (1983: 7) highlights the emotional aspect of care relations as labour like any other form of labour. She states:

*This labor requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others- in this case, the sense of being cared for in a convivial and safe place. This kind of labor calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honor as deep and integral to our individuality (ibid: 7).*

Hochschild (ibid: 9) talks of an emotional system and develops a concept of a private and public face for emotional labour. Her interest is the exploitation of this private emotional system when brought to the market place. Hochschild brings attention to emotional labour outside of the emotions that people use at a primary care level to keep relationships and communities together. She has linked it to the work we do for pay and linked it to exploitation and alienation. Her work on the outsourcing of emotional labour (2012) focuses on how care work, outside of the family, can become a form of oppression. Notably, in this work, the hurt that happens in families is also discussed and hence oppression of emotions is not just a result of outsourced emotional work. The emotional labour that Hochschild has written about so
extensively is fundamental to how care relations operate in terms of love, care and solidarity relations.

**Vulnerability**

Fineman’s work on vulnerability and dependency is also of use in understanding care relations. Fineman (2010) uses the concept of vulnerability to define the very meaning of what it means to be human. She stresses that human vulnerability is universal, constant and complex (2010: 238). Her focus on dependency and vulnerability as central to how people are defined is useful in trying to conceptualise care relations in the affective system. Her work is also useful for showing that care relations are not confined to a specific sphere of life but permeate all of our social interactions. Fineman’s work is also of relevance to this research in the ways that she draws attention to how law structures individual, institutional and power relationships. Applying this to the affective system and the care relations that underpin that system, illuminates the fact that care relations are deeply influenced by economic and cultural and political (including legal) relations and are structured as much by wider socio-economic conditions as they are by the urgency of caring, in its imminence and inevitability. In other words, care relations are an inevitable part of being human, yet these care relations can be altered by wider social conditions and this is where the concept of vulnerability is significant.

**2.4.3 The practice of love and care**

In addition to institutions and relations, social action in the sphere of love and care in society involves practice. This is informed by shared norms and values, which, even though unwritten, are shared across cultures and countries. In love and care work, for example, there is the tendency to consider care of infants important and necessary. There are norms and values that shape this work and these are gendered in most societies. Sara Ruddick’s work, ‘*Maternal Thinking*’ (1980) and *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace* (1989), is central to the thinking behind this thesis because of her focus on emotional and psychological aspects of care. Ruddick’s work is also useful in drawing attention to the way in which caring, specifically maternal caring, is a social practice and not just a biological need. For Ruddick, the act of ‘mothering’ or rearing children, and therefore producing human beings, is not just about feeding and loving but socialising people into society in a
way that means they will be accepted. Her work maintains that mothering is a conscious activity that calls for choices, daily decisions and a continuing, alert reflectiveness. Writers have drawn on her theory when looking at mothers to show how maternal thinking develops strategies for preserving the life of the child, fostering the child's growth, and shaping an acceptable child (Radosh, 2008).

Some researchers within sociology have referred to love and care work as body work (see special issue of Sociology of Health and Illness, 2011), which is focused on the labour involved in looking after young, ageing and/or unwell bodies. Research in this area has highlighted the significance of co-presence and physical touch in care work (Dyke et al., 2005; Milligan and Wiles, 2010). While sociologists have incorporated care work, it has been categorised as an analysis of formal and informal, paid and unpaid forms of the same labour activity and has rarely been incorporated within the same research. Recognising love and care work in the family and community, outside of paid work, remains a key challenge for the contemporary sociology of work (Pettinger et al., 2006). The following paragraphs illustrate some of the distinct elements of love and care work at a primary care level.

**Imminent and unavoidable**

What connects love and care work across cultures, even if values and norms differ, is that it is inevitable and unavoidable. In Kittay’s work (1999: 29), care is not a burden or choice, or something that we may need at some time, it is part of the here and now all of the time and it is inevitable:

> While conditioned in fundamentally significant ways by cultural considerations, dependency for humans is as unavoidable as birth and death are for all living organisms. We may even say that the long maturation process of humans, combined with the decidedly human capacity for moral feeling and attaching, make caring for dependents a mark of humanity.

In addition, Glenn (2000: 87) contends that care can be viewed as a practice as this definition recognises that everyone needs care, not just those we consider incapable of caring for themselves. The definition of care as practice also recognises that caring can be organised in a myriad of ways (Glenn, 2000: 87).
Organising love and care

The many ways care is organised varies within society, from care within families, care within communities, paid care, care between friends and institutional care to name but a few. Care can be labour in terms of tasks such as basic feeding, and care can be emotional labour in the form of providing nurture and love. To provide love, care and solidarity, people utilise core tools and resources. Some of these are internal to them, such as the capacity to love or have empathy that they have acquired over time, and others are external resources such as shelter and water.

Time limited and situational

The practice of love, care and solidarity is also time limited and situational and this is something that feminists have drawn attention to (Folbre, 2004; Lynch et al., 2009). This is particularly important when theorising primary care relations in the affective system, which are usually unpaid. This includes care work such as housework, child care and elder care (Walby, 1990). Yet time and situation are also significant when considering situations when care is paid for, and there is a profit incentive for service providers to carry out care in shorter time-frames. Bodies do not fit well into bureaucratic or scientific models of labour management or profit maximisation: body time fits poorly with ‘clock time’ (Simmonds, 2002 in Twigg et al., 2011). As Twigg et al. state:

> Whereas clock time, the commodity against which capitalist wage-labour is reckoned … is abstract, accountable and exchangeable, bodily rhythms are individual and variable, the times and duration of bodily need unpredictable and expansive (2011: 177).

This poor fit leads to a demand for flexible bodies and flexible workers, but also to strenuous attempts to fit the care of older bodies into tightly regulated time management schemes, with often negative results for both workers and care recipients (Roberts et al., 2012: 492). As Twigg et al. argue:

> unless staffing levels are ‘unprofitably’ high, a decreasing likelihood given the dominance of the profit-motive in the social organization of body work, some
Lynch (2007) has drawn significant attention to this relational, emotional and time-based aspect of care work. Her work highlights the fact that there are elements of care work that are non commodifiable (Lynch, 2007). In particular, she focuses on the idea of love labour and maintains that primary care relations are not sustainable over time without love labour; that the realization of love, as opposed to the declaration of love, requires work (Lynch, ibid:2). She argues that there is mutuality, commitment, trust and responsibility at the heart of love labouring that makes it distinct from general care work and solidarity work. She also sets out reasons why it is not possible to commodity the feelings, intentions and commitments of love labourers to supply them on a paid basis.

Love and care work, as a site of social action, have many dimensions that are unique to this sphere of action not least of which are the inevitability and unavoidability of this work and the ways in which it is structured but also how it is time-limited and situational. All of these dimensions matter when proposing the idea that affective social action is a discrete, yet intersecting system.

2.4.4 The structure of the affective system

The affective system intersects with the economic, cultural and political systems but it is also has discrete dimensions specific to love and care as a site of social action. The affective system is ordered privately and gendered and it is these two aspects of the affective system that render analysis of just the emotional or just the relational aspects of affect insufficient to fully understand social action and more specifically action concerned with building an egalitarian society.

This is where the concept of intersecting systems, and intersecting institutions, relations and practice is significant for fully understanding how the affective system operates. On a more detailed level, Lynch et al. (2004; 2009) have developed an affective framework for understanding the relations of love, care and solidarity in society and their operation at different levels in society (see figure 1 below).
Affective institutions, relations and practices are regulated just like any other social system. There are laws governing the affective system that ensure integration of that social system. The norms and values that also regulate the affective system play a role in latency for that social system. These affective institutions and relations that make up the affective system (Lynch et al. 2009) are identifiable at three levels in society. These levels are clearly laid out in Lynch et al. (2009) and the different levels are illustrated in figure 1 below.

**Figure 1:** Care, love and solidarity relations: Concentric Circles of Care Relations (source: Lynch, Lyons and Cantillon 2007)

The affective structure, as is clear from figure 1, can be understood as encompassing three major life-worlds or circles of relational care work including the world of primary care relations, secondary care relations and tertiary care relations (Lynch 2007). It is also underpinned by biological and sociological practice and emotional and psychological activity. Lynch (2010: 8) explains the three life-worlds of relational care work as follows:
There are three major life-worlds or circles of relational care work (Figure 1). First, there is the world of primary, intimate relations where there is strong attachment, interdependence, depth of engagement and intensity; the prototypical relationship in this circle is that between parents and children. Even if little love labour is invested by the parties to this intimate world, or if there is abuse or neglect, these relationships retain a high level of emotional significance. Secondary care relations involve outer circles of relatives, friends, neighbours and work colleagues where there are lower order affective engagements in terms of time, responsibility, commitment and emotional engagement. Tertiary care relations involve largely unknown others for whom people have care responsibilities through statutory obligations at national or international levels, or for whom people care politically or economically through volunteering or activism.

Lynch (2010:9) also illustrates that nothing is inevitable in the love, care and solidarity, maintaining that

the relational sphere provides contexts where they can be either fostered or destroyed, not least because economic, political and cultural injustices interpellate with affective relations and frame their character.

In this regard, it is important to understand that labours of abuse and neglect can replace love labouring and other-centred work can be undermined by a focus on competitiveness in workplaces.

2.5 Affective system as a site of inequality

The above sections have shown how love and care work in society is a site of social action. Like other systems of social action in society such as the economic system, the affective system generates inequality and intersects with the generation of inequality from other systems. Lynch (2010: 2-3) explains how affective inequality occurs directly when people are deprived of the love, care and solidarity that they
need to survive and develop as human beings and/or when they are abused, violated or neglected affectively. She states that:

*It also occurs when the burdens and pleasures of care and love work are unequally distributed in society, between women and men particularly but also between classes, ethnic/racial groups. And it occurs when those doing love and care work are not recognised economically, politically and/or socially for that work. Affective inequality occurs indirectly when people are not educated regarding the theory and practice of love, care and solidarity work and when love, care and solidarity work is trivialised by omission from public discourse, when they are made inadmissible political subjects (ibid: 3).*

Affective equality, then is concerned with two major issues, securing equality in the distribution of the nurturing provided through love, care and solidarity relationships and securing equality in the doing of emotional and other work involved in creating love, care and solidarity relations. When love, care and solidarity are produced and sustained in an economically unequal society, then the affective inequalities experienced are a result of the intersection of the affective and economic systems. In effect, there are affective inequalities generated by the affective system through institutions such as the family, and there are affective inequalities generated by the economic system through institutions producing the necessary tools and resources to care.

### 2.5.1 Ethnicity, gender and class inequalities

When caring is done as paid work, it not only remains gendered, it also becomes conspicuously racialised. In institutional settings such as hospitals, nursing homes, and group homes, nursing aides and other workers who actually do the day to-day work of caring are overwhelmingly women of colour, many of them recent immigrants. Home care workers are also drawn disproportionately from the ranks of women of colour (Glenn 1992). Federici and Glenn raise fundamental questions of social justice for the affective system and relational justice. The affective system, it seems, generates inequality as much as it reinforces the inequalities generated by the economic system.
Glenn (2000: 85) maintains that the relegation of care to the private sphere and to women has had two corollaries: the devaluation of caring work and caring relationships, and the exclusion of both from the arena of equality and rights. So gender inequality and affective inequality are intrinsically linked. But gender inequality intersects with ethnicity and class inequality in both the unequal provision and unequal receipt of care.

In making sense of care work-related inequalities, Duffy (2005: 68) identifies two major conceptual frameworks for understanding care, which she refers to as the nurturance framework and the reproductive labour framework. She acknowledges the overlap between these frameworks but also draws attention to a very significant difference and the result this has on understanding affective inequalities. For Duffy (2000), nurturing care with its reliance on relational aspects of care, overlooks the racial/ethnic and class-based inequalities generated by reproductive labour. There is a danger it will overlook the ‘dirty’ domestic work in caring. The privatisation and devaluing of care-work, for Duffy, is contextualised within the economy, polity, culture framework. Glenn (2000: 84) also argues that a society that values care and caring relationships would be not only nicer and kinder, but also more egalitarian and just. Glenn (2000: 85) states that:

*To the extent that caring is devalued, invisible, underpaid, and penalized, it is relegated to those who lack economic, political, and social power and status. And to the extent that those who engage in caring are drawn disproportionately from among disadvantaged groups (women, people of colour, and immigrants), their activity-that of caring—is further degraded. In short, the devaluing of caring contributes to the marginalization, exploitation, and dependency of care givers. Conversely, valuing and recognizing caring would raise the status and rewards of those who engage in it and also increase the incentives for other groups to engage in caring. Thus, a society that values care and caring relationships would be not only nicer and kinder, but also more egalitarian and just.*
Lynch (2007: 4) also references how caring is low status work generally undertaken by low status people, especially if engaged in full-time. In most countries, people who are working full-time as carers at home (mostly women) are not defined as working. Personal service workers, especially carers are poorly paid and have low status.

2.6 Conclusion

Although drawing on some of the basic concepts developed by Parsons to denote a system, this chapter has presented a more complex view of how systems operate in structuring society. This more complex understanding of a system assumes that a system can be structured by conflict as much as cooperation and allows the roles, interactions and norms of the affective system to be analysed on a par with the relations and practices of other social systems structuring society. This chapter has shown how the roles, actions and norms associated with the affective system are those most intimately known to people, as the affective system describes their relational identities, their families, their values and their survival strategies.

This chapter has also argued that the affective system is unique. There is urgency and inevitability about this system in terms of human survival; it is composed of both emotional and physical goals; affective institutions, relations and practices are known to all cultures and all societies throughout human history; and in many societies affective relations have been regulated in whole or in part by law. The affective system is also defined by the interaction of individuals as people who recognise their love and care relations as discrete areas of life and of value, and make choices and decisions to operationalise them in ways that they provide nurture and security over time.

The intersection of systems is critical to discussions of how society is unequally structured. The affective system of love and care work must be theorised, therefore, with a more nuanced understanding of the intersectionality of social systems (Walby; ibid and Baker, Lynch et al.; ibid). The classed system of society undermines the affective system in a way that is often invisible and this intersection can only be illuminated when the affective system is analysed on a par with the economic system as a site of social action.
Chapter 3: The missing story of the affective system in the egalitarian trilogy of recognition, redistribution and representation.

3.1 Introduction

Economics is defined as the study of the way people organise their efforts to sustain life and enhance its quality (Loannides and Nielsen (eds), 2007). Marxism, which has dominated much of the theorising on understanding and on overcoming social class inequalities associated with economics, presents economic production, so vital for the reproduction of human life, as always the most fundamental activity in which people engage. The role of love and care, the very basis of production and reproduction of human life has been subsumed within this economic framework.

The previous chapter makes the case that the love and care sphere in people’s lives is a discrete site of social action despite not being conceptualised in egalitarian and sociological theory on a par with the other social systems. However, chapter 2 also noted that it has been primarily care feminists’ who have challenged scholars to redefine citizenship, and indeed human existence and social action, in a manner that respects our love and care spheres of life (Fraser, 1997; Held, 1995; Sevenhuijssen, 1998; Fineman, 2004; Kittay, 1999; Lynch, 2007, 2009; Tronto, 1993, 2013). Using the broad egalitarian-related categories of redistribution, recognition and representation, the discussion that follows will examine how feminists have analysed the love and care inequalities they explore in their work. The discussion will be broadened to examine those feminists that have widened questions of egalitarian thinking beyond these three ‘Rs’ to include a focus on the ethics of care as a discrete concern for justice.

The ideas of academic experts will be followed with the thoughts generated by the experiential experts, through the autoethnographic data and the interviews and learning circles, in which they discussed how the institutions, relations and practices of love and care are central to how social class inequality is lived, felt and challenged. The methodology underpinning this research maintains that the intersection of class and care in generating inequality can only be fully recognised when dialogue takes place with those experiencing the intersection of affective and economic inequalities (Gomez et al., 2010 and Flecha and Soler, 2014). The voice of
the research participant, specifically because they were asked to comment on the theory being proposed, is being presented alongside the voice of academics and theorists in the literature review chapters.

Taken together, the academic and experiential experts will be examined in this chapter to develop a greater understanding of how the affective system is involved in the generation, reproduction and maintenance of social class injustice.

3.2 The intersection of class and care in academic texts

To understand the hidden injustices of care, it is important to engage with writers that have produced research and theories on care in the context of social justice and inequality in society. By understanding how love and care are conceptualised, the injustices of love, care and social class can be presented within a wider understanding of how the affective system structures society.

For the most part, love and care relations (the affective social system as proposed in Baker, Lynch et al. (2009 [2nd ed]) and Lynch et al. (2009)) that operate in society are described, analysed, challenged and celebrated in the work of feminist scholars such as Folbre (1994, 2004); Himmelweit (2002); Duffy (2005); Fineman (2004), Kittay (1999); Tronto (1993) and Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2002). Yet, this literature review has found that when love, care and solidarity are the focus of sociological and egalitarian theory, even within feminist theory, they are still contextualised within the economic, cultural or political systems according to egalitarian issues of recognition, redistribution and representation. As the discussion that follows shows, the work of these feminist theorists has provided insights and much-needed research into love and care injustices. However, as the final part of the discussion will show, this insight and research into love and care injustices is greatly enhanced when broadened beyond the confines of egalitarian concerns related to redistribution, recognition and representation.

3.2.1. Recognition

A considerable amount of feminist writing on care has been concerned with making care work visible (Folbre, 2001; 2008). In Folbre’s (2001) book The Invisible Heart, she addresses the economics of care and reciprocity. As expected, given that she is
an economist, although her focus is care, her framework is economic. Folbre maintains that care is undervalued in the household and in the labour market. Her conclusion includes a series of policy proposals for increasing the quality and recognition of care. Folbre likens the invisible heart as counter-posed to the invisible hand of competition and self-interest. Folbre (2001; 2004) has spent a considerable amount of time making the case for care work to be recognised. Likewise, Folbre’s work on the care economy (2006), whilst demanding recognition for care work, still presents an economic framework. She maintains that the various definitions of care work make it all the more challenging to have a clear definition of the care economy, citing the differences yet similarities between care work, non-market work and social reproduction. Teasing out the care economy more, Folbre raises questions as to who benefits? who provides care? and what qualifies as need and luxury care. She goes on to develop an approach that goes beyond unpaid care when looking at important relationships to the market. For Folbre, even breastfeeding has an economic value. She conceptualises care work as ‘human capital’ in terms of consumption and asset production and she has drawn attention to care work as a necessity, and not a by-product of other human activity like education. Folbre’s work on family care-time, and what she refers to as the care continuum is significant as it has played a major role in framing the economics of care. Her work, in turn, provides insightful concepts for an affective framework for analysis.

Hochschild (1983) uses research on emotional labour in a private and public capacity to illustrate what her term ‘emotional labour’ entails (ibid: 7), which for her is about the management of feeling or emotion. Her work, she maintains, highlights an area of mainly female work that is neglected in analysis, that of emotional labour. The emotional labour that Hochschild refers to in much of her work is that drawn upon in paid work settings and she claims that circa one third of all jobs in the US at the time she was first writing (ibid) demanded emotional labour (ibid: 11).

Hochschild also draws attention to the disproportionate number of women employed in emotionally demanding jobs, which, for Hochschild, is linked to their management of emotions in the private sphere. Hochschild also refers to the private and public face of an emotional system in her work (ibid: 12) and to the gendered emotional work in family life (1989). She refers to the private face of the emotional system as
well as a public ‘front and back’ of such a system. However, Hochschild is using the
term emotional system to refer to how we privately manage emotions rather than a
system that is composed of relations and institutions and politics such as the
economic or cultural system. For Hochschild the emotional system is made up of
emotion work, feeling rules and interpersonal exchange (ibid: 76). In her work, *The
Outsourced Self* (2012), Hochschild develops the concept of boundaries between
market ways of imagining life, and personal (family/community) ways of imagining it.
Although, once again, she does not conceptualise this as a social system, her work
has nonetheless drawn recognition to the ways that people make sense of their lives
outside of economics.

Overall, by drawing recognition to the emotional work of women, Hochschild’s works
such as *The Managed Heart* (1983); *The Commercialisation of Intimate Life: Notes
from Home and Work* (2003); *The Outsourced Self* (2012), and the most recently *So
How’s the Family? And Other Essays* (2013), has provided a greater understanding
of the relationship between the micro and macro spheres of social life. Her work also
conceptualises the ills of capitalism from another perspective, that of the emotional
impact. In her work on migration and care work, she maintains that the transplanted
nanny manages her sense of loneliness, isolation whereas her own child, whom she
leaves to care for another child, may feel hurt, depressed, angry, or even somewhat
detached (Hochschild, 2013). Hochschild’s work on empathy maps is also of
importance to egalitarian theory. She describes these as a social space enclosed by
boundaries separating it from other social spaces. For Hochschild, we empathise
with those inside that space, and not with people outside it. In an interview for the
International Sociological Association, she explains:

> Two groups of people can be equally capable of empathy and equally active
> at the hidden practices which enhance empathy but, given their different
> maps, refuse empathy to one another. To expand our maps, we need to feel
> our way across the boundaries we set between them (Hochschild, 2014).

### 3.2.2 Redistribution

Feminists such as Heidi Hartmann (1981) and Barbara Ehrenreich (2002) who have
roots in Marxism and Socialist-Feminism, have attempted to integrate theories of
patriarchy with theories of capitalism. This is also known as the ‘unhappy marriage’
debate. Socialist-feminists utilise a materialist analysis of women's oppression; drawing on Engel's often-quoted words, "the determining factor in history is, in the final instance, the production and reproduction of immediate life". They do not really address the affective system as a system (in terms of love, care and solidarity work) rather they focus on the institutions and practices of patriarchy and how it interfaces with capitalism.

Despite not developing a discrete analysis of care relations in social struggle and social change, feminist theorists, whether Marxist or Socialist, tend to at least widen the focus of Marxism beyond the economic sphere. So for example, when considering gender in terms of strategy and organisation for social change, they focus on spaces outside of economic, cultural and political systems. Della Costa and James (1972) present an excellent overview of the issues this presents for emancipatory social change. Their insight into the community as an organising space and one in which women play the role of the subversive, makes a significant contribution to understanding the politics of the affective field:

> Once we see the community as a productive centre and thus a centre of subversion, the whole perspective for full generalised struggle and revolutionary organisation is re-opened (James, 1972, 18).

What Selma James has highlighted is the fact that most people already occupy political spaces and are already activists in their everyday activities. Recognition of the affective system as a social system and a site of politics means that the institutions, relations and practices of care can be reconceptualised, like James has done, as political sites and actions. So, although Costa and James still frame their thinking within the economy, polity, culture framework, thereby not declaring the affective system as a system in itself, their work describes affective relations and institutions as central to the politics of the community. Furthermore, Costa and James allude to the need to establish ways of breaking isolation and finding autonomy without having to do so within capitalist planning. The struggle for women, they claim, is claiming an alternative way of living that is not subservient to capitalism in exchange for 'liberation' (Mies, 2000).
Indeed, Costa and James were amongst a number of activists and theorists that first drew attention to the economics of care work in the 1970s. The idea was first articulated by activists in the Campaign for Wages For Housework, such as Leopoldina Fortunati and other feminists such as Maria Mies and Veronica Bennholdt-Thomsen. The argument was that housework is actually work for capital, that although it is unpaid work it contributes to the accumulation of capital. By highlighting the economic value of care work, these theorists had articulated something extremely important about the nature of capitalism as a system of production. This is explained very clearly by Silvia Federici in a public lecture in 2006:

[W]hen we said that housework is the work that reproduces not just “life,” but “labor-power,” we began to separate two different spheres of our lives and work that seemed inextricably connected. We became able to conceive of a fight against housework now understood as the reproduction of labor-power, the reproduction of the most important commodity capital has: the worker’s “capacity to work,” the worker’s capacity to be exploited. In other words, by recognizing that what we call “reproductive labor” is a terrain of accumulation and therefore a terrain of exploitation, we were able to also see reproduction as a terrain of struggle, and, very important, conceive of an anti-capitalist struggle against reproductive labor that would not destroy ourselves or our communities.

Himmelweit (2002, 2008) also provides useful ideas about the economic of care, maintaining that caring has some specific features that distinguish it from other economic activities. She maintains (Himmelweit, 2007) that the relational aspects of care economics make it less amenable to the relatively smooth market-led process that attended the commodification of other aspects of household labour, where wages earned on the labour market allowed affordable commodity substitutes to be purchased. Good care, she claims, demands presence and the development of a relationship. These types of characteristics of care, Himmelweit argues, make the transfer of care to the paid economy more difficult. Himmelweit identifies four main sectors of the economy in which caring takes place: the domestic, private profit
making, public and the not-for-profit, voluntary sector. Just like Folbre, Himmelweit, relies on an economic framework to conceptualise and address gender inequality as well as wider concerns about the commodification of care work. For Himmelweit and Folbre, despite distinguishing features, caring is still an economic activity.

Feminist work on the ‘care deficit’ is also very insightful in terms of understanding the importance of the care system in society. However, given the disciplines of the researcher, most of the literature addresses the ‘care deficit’ from an economic and investment perspective. Hochschild (2003) and Kim England (2010) describe the ‘care deficit’ as that gap in care arising in the private and public sphere due to women entering paid employment. Hochschild maintains that the change in demographics has resulted in a need for care as well as a decrease in the supply of care. England (ibid: 132) contends that the state has reduced public funding for care and has pushed the growing ‘care deficit’ back to the private sphere for management, which she describes as the State moving to a policy that views care not as a public concern but as an individual and family concern. England’s research (2010) utilises the case study of paid home care workers to illustrate how the State has conferred responsibility for care onto markets, individuals and families. Although not stated as a social system, and again contextualised within a paid/unpaid care work discourse, England has nonetheless provided an excellent overview of some of the complexities of the politics of the affective system.

Harrington Myer (2000: 1) opens her book on Care work, Gender, Labour and the Welfare State by referring to the ‘burden of dependency’. The key question posed in this edited collection of essays focuses on balancing the ‘burden of care’ between family, the state and the market. Harrington Meyer nuances the definition of caregiver and uses care work to show that there is a cost of caregiving, which can be overlooked by the use of the term caregiver. The other central thesis is that women (as they identify the gendered aspect of care work) should have the choice to care or not to care. Care, which is an unavoidable part of our day-to-day functioning as caregivers, care receivers and care workers is mainly contextualised as a ‘burden’ or ‘choice’. Referring to ‘how we will all need care at some time’ (Harrington Meyer, 2000: 4) further shows how care, even within feminist literature, can lack a coherent understanding of how care is a system not simply a specific activity within other
systems. Moreover, caring is a system in which we are all integrated, even when not highly dependent. We are interdependent even in our autonomy.

Much of the feminist literature has drawn attention to intersectionality and inequality (Yuval-Davis and Anthias, 1992; Yuval-Davis, 2011). In terms of care literature, intersectionality is integrated into discussions of the classed, raced and gendered doing and receiving of paid and unpaid care as well as in the analysis of low pay and low status of paid care work. England and Folbre (1999) maintain that empirical research shows that motherhood also reduces the wages of employed women, even if they do not reduce their hours of work. Moreover, in general, they conclude that providing care often has the effect of lowering income. England and Folbre’s work also shows how many caregivers come from groups that have traditionally been disadvantaged in the labour market. They show that women of colour are overrepresented in many of the most poorly paid caring jobs, such as child care, elder care, and health care performed within clients’ homes. For England and Folbre (1999) both pay and working conditions in these domestic services perpetuate inequalities based on gender, race, and ethnicity. They argue that none of the dimensions of inequality they identify flow simply from reliance on the market as the primary means of providing care and distributing rewards from care. Instead, other factors come into play, such as the pre-existing distribution of resources, the special characteristics of care work, and economic and cultural processes that reproduce group differences.

### 3.2.3 Representation

In her book, *Scales of Justice* (2009), Fraser’s argument is about what is or is not included in the social justice frame, and she focuses on how in the Westphalian (nation state) phase of history, equality has been framed as a problem within nation states, thereby excluding most of the world’s poor. This analysis leads her to include the politics of representation as a critical part of her three dimensional theory of justice. In her work, Fraser states that two different levels of misrepresentation can be distinguished (2005: 8). She includes women within both levels of misrepresentation; in the first level, she asks whether women have parity of political participation and at the second level, which she calls misframing, the question is whether the injustices women face are included in the frame of analysis (2005: 8).
Sylvia Walby (1999; 2011) has also raised questions about the challenge of ensuring that women are politically represented. Walby’s more recent work on gender mainstreaming claims that gender equality is about engaging with existing configurations of power institutionalised in the state (2011: 80). She maintains that the challenge that arises for feminism pertains to performing gender mainstreaming in a manner that will successfully promote feminist goals (2011: 80). Her theories of patriarchy include reference to the private and public domains, where she identifies two different basic forms of patriarchy which emerge in response to the tensions between capitalist economies and patriarchal household economies: private and public patriarchy. Private patriarchy is marked by excluding women from economic and political power while public patriarchy works by segregating women. Walby’s focus on the state and transnational entities has led to her being critiqued for not taking seriously where most opposition to women’s equality in public life comes from, the family and the gendered aspect of care work (Crusmac, 2015:115). Okin’s work (1989), for example, highlights the impact on the public sphere that status and power inequalities within the family have. Yet even Okin’s work, by presenting these inequalities as power relations, fails to treat the inequalities identified with providing care in families as affective relations.

3.2.4 Widening understanding of love and care injustices

The majority of theorists discussed above theorise about love (very rarely) and care within an academic trilogy of redistribution, recognition and representation. Their work provides a significant insight into the diverse range of injustices related to love and care relations in society. In addition to the work examined above, other feminist theorists have also addressed love and care injustices in society but their work has augmented the justice framework to include how love and care is constituted, and organised, as a generative source of injustice. In a 2010 paper, developing her theory of affective equality, Kathleen Lynch writes:

Equality is not simply about (re)distribution and/or recognition, nor is it simply about the interface between redistribution, recognition and power relations,
overcoming the Keynesian-Westphalian frame, as Fraser (2008) has recently suggested. The Marxist-Weberian trilogy of class, status and power do not establish the parameters for the knowing the scope of inequality and injustice. Neither is inequality and injustice simply about the public domains of life, nor is it indifferent to the matter of care and love, or affective relations generally (Lynch, 2010: 7).

Lynch’s work compliments thinking by other feminist thinkers who have placed care as a discrete dimension of social justice. The focus on care relations as developed in the work of Kittay and Gilligan drew attention to discrete aspects of love and care that other forms of analysis had failed to acknowledge. Rather than seeing care relationality and vulnerability as related to the economic or cultural system and played out in love and care relations, Kittay and Gilligan positioned relationality, interdependence and vulnerability as key components of the field of love and care. Although they do not specifically refer to these elements as constituting the operations of a social system, they have nonetheless presented a clear analysis of factors that could be theorised as part of a discrete social system.

Gilligan (1982) outlines what she perceived as a distinctive feminine ethic of care which contrasts with the dominant masculine ethic of justice and rights. Gilligan’s distinction between ethics of care and justice is a contested issue between different ethics of care theorists and one that has yet to be resolved (Held, 2006). Sara Ruddick, for example, proposed an approach that “justice [should] always [be] seen in tandem with care” (1995, p. 217), while Joan Tronto’s (1993) work on the ethics of care presents an approach to care related to personal, social, moral, and political life that starts from the reality that all human beings need and receive care and give care to others.

The care relationships among humans are part of what mark people as human beings. For Tronto, people are always interdependent beings. Tronto's concern (1993) with the ethics of care theory is to move beyond this separation of the ethics of care and the ethics of justice into two incompatible spheres identified as feminine and masculine. Tronto faults those like Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1984) who validate a feminine ethics of care for not paying attention to the wider social and
political institutions into which our particular caring practices fall. Tronto recontextualising questions of justice through questions of who cares for and who receives care, maintains we can better answer questions of justice by addressing these as key questions of social justice (Tronto, 2013). Tronto (1993: 126) holds that rather than to adjudicate the distribution of goods and services by abstract claims to universal rights or entitlements, we should assess them by the degree to which a society satisfies particular human needs as a yardstick by which to measure its moral worth.

Tronto’s call for a public policy based on care has been critiqued for being vacuous, since it is argued that conservatives, liberals and radicals can each claim to be adhering to it while disagreeing on the importance of public concern with caring (Fergusan, 1996). Failing to develop a conceptual framework around care itself, rather than just developing a moral argument, poses a serious challenge to the public ethics of care that Tronto proposes. Ferguson (1996) in particular highlights the failure of Tronto to analyse and address the opposition to care and a public ethics of care: she claims Tronto fails to develop a clear analysis of the solidarity and politics needed to achieve the levels of care to bring about global equality. This failure comes back to the lack of analysis of care as a social system with power and politics just like those inherent in other social systems like economics and culture. For Ferguson (1996) ‘we need to contextualize the possibility and political effectiveness of such a paradigm shift in even more of a collective and political way than Tronto has offered’. Having a well-developed understanding of the politics of an affective social system could underpin that paradigm shift needed. What Tronto’s work has done is made a clear case for care as a social practice.

Held (2004; 2006b) maintains that care should be thought of as both a practice and a value. In dealing with the justice and care ethics debate, Held claims that Universal human rights, including the social and economic ones as well as the political and civil, should certainly be respected, but promoting care across continents may be a more promising way to achieve this than mere rational recognition (2006(b): 548). For Held (2006b), key features of an ethics of care theory is that we all need care at some stage in life:
Moralities built on the image of the independent, autonomous, rational individual largely overlook the reality of human dependence and the morality it calls for. The ethics of care attends to this central concern of human life and delineates the moral values involved. It refuses to relegate care to a realm “outside morality.” How caring for particular others should be reconciled with the claims of, for instance, universal justice, is an issue that needs to be addressed. But the ethics of care starts with the moral claims of particular others, for instance, of one’s child, whose claims can be compelling regardless of universal principles (Held, 2006(b):538).

The ethics of care literature has generated an understanding of injustice from a care perspective that presents care itself as the central dimension of justice. This is in contrast to research, and thinking, about care injustices that present economic, culture or power as the central justice questions. This contrast is significant for this thesis as it provides a body of thinking that supports the idea that achieving egalitarian social change must include a focus on how love and care operate as a site of social action in society on a par with other systems structuring people’s lives.

3.3 Located in everyday experience

Turning now from the thoughts of academics to the ideas of people living with care and class injustice, this discussion will examine how love and care injustices are contextualised by those living daily with inequality. Sennett and Cobb (1972) was one of the first to give attention to the fact that some of the inequalities associated with economic inequality are more adequately analysed using the cultural system. In much the same way, this research is arguing that the love, care and solidarity inequalities experienced in an unequal economic society cannot be understood without an analysis of the affective system. My own life-history and the field research illustrated, time and time again, the pivotal role of care institutions and care relations in people’s experiences of economic inequality. The experiences of inequality that people spoke of, the stories that they told, and the ways in which they generally discussed living in an unequal economic system, time and time again, referenced the institutions, relations and practices of care. When they spoke of wanting to buy a new uniform for school so their kids didn’t feel left out with used ones; when they talked about how the lady in the welfare office spoke to them; and when they talked
about why they wanted their children to do well at school, these were all references to how they struggle and survive in a deeply divided society along social class lines and yet they were all references to the institutions, relations and practices of love, care and solidarity. The inequalities that they spoke of, therefore, were not just a result of the economic system but a deeply gendered, divided and privatised affective system where women carried the bulk of the hidden injustices of care. The welfare system was a recurrent theme in most of the interviews as were resource inequalities. Interestingly, the discussion of these issues, usually conceptualised as economic resources, when analysed academically, actually centre around discussions of nurture, emotions and care labour, and resources are presented as necessary for the practice of care. The interviewees, when three were drawn together in a learning circle to tease theories out further, were adamant that the only reason resources matter is for self-care and care of others. The women here are challenging the Marxist contention that the production of workers is by means of producing commodities. Instead, they view commodities as central to their affective production of themselves, their families, and their communities. Life is produced by love and care work and commodities serve as tools in this work.

3.3.1 Experiential knowledge of resource inequalities as love and care issues

The autoethnographic data generated for this thesis conveys how the injustices associated with love and care relations are private and public realities of most people’s experience of poverty. We all love, care and experience solidarity (or lack of same) in a class and gender divided society. Although intersectionality may be a more recent theoretical development in sociology over the last two decades (Anthias, 2013), the matrix of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability and class has always been a cornerstone of lived experiences of inequality. Amongst the two-hundred odd houses in the local authority housing estate that housed my family in the eighties and nineties, there was a wide variety of household types including lone parents, Travellers and households experiencing poverty from disability, low paid work or unemployment. Each household shared a common thread of not being able to afford accommodation and therefore being in receipt of social housing so deprivation and/or poverty played a common part in most people’s lives.
Yet there were stark differences amongst households too and this was evident in the wider gender inequalities experienced by lone parent households and the racism experienced by the Traveller families. The different faces of oppression (Young, 1990) were everywhere and looking at oppression with this more nuanced intersectional lens shows how people cannot be neatly termed oppressed or oppressor.

The intersectional aspects of oppression also mean that any theory of social change must build on shared experiences as well as differences. I have seen this happen naturally when people organised at a local level against the drugs problem in my own estate in the mid-nineties. That particular struggle showed me, first-hand, how the shared experiences were equally as important as managing differences when working together. The people were concerned for their families and their community and the struggle against drugs became their struggle because they felt abandoned by the State and wider Irish society. The subsequent academic analysis of drugs and low-income areas has always highlighted the links between poverty and drug use but few have conceptualised the struggle as one intersected with the affective system in society and underpinned by love, care and solidarity.

But this practical reality (of mobilising against the misuse and sale of drugs), what was essentially a struggle about care and solidarity, intersecting with economic inequality on a ground-level, can become narrow at a theoretical and academic level of analysis when the urgency of a solution is not pivotal to the life of the researcher or academic. So for areas characterised by deprivation and poverty, like my own estate, the political and academic focus was, and continues to be, the economic or cultural inequalities associated with such areas. Specific to the academic context, this necessary, but narrow and limited, economic and cultural lens has dominated much of the analysis of such poorer households. When a gender lens did emerge with the feminisation of poverty analysis (Pearse, 1978; Kim et al., 2013), there was still a tendency to do such analysis within an economic, political and/ or cultural framework, albeit using a feminist approach to research and analysis.

Yet, the women who engaged in this research were clear that affective injustices need to be analysed with economic analysis. This participant illustrates the affective aspect of what was treated as an economic issue:
I had to go on national radio you see and make my private life public to everyone to show how much of a b****** he was and why I have to leave him with my four children…it was the Liveline when Marian Finucane ran it…I had to explain how the social welfare refused me money because I wasn’t considered a deserted wife…they didn’t care about me or my kids or how I’d feed them, they viewed me as a taker. [Pauline, grandmother, community activist, age 60+]

Another learning circle participant reminded me during an interview of an unspoken (well I had never told anyone until she articulated it so clearly) but obviously common activity in the housing estate we were both reared in:

I remember lying on the top bunk as a child picking the icicles from the ceiling for something to chew on, it was the 80’s, who could afford sweets…[laughs] and who knows what repercussions this will have on my health as I age, all because the b****** of authority never seen fit to warn us that they had given us asbestos ceilings and wallpaper and tiling which they bought in from the US market, knowing full well that the US were phasing out these products because of their danger to people’s health. [Laura, lone parent, age 30-40]

Family tales of inequality differ even within the same class as the generative causes of injustice overlap and intersect in unique ways: our household was confined to poverty due to the intersection of disability and social class whereas for Laura and Pauline, the intersection was gender and social class. The tale that Pauline is referring to above was a media story at the time when she went public about her decision to leave an abusive relationship with her three children. The same woman played a very active role in community politics and has run for local elections a number of times. As the interview develops, her story captures the complexities of how the resource inequalities that featured most in her daily experience of injustice were intrinsically linked to the relations of love, care and solidarity in her life, and the abuses she experienced within them. She has completed a degree in sociology from Trinity in her fifties, which she claims has really helped her make sense of her life in many ways. She uses that learning to expand:
You see, then I didn’t think about it as class…I was active in the union in the factory before I got married and I was always on about workers’ rights but I didn’t tie it all together until I started reading and realising that, hey, hang on, I live this s***…that’s not the full story and I took on lecturers in Trinity, no problem to me. [Pauline, grandmother, community activist, age 60+]

The ‘full story’ of Pauline’s life is not presented in academic research because the analysis presented in most academic texts examines her life, and the lives of many working class women, as construed primarily economic issues (Layte et al, 2001) or at best, a combination of economic and cultural issues. They were, and continue to be, presented as either poor and in need of employment or welfare assistance, or as poor and in need of both employment and moral guidance (Dowd, 1999). Pauline’s life, as her story develops in the interview, and that of my own life, are generally treated as social problems in need of political remedy and related academic inquiry.

So the lived experiences permeating this research seem to tell the same story in that the love, care and solidarity relations and institutions that formed such a central part of our lived experience of poverty became add-ons, things to consider, in the wider context of our economic and cultural positioning. There was no affective mapping of society to ensure that relations of care, love and solidarity could be enhanced by Government policy, this was not part of the research or analysis feeding policy. The fact that economic division leads people to live out very separate lives, spatially and in terms of habitus (Bourdieu, 1984), means that a class-divided society is a love, care and solidarity divided society.

3.4 Conclusion

This review has evidenced how feminist theorists have done a significant level of work in drawing attention to care injustice. But in the main, when feminist theorists make love and care the focus of sociological and egalitarian theory, they generally frame these as operating within the economic, cultural or political systems defining them as issues of recognition, redistribution and/or representation.
Yet, it is the focus on emotions, relationality, interdependence and vulnerability within the work of theorists like Hochschild, Gilligan, Held, Kittay and Fineman that hints to a discrete set of social relations and institutions in operation. Their work augments the general work on care injustices presented by other feminist theorists. Jonasdottir and Ferguson (2014) draw attention to love as central to feminist politics for the twenty-first century; it is timely that we start to bring this discussion into class politics.

The words of poorer people in society tell the stories of how resource inequalities are interconnected with care inequalities and the love and care, and wider solidarity, relations and institutions in their lives. What the experiential experts have done, in particular, is reframed the redistribution, recognition and representation approach to include a focus on the affective as a discrete system of care that is highly classed through its under-resourcing. 

Whereas mainstream sociological and egalitarian theorists have ignored this reality (Bauman, 2000) especially theorists concerned with social class (Olin Wright, 1994; 2010), feminist theorists such as Carol Gilligan; Eva Kittay; Martha Fineman; Sara Ruddick; Joan Tronto and Selma Sevenhuijsen have played a vital role in drawing attention to the relational aspects of care in society (be it love or care or solidarity) and how the relational aspect of care is interconnected with concepts of interdependence, dependency and vulnerability.
Chapter 4 Love, Care, Consciousness and Social Change

4.1 Introduction

Inequality in the doing and receiving of love and care work has been identified as key forms of affective inequality (Baker and Lynch et al. (2009, 2nd ed.). Lynch et al. (2009) has also shown how love and care work is structured by class in addition to gender and family status. Folbre (2001; 2004) has often made the case for care work to be recognised for its economic and social worth. Himmelweit (2008) has also contributed to ideas around care inequalities by highlighting the difficulties in paying for love and care, while Hochschild (1983, 2012) has highlighted the emotional impact and significance of care labour. Her work on migrants and care, in particular, has shown inequalities arise for specific groups due to the intersection between care work, class and ethnicity. The work of Dodson (2007; 2009) has shown how the care and love inequalities structured by class inequalities lead to a moral underground where poor mothers, supported by employers in some cases, are forced to conceal their care and love work in order to survive materially in a rich society. Of interest to this thesis, therefore, is how much of these class and care inequalities have been considered in theories of consciousness that underpin ideas of emancipatory social change.

Class consciousness (Marx, 1848; Lukács, 1920; Gramsci, 1971), black consciousness (Fanon, 1961; Biko, 1978; hooks, 1989; 1994, Hill Collins, 1990) and feminist consciousness (Sarachild, 1970; Oakley, 1985 [1974]; MacKinnon, 1987; Rosen, 2000) are well documented in theories of resistance to inequality and egalitarian social change. For feminist and Marxist thought, consciousness is realised when individual circumstances are collectivised into common understandings of oppression and resistance. Consciousness in the context of emancipatory theory is not a personal identity, it is a process.

This chapter will explore theories of social change including the key concepts of class consciousness and feminist consciousness that have underpinned Marxist and feminist theories of emancipatory change. In doing so, it is examining the ways in which feminist and class theorists incorporate love and care in their ideas for social change. In line with the general approach of this thesis to integrating the expertise of
both academics and those with lived experience of inequality, this chapter will include not only reference to the ideas of academics but also experiential experts consulted during the field research. This serves to ground the academic literature in everyday ‘knowledge’ that can be generated when lived experience is discussed.

4.2 The centrality of affective equality to social change

Emancipatory social theory, including both Marxism and Feminism, and social movement theory are some of the broad theoretical areas concerned with emancipation and social change in society. These theories deal with the ‘who’ and ‘what’ in terms of how people organise for emancipatory social change. Yet the wider social sciences have many approaches to the concept of emancipation. Rebughini (2015: 273) outlines how the concept of emancipation in the social sciences has been challenged by the constellation of postcolonial studies, as well as by critical global studies and theories of plural modernities:

The idea of emancipation since the Second World War, through decolonization, the ‘cultural turn’ in social sciences and the collective claims of difference by social movements have shown how the traditional sociological model of emancipation was falsely neutral in its claims to genderlessness, colourlessness, culturelessness (Bhambra, 2007, 2011 in Rebughini, 2015: 273).

Rebughini has drawn attention to the need to nuance the idea of emancipation as we understand it. In theories of emancipation, the collective actors for social change are defined in terms of their public social relations as political, economic or cultural agents. Such theories of change are largely indifferent to affective relations that create, maintain and reproduce the human dimensions of life itself. By drawing attention to people as relational beings and the love and care injustices in their lives, this approach is nuancing the ‘who’ in those who organising for social change as well as nuancing the ‘what’ in terms of what people organise for and against.

4.2.1 The ‘who’ in social change: Individual ‘actors’ as relational

What is argued in this thesis is the need to also nuance the idea of the individual within emancipatory theory. Axel Honneth has renewed the concept of emancipation to include a theory of recognition, which is related to an ethical idea of emancipation
where the general goal is more normative than practical: that of a good and ethical society (Honneth, 1995). Rebughini states that Honneth’s idea of emancipation is grounded in his conceptions of inter-subjectivity and individual autonomy: a decentred autonomy that can only be achieved through social recognition of human dignity and value (Honneth, 1991). The individualised view of emancipation as proposed by Honneth neglects the wider collective concept of emancipation associated with theories of emancipatory social change at a social group level. Boltanski and Chiapello (1999) maintain that it is necessary to resume an idea of emancipation that is related to social justice rather than personal authenticity. Rebughini (2015: 277) describes how, more recently, Luc Boltanski (2009) has explicitly insisted on the need to renew the topic of emancipation with the concept of critique. Following a path based on the necessity to go beyond the idea of domination conceptualized by Pierre Bourdieu (2000), Boltanski has focused on the idea of critical capacity (Boltanski and Thévenot, 1991). Critical capacity is at the basis of the emancipation process, and it is rooted in situated practices and contingent opportunities (ibid: 277). What is interesting about what Boltanski has proposed is the idea that emancipatory processes are not about individuals but situated practices so critical capacity is the way in which the individual interacts with the conditions that are generating the dispute or conflict he or she is facing.

A reconfiguration of the interpretation of emancipation as a way to overcome social injustices has also been evident amid the new wave of social movements (Rebughini, 2015: 280). Rebughini states that the critical focus on neo-liberalism is useful for renewing the idea of emancipation as the expression of needs for equality, personal freedom, redistribution and recognition among these social movements. For this thesis, the move from the focus on the individual that Honneth had developed is welcome but there is a concern that critical capacity still treats people as individuals rather than viewing individuals as care relational beings. So, for this thesis, the emancipatory process for people, as individuals, is always connected to their care relational realities. This captures their connection to other people in their immediate love and care lives and to wider community and society connections. Although, the agency and structure debate is a long-standing one in theories of social change (Boltanski in Duvoux, 2012) it fails to incorporate a nuanced
understanding of agency. When agency is defined relationally, it is not about just about an individual’s capacity to act, even though agency still occurs, but a person’s connectedness to others and themselves and how they act as an individual within these wider love and care relations. So emancipatory action, even at an individual level, is always collective at some level even if a person engages in a solitary act of resistance. Thus, building on this more relational view of the individual, this thesis is also concerned with those theories of emancipatory change that have a direct reliance on consciousness at a collective rather than individual level.

4.2.2 The ‘what’ in social change: equal love and care

For Nussbaum, the political form of love is solidarity (Nussbaum, 1990). Moreover, empirical research shows that more equal and solidarity-led countries have higher levels of well-being and health (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009), thereby highlighting the centrality of love, care and solidarity to egalitarian projects. People’s capacity to provide and sustain love and care in conditions that make that equal for everyone is a legitimate political focus. Yet, for the most part, awareness of affective inequalities has become assimilated into the general theorising of women’s oppression that underpins feminist awareness-raising for social change. Love and care inequalities appear to have become synonymous with gender equality rather than a developed analysis of how the love and care system operates as a site of social action. The following literature review shows, when incorporated into the work of Marxist or more general social movement theory, affective inequalities are reduced to a general gender analysis.

4.3 Social Movement Theory

Social movement theory has undergone a process of gendering analysis in terms of making women visible in social movements and making sense of how gender influences mobilisation, organisation and outcomes (Taylor, 1999; Einwohner et al., 2000; Kuumba, 2001). Social Movement theorists also include a focus on emotions and affect (Klatch, 2004; Bell and Braun, 2010). Although political theorists such as Ahmed (2004) have developed ideas around the politics of emotions, social movement theory has yet to engage seriously with the affective as a site of politics. Instead, the majority of theorists have embraced a gendering analysis and a bio-
politics and/or psycho-social approach to affect that confine affect to the realm of emotions or feminine-related analysis (Kuumba, 2001). This literature review is concerned with this gendering of social movement theory to explore how gender and the affective system interact with mobilising, organising and affecting social change in response to experiences of social class inequality.

**Gendering analysis**

Taylor (1999) makes the point that political sociologists and sociologists of social movements have traditionally rarely evoked gender as a force in the emergence and development of social movements. However, more recent gendering analysis within social movement theory has refocused scholars and activists from making women visible as movement leaders and participants, to rethinking analytical frameworks in gender terms (Wolf, 1993; Einwohner et al., 2000; Neuhouser, 1995). Scholars and activists have, in turn, drawn attention to the affective sphere in terms of mobilisation, organisation, and outcomes for social movements across the spectrum of social movement theory, including political process theory, resource mobilisation theory and new social movement theory (Kuumba, 2001).

Social movement theory has also been reworked to include discussions of affect in the form of emotions (Barbalet, 1992; Jasper, 2009) and then more structurally in terms of affective relations and institutions (Klatch, 2004; Bell and Braun, 2010). Kuumba (2001) manages to present a clear overview of the macro, meso and microlevel dimensions in which gender issues interplay with people’s decisions to join social movements. For example, union activism for women may be constrained by the relative structural location of women compared to men in the labour force, but this may present opportunities for women to organise in communities (Costa and James, 1969). Social movement mobilisation is also supported by formal and informal networks and organisations through which people can meet other like-minded people and form alliances. A gendered insight into this aspect of social movement research has illuminated a whole world of informal networks that women use to engage in social change (Berger, 1986). This includes kinship and family networks, friendship circles, and community-based groups. Kuumba maintains that the networks and structures that draw people into social movements tend to follow the paths of the social relations that define their lives (2001: 84).
When strategy and organisation within social movements is analysed with a gender lens, it illustrates differences between men and women (Kuumba, 2001). In particular, just like mobilisation and social movements, gendering the analysis of organisation within movements draws attention to affective relations and affective institutions. Gendering the analysis of the Black Panther (BP) movement has allowed for an insight into the critical strategy, which greatly benefited the BP movement, engaged by women at that time. This specifically refers to the education and consciousness-raising work that was led by women in the BP movement. Although, most theorising, and indeed popular presentation of the BP movement focuses in on the use of violence, such analysis ignores the breakfast clubs, education groups and other critical consciousness-raising strategies employed by the BP movement.

Likewise, such gender-blind analysis neglects the informal networking and kinship ties and the emotional, physical and cognitive work that such love, care and solidarity-based work demands. It is gender-blind theorising because of the fact that women are typically, given the organisation of society, those responsible for this love and care work (Morley, 2007; Blackmore 2007).

Social movement theorists such as Kelly (1994) document more day-to-day forms of resistance as those less organised and co-ordinated but relevant to challenging hegemonic power. Kuumba claims that women’s resistance strategies, as an outgrowth of their productive and reproductive labour, are the very ones that are hidden. McAllister (1991) highlights many aspects of resistance, employed by women, which are overlooked in social movement analysis such as the use of emotions to rationalise actions and the active management of emotions.

When gendering the analysis of social movement outcomes, research shows that outcomes from social movements differ for men and women (Kuumba, 2001). Given the gendered division of labour and social responsibility within society, it is not surprising that outcomes from social movements are gendered. An interview in a Dublin feminist magazine ‘the RAG’, Chris McCarthy, a female activist during the anti-drugs movement in working class communities speaks of the way in which feminism for working class women was a by-product of organising and meeting
around the anti-drugs issue (Hilary, 2008) Thus, as Kuumba (2001) observed, social activism tends to follow the paths of the social relations that define people’s lives. Consciousness-raising among women is related to their locality of work, be it in their local community, family or related spaces. This is a recurring theme for scholars looking at different gender outcomes from social movements.

Nancy Naples work (1992; 1998) on community activism and mothers captures this aspect of women’s involvement in political work at a community level. Naples shows how for African American women raising families in a deteriorating inner-city neighbourhood, "good mothering" may require struggling for better schools, for improved housing conditions, or a safer neighbourhood (Naples 1992). Collins (1991) maintains that women organising at a community level is often around bridging a gap between the community's needs and its resources.

4.4 Emancipatory theories of social change

Marxism and Feminism are emancipatory in that they envision the possibility of eliminating forms of oppression from social life (Wright, 1994:211). Of interest here is the degree to which both emancipatory traditions, both Marxism and Feminism, treat the affective system in their accounts of eliminating oppression and transforming society.

4.4.1 Marxism and Class consciousness

Marx (1848; [1845-49] 1970) being one of the most influential social change theorists neglected the affective as a system in his analysis of emancipatory social change through consciousness. In terms of overcoming oppression, Marxist theory claims the economic and productive spheres of human society are the forces of change working through social movements and class consciousness (Lukács, 1920; Mannheim, 1959; Gramsci, 1971).

In Marxist emancipatory theory, the concept of class consciousness (see Lukács, 1968) is central to the social revolution needed to overthrow oppressive economic relations. For class consciousness to be successful as a force for social change, the
proletariat must develop a dialectical contradiction between its immediate interests and its long-term objectives, and between the discrete factors and the whole. Lukács expands on this (ibid: 71):

For the discrete factor, the concrete situation with its concrete demands is by its very nature an integral part of the existing capitalist society; it is governed by the laws of that society and is subject to its economic structure. Only when the immediate interests are integrated into a total view and related to the final goal of the process do they become revolutionary, pointing concretely and consciously beyond the confines of capitalist society. This means that subjectively, i.e. for the class consciousness of the proletariat, the dialectical relationship between immediate interests and objective impact on the whole of society is located in the consciousness of the proletariat itself.

Lukács (1968: 39) draws attention to a central tenet of class consciousness for Marx and that is the role of knowledge, as Marx believed that it is only through the unity of theory and practice that a real basis for social revolution and the total transformation of society can take place.

Class consciousness is the 'ethics' of the proletariat, the unity of its theory and its practice, the point at which the economic necessity of its struggle for liberation changes dialectically into freedom (ibid: 4).

Marx had understood and described the proletariat's struggle for freedom in terms of the dialectical unity of theory and practice. That is to say, the moment when the class consciousness of the proletariat begins to articulate its demands, when it is 'latent and theoretical', must also be the moment when it creates a corresponding reality which will intervene actively in the total process (ibid: 41). What follows here is an overview of the key dimensions of class consciousness nuanced from a care perspective.

4.4.1.1 Consciousness in Marxist theory

There is no consensus within Marxism as to how class consciousness is conceptualised (Wright, 1985: 242). Wright places Lukács in the broad group of Marxists that view consciousness at a group level and not at an individual level (ibid: 243). The other way consciousness in approached in the Marxist tradition is a focus
on individual subjectivity and it is closely aligned with the cultural turn in Marxist theory. Hill and Kelsh (2009: 4) define class consciousness in the context of praxis and by this they mean the praxis based on the Marxist theory of class that produces knowledge that is transformative because they explain the cause(s) of inequality, the existing property relations of capitalism that constitute capitalism itself. They claim that Weberian-derived classifications serve to occlude class consciousness and see class as the result of cultural practices rather than through conflict as Marx had suggested. Hill and Kelsh put it as follows:

Class consciousness, that is, involves knowledge of class as the relations of production. Insofar as the revisionist left has discarded this (binary) concept of class, it contributes to the blocking of class consciousness (ibid: 10).

They conclude their work by stating that it is necessary to build:

the Marxist understanding of social class, class consciousness, and class struggle, rather than occluding, in their culturalization of class, these understandings that are necessary to replace capitalism with socialism (ibid: 39).

What Hill and Kelsh are referring to is the turn in the 1970’s and ‘80s, to what has been called the “cultural turn”, when class consciousness was seen by historians as a product of culture (Hidalgo, 2014). Hidalgo (2014) states that added to this revised version of consciousness was the rise in the 1980’s of language theories in social science theorising, the “linguistic turn” (Stedman Jones 1983; Scott 1987; Joyce, 1995; Cabrera, Divasson and de Felipe, 2008), which posits that class identity is shaped by language, by the discourse of daily life, which gives meaning to reality. Habermas had theorised emancipation as intertwined with the possibility to act in a public sphere where virtually (in an ‘ideal speech situation’) everyone can speak and thus contribute to identifying the ‘best argument’ (Rebughini , 2015). For Habermas, linguistic communication is the key to explaining both domination and emancipation: communicative action is an emancipatory force, while domination is related to distorted communication.

So what Hill and Kelsh are suggesting, and what this thesis is also affirming, is that the cultural turn is class analysis has had a valuable input by highlighting the role of
culture and language in class formation and resistance. Yet, the cultural understanding of consciousness, at the same time, distanced concepts of change from praxis and especially from the role of economic and political power in the realisation of change.

**Crises and consciousness**

Lukács (1920) believed that the source of class consciousness was found in the crises that periodically beset capitalism, and that these would culminate in one final crisis. Taking the field of love and care seriously as a social system means that the affective inequalities experienced as a result of the economic system can be integrated into a concept of consciousness. Because love and care inequalities matter to people on emotional, practical and ethical/normative grounds, realising how oppressive social structures generate these inequalities matters as much as the mismatch between claims of capitalism and economic inequalities experienced by people. This is all the more important given that some of the modern day crises of capitalism have affective inequalities at the core, namely the care crisis (Sevenhuijsen 2003; Kelley et al., 2004; Isaksen et al., 2008, Federici, 2012).

Feminist theorists and researchers for some time have been examining care in its gendered dimensions. Some of this work presents the current care crisis as a product of a privatized and gendered caring regime in which families, rather than the larger society, are responsible for caring, and in which women (and other subordinate groups) are assigned primary responsibility for care giving (Glenn, 2000: 85). Other theorists present the crisis in the context of the growth of paid care work (England et al., 2002) and the globalisation of care work (Hochschild et al., 2008). Other highlights the crisis in childcare (Ferguson, 1991; Philips and Adams, 2001), whilst others illustrate the crisis in elder care and the resistance of women to patriarchal capitalism by ‘refusing’ to have children when they have a choice in the matter (Federici, 2012). If class consciousness is about linking the material to lived experience for social change then neglecting the care crisis in capitalism is a big omission in terms of consciousness-raising.

**Making sense of non action**
Langman (2015: 463) claims that for the most part people have ‘willingly consented’ to class and ideological domination, and goes on to query why people consent to systems/leaders that act contrary to their self-interests whether economic, political or personal (self-direction/realization). This has often been understood as ‘false consciousness’, a term first used by Engels and Lenin. In a similar way, according to Langman (2015: 464) Marx’s critique of ideology informed Gramsci’s ideas of hegemony as the ideological control of culture that produced ‘willing assent’ to a ‘historic bloc’, the coalition of economic, political and cultural elites who shared mutual interests in maintaining their wealth, status, and power politically, economically, and culturally.

Langman argues that Gramsci did not adequately explain how and why it was that ‘assent’ was willing in his theory of hegemony. For Langman (2015) hegemony, as the embrace of particular cultural values that, in turn, produce ‘willing assent’, depends in large part on the production of one’s identity and colonization of desire that is, in turn, closely intertwined with emotions. Raymond Williams (1977) also presented a concept of hegemony that recognised the links between the cultural and material dimensions of life. So the thinking behind class consciousness, false consciousness and hegemony is far from complete and, as we have seen above, there are many gaps in these concepts when an affective analysis of the concept is taken.

Erik Olin Wright (2010) in theorising about social transformation maintains that a fully developed theory of social transformation has 4 elements: the theory of reproduction; a theory of the gaps and contradictions of reproduction; trajectories of unintended social change; and a theory of transformative strategies (ibid: 273). However, he is using social reproduction to refer to the processes that produce the underlying structures and relations and institutions of society (ibid: 274) and is essentially talking about the reproduction of social structures. Social reproduction in capitalist society takes place through two sorts of interconnected processes which he calls passive reproduction and active reproduction.

He distinguishes between passive and active reproduction and refers to the passive as reproduction of the dull compulsion of everyday life (ibid: 275) whereas active includes specific work with a reproductive focus like education. For Olin Wright,
transformative change is limited by four aspects of social reproduction such as coercion, rules, ideology and material interests (ibid: 278). These uphold capitalism as they obstruct individual and collective action and channel actions that could be used for change to uphold passive reproduction (ibid: 289). So the hegemonic social reproduction of capitalism, for Olin Wright, is based on idea that people reproduce capitalism and accept inequality as it is defined as being in their interest. For Olin Wright, coercion, rules, ideology and material interests interconnect with passive and active reproduction in ways that reproduce society. Yet Olin Wright neglects the daily and unavoidable act of loving and caring arising from human interdependency when he describes these aspects and processes of reproduction.

**Passive reproduction**

But the idea of passive reproduction needs to be nuanced from a love and care perspective. This thesis would propose that a lot of the ‘dull’ everyday work that happens in people’s lives is what matters most to them. Unlike Olin Wright, this thesis would suggest that the everyday love and care in people’s lives is what takes time and attention as love and care cannot be put aside for another day. The work of survival through feeding, cleaning, loving, minding, mending, and the emotional and physical nurturing of people, is an everyday labour that cannot be avoided whether people want to do the work or not. Neglecting care relations in the everyday and how they impact on people’s engagement with social reproduction is a gap in Olin Wright’s work. If, as he suggests, (ibid: 370), the aim of understanding transformative change is to examine the relationship between how institutions are designed and emancipatory ideals realised, then neglecting affective institutions and relations omits a large part of people’s everyday relations and practices.

### 4.4.1.2 False consciousness

DiMaggio (2015: 496) explains that although the notion of false consciousness was never explicitly discussed by Marx, it was referenced at least once by Engels and by subsequent Marxist-Gramscian scholars (Eagleton, 1991: 89; Lukács, 1971). Where Olin Wright is theorising the idea of passive reproduction, other Marxists have developed the idea of false consciousness to explain why the revolutionary class has not risen through consciousness to date (Lukács, 1920). Langman (2015) maintains that the extent to which people accept structural domination and actively embrace,
support and pursue its leaders, agendas, policies and understandings of reality that are ‘contrary to their self and/or class interests’ has been a central question in social political theory in general and especially for various Marxist and neo-Marxist thinkers. Gramsci’s idea of hegemony builds on the role of ideology and knowledge in how class is reproduced. The concept of hegemony represents the process of moral, philosophical, and political leadership that a social group attains only with the active consent of other important social groups:

Leadership is derived from the ‘consent [that] is historically caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of [capitalist] production’ (Gramsci, 2000: 307 in DiMaggio, 2015: 496).

The existing literature on class consciousness, false consciousness, hegemony, Gramsci, and Marx is too vast to sufficiently summarise here. The main point is to suggest that Marxian class analysis and Gramscian hegemony remain central to our understanding of class and class consciousness. Langman explains:

Eric Fromm and the Frankfurt School provided an early framework for understanding how hegemony was actively reproduced in the course of everyday life. Moreover, as they argued, the assent to dominant ideologies/particular historic blocs was not based on logic, reason, facts or figures, but on feelings and emotions which are deeply ingrained aspects of character structure. For people in general, and authoritarians in particular, the regulated and regular nature of everyday life interactions, especially when instructed by authority, provides people with a myriad of gratifications (ibid: 470).

DiMaggio (2015: 496) also maintains that the economic base of society remains important for false consciousness because the economic relations of production work through other factors such as socialization, determining individuals’ level of class consciousness, with that consciousness then influencing beliefs and behaviour. But what if some other form of relations takes priority to labour relations in the lives, minds and hearts of working class people? What if the love and care relations in people’s lives are part of why they continue to play a role in reproducing unequal societies?
Thompson (2015: 449) also nuances the concept of false consciousness and recasts false consciousness as a pathology of subjective cognitive and moral reasoning faculties brought on by particular social-cultural forces within administrative capitalist society. He goes on to explain that attention needs to be paid to the actual structures of consciousness, thought, and mental processes of reasoning that individual subjects perform in order to understand the ways in which dominant ideas, value patterns, and forms of legitimation come to neutralize critical attitudes and forms of consciousness. These structures of consciousness should be seen as both products of the ideological environment one inhabits and into which one is socialized and as actively constituting the power relations that pervade the social order (ibid: 450).

Langman (2015: 479) points out how the contradictions in neoliberal capitalism, as it remains hegemonic, become more evident and how, with this, more people are likely to experience both economic pain and suffering, and at the same time the psychological pains of recognition and dignity are denied. For Langman, how and why people assent to unequal structures in society is best understood by analysis of the nature of emotional pain and suffering and understanding the power of identity and feelings. He explains how growing numbers of youth are more and more alienated and angry at capital, more indignant about their precarious identities, and with more liberal social values, they have already become more sympathetic with alternatives to capitalism with hopes for a more utopian society (Langman, 2015).

Yet Langman (2015), Thompson (2015) and Erik Olin Wright (2010) have made the same omission as Gramsci and others in trying to make sense of how and why people partake in unequal structures. They neglect the wider love and care relations and practices in people’s lives. Identities and desires are not purely material or cultural, and therefore led by capital and consumption, important though these may be. There are other survival questions at play in enabling compliance within the ‘dull’ everyday realities of ‘passive reproduction’. People have relational identities that occupy them as well as cultural and economic identities; they want themselves and their children, family or friends to be well, to be emotionally and physically capable of living with them and around them. The work involved in producing these types of relational lives is substantial, it takes time, thought, energy, planning and organising; it involves carrying various love and care maps around in your head (although these
are held in highly gendered ways). It is work, daily work in producing the affectively engaged self and others.

### 4.4.1.3 Gender, class and capital

The cultural turn in Marxist theory, evidently, did not address the gender deficit in Marxist analysis. The relationship between gender and capital is complex – and yet, it lies at the heart of any attempt to contribute to a materialist, emancipatory social theory (Bronberg, 2015: 93). It has been mainly feminists that rectified the neglect of affect in class theory by introducing the affective dimension to analysis including highlighting the role of mothering as deeply classed and central to the reproduction of class (e.g. special edition of the *Journal of Sociology, 2005*). Social class as a category is described by critical feminists as a masculine category of analysis (Crompton, 1998, 2006; Walkerdine et al, 2001). Feminists have challenged the way the labour market is seen as the primary site in which individuals come to understand themselves as classed subjects (Hey, 1997). They have shifted attention onto the significance of the affective and the normative dimensions of social life, placing emphasis on the salience of love, care and solidarity as goods of public significance (Lynch, 2010).

**Neglect of emotions**

Feminist, by shifting the analysis, have also drawn attention to the role of emotions in social change. Sara Ahmed's work (2004), *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, provides a close reading of the everyday, lived emotions that are part of larger material and discursive structures of the nation-state. Ahmed concentrates on the influence of emotions on the body and the way that bodies relate with communities, producing social relationships that determine the rhetoric of the nation. For Ahmed, emotions are not private but social, organised and without an emotional exchange, social groups will not be created, nor will social action take place. Her work on the role of emotions is important for an understanding how people engage in action for social change. In her work, *Affective Economies*, Ahmed (2004) used an analysis of emotions that highlights the emotional obstacles to formation of collectives and she is using the concept of class formation not in the narrow sense of *The Communist Manifesto* but rather as constituting a collective across difference. Her work
proposes emotion as political activity, not simply an excess, or worse, an inconvenient distraction from the real work of political organisation. Hidalgo (2014), drawing on the work of Ahmed, and following the "affective turn" within the social sciences, claims that class consciousness is an emotional construction. In her work, she shows that emotion can be a useful category for the study of how class consciousness is formed. In her study of the working class movement that developed in the basin of Nervión (Bizkaia) around 1890, she claims that class consciousness in the Nervión basin was formed within the emotional regime proposed by socialism. She maintains that the analysis of socialist’s emotional discourse has shown that the “emotional disagreement” some workers felt with the bourgeois emotional regime, which labels workers as disgusting and dangerous, led them to a new ways of thinking, feeling and encountering the world (ibid: 8).

The work of Adair (2005) and Darder (2007) also places the emotional at the centre of political action empowered by collective consciousness. The emotional refers to the work involved in building relations of solidarity, caring and loving. It is central to human existence (Baker et al. 2009) and it is what matters most to people (Sayer, 2011). Indeed, for Adair (2005) it is only through collective action made up of private struggles that political consciousness is born, as private struggle, when confined to an ignored and undervalued affective system, remains privatised and un politicized.

Although, feminists have brought a more gendered lens to the core aspects of Marxist theories of social change, they are still divided about the overall placement of gender inequality, class and patriarchy in theories of social change. Whereas Marxist feminists maintain that gender oppression will be overcome with the end of capitalism and class society, socialist feminists advocate alliances between women’s movements and working-class struggles with the goal of overcoming both patriarchy and capitalism (Hartmann, 1979).

**The fallacy of isolating struggles**

Another striking division in proletarian class consciousness is the separation of the economic struggle from the political one (Lukács, 1968: 71). For Lukács, Marx repeatedly exposed the fallacy of this split and demonstrated that it is in the nature of every economic struggle to develop into a political one (and vice versa) (ibid: 72).
This failure to connect the economic struggle to political struggle could also be extended to a separation of the economic struggle from the affective one. People cannot be removed from their caring relations; even if a social revolution is initiated, someone will still have to care for children, for the elderly, for people who are ill or need assistance and people will still need to care for themselves.

These care relations are as much a part of people’s ‘immediate interests’ as Marx viewed productive interests the ‘dialectical relationship between immediate interests and objective impact on the whole of society as located in the consciousness of the proletariat itself’ (Lukács, 1968:71). In this regard, this must include love and care interests. Like social class relations in Marxian theories of social change through consciousness, care relations are not just identities, although people can identify as mothers, brothers etc., they are relations that are part of a reproductive and productive process.

A ‘total view’ of oppression

The unequal material conditions that oppress people’s love and care relations through denying them the necessary resources such as food to care or time to love and care, or through State underfunding of key care institutions such as the health system, are daily realities for people living with economic inequality. People connect this reality with theory when people can see these care relations as part of a ‘total view’ and see the contradictions inherent in try to provide and sustain love and care in unequal conditions. For most people, the process of living and working is fundamentally a process of producing and sustaining human life and this is to the fore in most people’s daily lived practices. A realisation of the oppressive impact of unequal economic structures on what matters most to people has to be incorporated into theories of class consciousness.

4.4.2 Feminism and feminist consciousness

Feminist consciousness, by virtue of the fact women are predominantly the carers in society, has involved thinking and action around care and love work. Class consciousness, as shown above, has largely neglected this sphere of work. Yet,

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2 One of the top regrets that people have when dying is working too much or not spending enough time with family and friends (see Guardian article accessed via http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2012/feb/01/top-five-regrets-of-the-dying).
there is a gap in how feminist consciousness has addressed love and care in women’s lives. This gap arises in how love and care are treated as sources of inequality rather than sources of alternative ways of organising as claimed by ethics of care feminist like Kittay.

**Consciousness-raising**

For hooks, consciousness was key to the understanding the way male domination and sexism was expressed in everyday life, and creating an awareness in women of the ways ‘we were victimized, exploited, and, in worse case scenarios, oppressed’ (2000: 7). She explains how early on in the contemporary feminist movement, consciousness-raising groups often became settings where women simply unleashed pent-up hostility and rage about being victimized, with little or no focus on strategies of intervention and transformation (ibid: 7). According to hooks, it was only through discussion and disagreement that women began to find a realistic standpoint on gender exploitation and oppression (ibid: 8). As Green states even just becoming a feminist leads to a transformation of consciousness (1979: 359). This is also reiterated by Sandra Lee Bartky’s essay, *Toward a Phenomenology of Feminist Consciousness*, which explains feminist consciousness as “a profound personal transformation” which is “complex and multifaceted” and results in changes of behavior (Bartky, 1990:11).

Consciousness-raising was necessary because, as hooks maintained (ibid: 19) most people had been socialized by parents and society to accept sexist thinking. So in its earliest inception feminist theory had as its primary goal explaining to women and men how sexist thinking worked and how we could challenge and change it. Bartky identifies two aspects of feminist consciousness that are key to understanding its effects. First is the recognition of victimization, that women are treated unjustly in current society. This is a dual recognition of both “already sustained injury” as well as “the possibility of unprecedented personal growth” (Bartky, 1990: 16). What Bartky means is that knowing you have been victimised acknowledges the damage done by current social structures, but also sees the possibility to heal via the change of those oppressive constructions. For Bartky, there is a second aspect of feminist consciousness: the double ontological shock. Bartky defines this aspect as “first, the realization that what is really happening is quite different from what appears to be
happening, and second, the frequent inability to tell what is really happening at all” (Bartky, ibid:18). This focus on personal transformation is important in terms of praxis and consciousness around love and care work as women, by virtue of being the majority carers in society, have been socialised and gendered towards a moral imperative to care (Lynch, 2009). But as we shall see below feminist consciousness problematised this work rather than valourised it.

4.4.2.1 The problem of love and care

A focus on love and care was prominent in the work and thinking of early feminist activists who focused attention on private bonds and domestic relationships because it was in those circumstances that women of all classes and races felt the brunt of male domination, whether from patriarchal parents or spouses (hooks, 2000: 78). For example, although necessary at the time to generate critical engagement with gender, Simone de Beauvoir’s The Second Sex (1949) characterises reproductive labour as mundane and monotonous labour, concerned with a biological task of turning infants to adults. This focus on love was a central part of raising awareness about women’s oppression and it also helped to draw attention to a sphere of life unexplored by Marxist theorists of social change.

Love, therefore, was a core concept to understanding women’s oppression in feminist consciousness raising as hooks explains:

> Romantic love as most people understand it in patriarchal culture makes one unaware, renders one powerless and out of control. Feminist thinkers called attention to the way this notion of love served the interests of patriarchal men and women. It supported the notion that one could do anything in the name of love: beat people, restrict their movements, even kill them and call it a “crime of passion,” plead, “I loved her so much I had to kill her.” Love in patriarchal culture was linked to notions of possession, to paradigms of domination and submission wherein it was assumed one person would give love and another person receive it. Within patriarchy heterosexist bonds were formed on the basis that women being the gender in touch with caring emotions would give men love, and in return men, being in touch with power and aggression, would provide and protect (ibid: 100).
But hooks claims the early feminist critique of love was not complex enough. Rather than specifically challenging patriarchal misguided assumptions of love, it just presented love as the problem (ibid: 102). For hooks, in retrospect, a positive feminist discourse on love was needed:

When we accept that true love is rooted in recognition and acceptance, that love combines acknowledgment, care, responsibility, commitment, and knowledge, we understand there can be no love without justice. With that awareness comes the understanding that love has the power to transform us, giving us the strength to oppose domination. To choose feminist politics, then, is a choice to love (ibid: 104)

Likewise, Uttal (2002) explains how in the early days of second-wave feminism, family care-giving was presented as the primary force that oppressed women and limited their individual development. Gillman, writing in 1903, suggested that socialising childcare was necessary for women to become equals in society. The problem for these feminists was not the oppression of love and care but the oppression of women by how love and care was organised. In doing so, however, feminists provided research and evidence of how love and care institutions, relations and practices could be restructured in the interests of women.

Joanasdottir’s work (1994) has also highlighted how love relations oppress women. She theorises women as a sex class as opposed to an economic class as a central way of making sense of patriarchy. She argues for the treatment of sexual relations as distinct relations opposed to purely cultural and economic relations. Jónasdóttir argues that in formal equal welfare societies the basic source of men’s power, as men, can be traced to their exploitation of women’s love.

Folbre (2002; 2015) also draws attention to how gender inequality is maintained by women’s default position as carer in society, which she refers to as the care penalty. Even controlling for differences in labour market experience, mothers earn less than other women, either because employers discriminate against them or because they devote less energy to paid employment, or both. Folbre’s (2012) general work on the care penalty presents unpaid and paid care as components of a “care sector” with
similar inputs and outputs and similar implications for undervaluation of services of care provision. As Joan Williams (1999) argues, employers often prefer an “ideal worker” who is not only fully committed to paid employment but also enjoys the backup services of a dedicated homemaker or care provider (ibid: 67). Women are of course more likely than men to provide care for children, disabled family members (including disabled children), and the elderly (ibid: 68). While more empirical research on these topics is badly needed, gender inequality in a generic sense has been increasingly indicating that there is an interface between care and love work and poverty; these trends have been labelled “the pauperization of motherhood” and the “motherization of poverty” (ibid: 73).

4.4.2.2 The oppression of love rather than love as oppressor

Consciousness-raising and activism around love and care go hand-in-hand in feminist theory (Baumgarder, 2005: xix; Hill-Collins, 2000: 22). What feminists have drawn attention to especially has been the privileging of some modes of activism over others, in gendered ways. Thus feminist scholars and activists have critiqued the centrality of the male hero in the narratives and practices of nationalist movements, for example, drawing attention to extensive female involvement in such movements (Jayawardena, 1986) and they have crystallised and brought to the fore political practices hinging on motherhood, care-work and cooperation (Naples, 1998). More recently, Motta et al (2011: 1) claim that this analytical strategy has brought to the fore how the privileging of “heroic” or “spiky” tropes of direct action in contemporary ecological and global justice movements and their association with masculine traits and male bodies, serve to marginalise women within those activist communities. Patricia Hill-Collins, in writing about black women’s activism in particular, states that:

Social science research [on activism] typically focuses on public, official, visible political activity even though unofficial, private, and seemingly invisible spheres of social life and organization may be equally important (Hill-Collins, 2000:202).

What Hill-Collins’ work (ibid) does is draw attention to diversity among women within feminism. Treating women as a homogenous group and making love and care the
source of inequality serves to silence classed and raced aspects of inequality experiences by poorer women and women of colour. This is particularly significant when feminist consciousness presents love and care as part of women’s oppression rather than viewing the problem as the oppression of the love and care system itself. In other words, for women to be freed from care labour, without the actual structure of a gendered, classed and racialised care system being nuanced, the care work falls to poorer women and women of colour (Uttall, ibid: 92). In essence, this wider intersectional view of women’s inequality draws attention to the wider systems that structure the conditions in which we do love and care work. The case can be made that it is those conditions that are the source of inequality and not love and care work per se.

Despite the fact that feminist consciousness drew more attention to the oppression of women by love and care rather than the oppression of the practice of love and care, feminist consciousness nonetheless offers ways to expose to the unequal structures of love and care in society. Held (1993) discusses the far-reaching implications of feminist consciousness, what she refers to as an alternative moral and ethical system, for altering standards of freedom, democracy, equality, and personal development. Ultimately, she concludes, the culture of feminism could provide a fresh perspective on, even solutions to, contemporary social problems. Feminist morality, for Held, makes a vital contribution to the on-going debate in feminist theory on the importance of motherhood. Held’s work is of importance to this thesis because she turns the tide on seeing love and care as oppressive and, instead, although still recognising the gender inequalities inherent in love and care work, presents love and care as alternative political ways of organising. As Virginia Held says:

If we took care seriously…care would move to the centre of our attention and become a primary concern of society. Instead of a society dominated by conflict restrained by law and pre-occupied with economic gain we might have a society that saw as its important task the flourishing of children and the development of caring relations, not only in personal contexts but among citizens, and using governmental institutions (2006: 550).
Held is highlighting the potential power in love and care work and the gains to be made from organising around love and care in society. This approach draws attention to how feminist consciousness could be utilised to expose the wider inequalities that make women’s love and care work oppressive rather than placing the blame on love and care.

**4.5 Consciousness and care: a lived awareness of injustice**

As stated at the outset, this chapter, as with other literature review chapters in this thesis, is created through linking experiential and academic expert knowledge. This following section includes some reference to the ideas of experiential experts. It uses experiential knowledge to talk back to theory and redefine it through a dialogue of equals in relation to theorising care, consciousness and social change.

In an Irish context, class inequality has been impacted by the neo-liberal influence on policy, which has included but is not limited to, the deregulation of public services, an increasing tendency towards a minimalist welfare-state, regressive taxation and flexible labour markets unencumbered by strong unions or collective bargaining (Allen, 2007). This means that on a political level we are witnessing the success of neo-liberal policies and a decline of welfare state approaches to collective well-being and collective responsibility (Kirby, 2002; Kus, 2006; Phelan and Norris, 2008). In essence, there has been a profound shift from a political economy of common ownership and state provision to one that embraces and celebrates the market (Jackson, 1995). This has direct consequences for relations and practices of love and care because the welfare system, progressive taxation and well-funded public services, and strong labour conditions for workers creates optimal conditions to provide and receive love and care.

Talking about economic inequality with women in low-income areas for this thesis always revolved around stories of children, of family and the impact of economic inequality on care and trying to get on with life. Their experience informed their expertise and insight into affective inequalities and the affective aspects of economic inequality. Their lived reality of the difficulty of doing love and care in an unequal economic society, forced them to community supports as that was one of the only
sites available to address the inequalities they were experiencing. The autoethnographic story tells a similar tale with the added dimension of how growing this awareness of love and care to a more political level can be a way of making sense of how inequality is generated and reproduced not only by the economic system but the affective system.

4.5.1 Organising where love and care work is done

Political organisation at this subaltern, family and community, level has highlighted the critical value of the care relationality of inequality. The rise of community-based groups and organisations outside of the organised labour movement, is testament to the fact that working class people need a space to address social justice more aligned with the ways in which they live their classed lives (their vulnerability and other-centredness), outside of the productive sphere of work.

The community is, of course, a contested site for radical social change (Broderick, 2002; Shaw, 2008; Craig, 2007). Nonetheless, it has been one of the only available sites to class and feminist activists outside of organised feminist or class-based union organising. For example, Carol Coulter (1993) provides an account of the split between academic feminism and working-class women’s community organising in Ireland. Coulter maintains that in the working class ghettos of Northern Ireland, where arguably the most oppressed women were to be found, it has been issues like prisoners’ rights or internment that have brought tens of thousands of women onto the street rather than any movement based on feminist demands. Coulter (ibid) observed that working-class community women’s organising in Ireland has been caught in the web of a defensive nationalist and ethnically Catholic identity. Motta et al., (2011: 11) claim that while the choice of stepping outside that (nationalist) community might exist for service-class professional women, other women have not historically had this freedom, instead being forced to assert their own needs and voices within an ethnic Catholic context.

bell hooks (1990) notes the historic importance for African Americans of “homeplace” as a site to recognise and resist domination, hooks argues:

Historically, African-American people believed that the construction of a homeplace, however fragile and tenuous (the slave hut, the wooden shack), had a radical political dimension… it was about the construction of a safe
place where black people could affirm one another and by so doing heal many of the wounds inflicted by racist domination. (1990,42).

But hooks also linked activism to more than place and highlighted the role of ideas (hooks, 1984). Other theorists have also claimed part of a movement for equality and social justice is an ideological struggle (Gramsci, 1971; Bourdieu, 1993; Castells, 1997). This is the basis of focusing on consciousness and consciousness-raising related to oppression. But ideology is only one aspect of the struggle for social justice because inequality is also generated, and reproduced, structurally, not only at a cultural level but also at economic, political and affective levels (Baker, Lynch et al. 2004; 2009).

4.5.2 Consciousness as day-to-day reality

The experiential experts in this thesis, the participants who live with care and class inequality, have raised awareness of the structural basis for inequality. They have drawn attention to the practical role of community organising and community supports for people trying to live, trying to do care work, trying to do other labour work, and trying to raise families and support friends and communities. For these women, ideology is only one part of consciousness, as so too is the reality of having to live day-to-day. This is important when you consider that class and feminist theories of consciousness are linked to praxis so where ideas and actions meet.

Consciousness, here, is both about ideas and the practical doing of care. This living day-to-day was not the problem, for these women, as living day-to-day was in actual fact what life was about. Their daily routines and the care and love that make up their daily lives were not a source of false consciousness, or passive reproduction, forcing them to accept unequal systems but rather a source of inspiration and reason to live. Instead, they criticised the unequal systems and conditions within and through which they had to do this ‘everyday’ living. The actual doing of the everyday was not part of the problem. Their positions as carers inform their class consciousness as much as their class positioning informs it, as it is through their love labour that they most readily discuss materialised class-based injustices. One participant reflects on the most difficult relational aspect of living with poverty:

You have a family that can't afford food...to have to come in here to a stranger, so to speak, and explain that you have no food is a big step. She wasn't
looking for charity, she was actually hungry. So I made up a hamper and pretended that she had won it and called over with it. Then we started doing a weekly food bank here. When it comes to not being able to feed children, though, that’s when women break [Susan, mother, age 30-40]

Another female interviewee who had grown up with poverty herself but who also works in a capacity where she provides social welfare responded, as below, when asked the hardest thing about living in poverty for people:

The first thing is not being able to provide for their children. It’s the practical side like whether they get a new school jumper, em, mine won’t be getting two new school jumpers. They’re in them two years and they have another year. The jumper has to last three years. It’s things like that and then that affects them… They’re going back to school with kids that have new jumpers. [Jennifer, mother, age 30-40]

She expanded on this understanding more by relating back to her own childhood:

I come from a separated family. My father had an affair when I was ten and I seen my mother always struggle. And my father would be a great man to men, he would always be first to put his hand in his pocket at the bar but we had no electricity. I remember my mother coming back from the parish priest and she was distraught. She had gone to the priest because we had nothing, now bearing in mind my father wasn’t a poor man, he had money; he chose not to give it to us. The priest told my mother to go back and forgive her husband. That was his attitude. We were without everything and yet she still put us all through school. [Jennifer, mother, age 30-40]

This experience gave her a keen insight into the role of women in communities and how they manage inequality:

Women hold communities together. You look at this centre, there are no men working in this centre. It’s all women. It has always been women that take an interest in communities. We have a huge amount of unemployed men up here but women will get up and do things because it’s our kids that use the services; it’s our families that benefit, it benefits our communities so we get up and we do it.
Writing about the importance of love and care work for people’s development and the impact of nurturing\(^3\) capital on people’s lives, Lynch (2007: 9) writes:

The amount of nurturing capital available impacts on people’s ability not only to relate to others at an intimate level, but also to flourish and contribute in other spheres of life.

And she continues:

Being cared for is not only a prerequisite for survival therefore, it is also a prerequisite for human development and well being (Engster, 2005). Relations of solidarity, care and love help to establish a basic sense of importance, value and belonging, a sense of being appreciated, wanted and cared about.

4.6 Conclusion

Tronto (2013) draws specific attention to the politics of care. She maintains that the idea that production and economic life are the most important political and human concerns ignores the reality that caring, for ourselves and others, should be the highest value that shapes how we view the economy, politics, and institutions such as schools and the family. Care, for Tronto (2013) is at the centre of our human lives but it is currently too far removed from the concerns of politics. In her work Caring Democracy (ibid) Tronto traces the reasons for this disconnection and argues for the need to make care, not economics, the central concern of democratic political life.

Unlike Tronto, social movement and emancipatory theory does not present love and care as the central concern for political action. What is clear from the literature however is that when emotions or the more affective aspect of organising or mobilising for change were included in theories of social change, the focus was on gender, and more specifically, women, rather than love and care as having salience for social movements in general.

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\(^3\) Lynch footnotes (2007: 35) that it is important to distinguish between emotional capital, and the related but separate phenomena of nurturing capital. While emotional capital (and the associated emotional work involved in love labouring and caring that produces it) is integral to nurturing capital, not all nurturing involves emotional work (and neither does all emotional work involve nurturing as Hochschild showed in her work, The Managed Heart). Nurturing can involve the enactment of practical tasks with limited emotional engagement at a given moment. The doing of nurturing tasks is generally motivated by feelings of concern for others, however, the undertaking of the task itself may well be routinized at a given time and require low emotional engagement.
What is necessary is to redefine the ‘who’ in theories of social change, focusing on developing a concept of the political actor beyond an individualistic framework. This is based on the premise that people or ‘actors’ need to be viewed as care relational beings and not just individuals devoid of other-centeredness and related survival needs to give and receive love and care. People live relationally in love and care terms, and this is as defining as the materiality of their lives.

There is also a need to redefine the ‘what’ of social change in terms of what goods are legitimate to struggle or ‘fight’ over. In the vast bulk of the literature, the ‘goods’ are economic, political or cultural and these map onto legitimated political struggles. Yet, this thesis is positioning love and care as goods that are central to political struggle. The experiential experts referenced in the final section of the chapter, and referenced in more detail in chapters six to eight, draw attention to the centrality of love and care to economic inequality.

What becomes most evident from this review is the need for any concept of political consciousness to include an awareness of love and care labour. This understanding of consciousness observes that identities and desires are not purely material, and therefore led by capital and consumption, important though these may be. There are other survival questions at play in enabling compliance within the everyday realities of ‘passive reproduction’, which are not ‘dull’ but are the very making of life itself. People have relational identities that occupy them as well as cultural and economic identities; they want themselves and their children, family or friends to be well, to be emotionally and physically capable of living with them and around them. The work involved in producing these types of relational lives is substantial, it takes time, thought, energy, planning and organising; and it involves carrying various love and care maps around in your head (although these are held in highly gendered ways). It is work, daily work in producing the affectively engaged self and others.
Chapter 5: Methodology and methods

We do not have to romanticise our past to be aware of how it seeds our present. We do not have to suffer the waste of amnesia that robs us of the lessons of the past rather than permit us to read them with pride as well as deep understanding (Lorde, 1984, p. 139).

5.1 Introduction

This research sets out to be emancipatory in terms of challenging classed-gendered inequalities in the care domains of life through dialogical collaborative research (Lynch, 1999). Findings were co-created with working class women. They will be re-shared when the final analysis is completed with local women’s community groups. Autoethnography (Ellis, 2004 and 2009) is utilised as a key research method to make sense of my experiences of social class inequality and what it has meant for me materially, culturally, politically and affectively. Analysis of this personal life journey has been contextualised and ‘tested’ with the stories and life experiences shared in the ten one-to-one interviews with ten working class women, five of whom also identified as community activists, and two learning circles, involving six working class women in total.

The aim of this chapter is to outline in more detail the methodological approach and methods utilised in this research. The following paragraphs will explain the reasons for choosing this research topic and the research methodology, research design and data collection and analysis utilised to achieve the research aim.

5.1.1 Why study class, care and relational justice?

This research was designed such that a mixed methods approach was used to collect data, and a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 2008) was utilised to analyse data. A grounded theory ethnography gives priority to the studied phenomenon or process-rather than to a description of a setting (Charmaz, 2006: 22). Grounded theory was proposed originally by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967) as a way to move from data to theory, so that new theories could emerge.
Theory developed in this way would be specific to the context being studied and ‘grounded’ in the data from which they had emerged rather than rely on analytical constructs, categories or variables from pre-existing theories.

This combination of mixed methods and grounded theory was utilised as a way to generate findings and discussions that could point to new ways in which inequality can be theorised. But why is this needed? Why do we need new ways to think about and challenge economic inequality?

There are few written records of the everyday living of poorer people in society that documents their everyday struggle and survival in the face of injustice outside of formal union organising or left political organising. Not enough is known about how egalitarian-led change takes place, and what forms of resistance to inequality exists outside of organised movements. Neither is enough known about how poor people find the will to struggle and fight outside of the paid labour context when they face forces more powerful than themselves. In what ways do people fight when their social identity is not easily framed or supported by their labour market status but is more meaningfully and intrinsically linked to those for whom they care and love. Many people struggle with, and survive, poverty and inequality without direct links to the kinds of organisations described by Marxist (Dworkin, 2007) or Social Movement Theorists (Kaufman, 2003). This highlights the need to question traditional notions of politics and to redefine, reclaim and name what is ‘political’.

The class conflict and care conflict present in everyday interactions and relations for poorer people is not contextualised as a struggle and therefore left outside of analysis. Where is the record of care conflict, when love and care is silenced in the history of the working class? Where is the political documentation of the women that organised, for their families and communities, against drugs and other social ills that threatened their care? Where is their story spoken or heard? The answer is very little is ever said or heard of the life and work of working class women, whose toil not only reproduces the labourer herself but also the very fabric of love, care and solidarity needed to maintain relations among people and communities.

Personal, family and community-based triumphs over poverty and inequality generally remain analysed at a level of personal resilience. The care relations and other-centredness that dictates actions and concerns at a subaltern level is not
translated into an egalitarian narrative for social change at a societal level; instead the valorisation of a politics of self-interest defines the public world of politics. The politics of solidarity, arising from care relations, is peripheralised. In terms of poverty and social class this is particularly limiting because the current narrative, which valorises paid labour and self-interest, does not resonate with vast numbers of the poor and working class for whom such a narrative claims to speak.

5.2 Research design and methods

The main aim of the empirical research for this thesis was to examine the intersection between care and class in people’s narratives of living with economic inequality. The first objective was to generate rich autoethnography material, which provided a detailed case-study for coding and initiating the open coding associated with grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). The hope here was to make sense of the researcher’s own experiences of inequality and to relate these experiences to relevant sociological research and literature available.

The second objective was to cross reference this data with other people’s experience of living with inequality by conducting interviews and testing the concepts from the initial coding in a more focused coding approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The third objective was to engage participants in theory by facilitating learning circles, where concepts were discussed moreso than personal stories. By using multi-modes of data collection the empirical research provided a richer and more comprehensive picture.

Figure 2 gives an overview of the research design and how the three methods of data collection intersect. The autoethnography formed the basis of the primary research and generated some of the key codes or concepts that were to further explored in the interview conversations and learning circles. Although the findings from each are described in discrete chapters, the substantive concepts generated by the autoethnographic chapter were tested in the data collected by the interviews and learning circles. The overlap between the autoethnography method in Figure 2 with both the interviews and the learning circles denotes the level of sharing and dialogue that defined the interview conversations and learning circles discussions. In both, the
researcher was a participant as much as a researcher. The overlap between the interviews and learning circles denotes the fact that some interviewees were invited to participate in a learning circle. This way they could be involved in reflecting on experiences in discussion rather than just telling experiences in interview conversations. The intersect point in figure 2 of all three collection methods generated the discussion chapters 9, 10 and 11 in this thesis.

Figure 2: Overview of mixed methods used for data collection.

5.2.1 Data collection

As figure 2 shows, the field research for this thesis was essentially dialogical; dialogue with myself and with others who shared a similar early life social class positioning in low-income families and low income estates. Documentary research was utilised to inform the literature reviews in this thesis but the dialogue could only be achieved through empirical field research. Yet the literature review was also emancipatory as it referenced the words of research participant in an effort to treat their views and ideas on a par with academic experts. Because the researcher has lived experience of both relational and resource inequalities having grown up in a low-income family, autoethnographic research and lived observation informed the
field research and theory as the thesis developed. This dialogue with the self augmented the other data collection methods.

**Sample size**

Using grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) meant that the sample size was identified at an early stage as the codes generated from the autoethnographic data allowed the researcher to identify the substantive concepts to be explored. Mason (2010) outlines how for a researcher being faithful to the principles of qualitative research, sample size in the majority of qualitative studies should generally follow the concept of saturation (e.g. Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This is when the collection of new data does not shed any further light on the issue under investigation.

Grounded theory merges the processes of data collection and analysis. The researcher moves back and forth between the two in an attempt to ‘ground’ the analysis in the data. The aim of this movement is theoretical saturation and this is what influenced the number of interviews in the qualitative research for this study.

The process of data collection and data analysis in grounded theory continues until theoretical saturation has been achieved. Theoretical saturation occurs when the researcher can find no new categories or concepts. However, Glaser and Strauss (1967) show how this functions as a goal rather than a practical reality. This is because even though researchers strive for saturation of categories, modification of categories or changes in concepts are always possible. So Glaser and Strauss (1967: 40) maintain that grounded theory is always provisional:

> When generation of theory is the aim, however, one is constantly alert to emergent perspectives, what will change and help develop the theory. These perspectives can easily occur on the final day of study or when the manuscript is reviewed in page proof: so the published word is not the final one, but only a pause in the never-ending process of generating theory (cited in Dey 1999: 117).

The concepts generated in the autoethnographic data, therefore, dictated the sampling for the one-to-one interviews as the theoretical sampling undertaken with the interviews is concerned with the refinement and, ultimately, saturation of existing, and increasingly analytic, concepts.
**Timeframe**

The timeframe for the thesis commenced in 2009 and was intercepted with maternity leave, illness leave and holding down employment so it waned from full-time to part-time study over those years. Lived observations, therefore, were an on-going aspect of these years whereas the retrospective autoethnography took place from 2013. Preliminary interviews were held throughout 2010 and 2011 as well as informal discussions. However, the formal ten interview conversations did not take place until between 2013 and 2015. The first learning circle was 2013 and the second one was 2015.

### 5.2.2 Autoethnography

Autoethnography was a primary source of data for this research. However, it was not until a few years into the research process that I decided to use autoethnography as a method for data collection. This decision coincided with the fact that I was using childhood reminiscent therapy in counselling that I was doing with the HSE National Counselling Services. So from mid-2013, throughout 2014 and up to March 2015, I drafted thousands of words recollecting childhood experiences, memories and emotions. I used these recollections for personal development whilst addressing generalised anxiety disorder through counselling but also to inform the data and theory for this thesis.

I ordered the recollections in terms of good and bad memories; in terms of home, family, friends and in terms of moments or epiphanies that marked a specific point in my life. I also talked to family as I remembered specific events or people and asked for clarity or their perspective. However, in the main, the interpretation of events and memories are mine and are dictated by how I felt and made sense of the memory. Chang distinguishes autoethnography from other forms of self narrative by accentuating the emphasis on not merely a narration of the self but engaging the self in a wider social and cultural context (2008: 41-42). Ellis and Bochner (cited in Chang, 2008: 48) note that autoethnographers vary in their emphasis in the research process (graphy), on culture (ethno) and on self (auto) and that different exemplars of autoethnography fall at different places along the continuum of each of these three axes.
Lived observation

The autoethnographic material was also indirectly informed by daily living observations. For the duration of the thesis process, I was living in a local authority housing estate with a high level of unemployment and accompanying high levels of poverty and experiences of inequality. The experiences of my neighbours and friends, who I interacted with on a daily basis, affirmed and sometimes challenged my own retrospective autoethnography. So living with inequality on a low income and observing the current reality of that situation as I also wrote about such experiences retrospectively enabled me to question my interpretation of life events and view them in a wider socio-economic context.

5.2.3 One-to-one interviews on class and care

Although the autoethnographic data provided a rich dataset for analysis, there was still a need to design the research in such a way that the data collected via autoethnography and lived observation could be tested and compared and contextualised with wider experiences and conditions. For this reason, interview conversations were held with other working class women living with class and care inequalities. The research method involved the collection of qualitative data through 10 in-depth interview conversations; 5 interviews were held with working class women who are living on low-incomes or different forms of welfare or disability benefits; and a further 5 interviews were carried out with working class community activists. All participants were female given the dominance of women in the community sector but also given the fact that women are the default carers at community and family levels. The purpose of these sets of interviews was to explore how family, personal and community relationalities impact on the narratives of class action that inform people’s lives both individually (the 5 ‘non-activists’) and collectively (the community activist).

All 10 potential participants were identified through Community Development Projects and Family Resource Centre’s serving specific local authority estates in Dublin and Wicklow. Initial invitations to participate were extended to those involved in community activism, in a paid or unpaid capacity. The non-activist participants...
were identified in consultation with the community activists and according to the main selection criteria including gender\textsuperscript{5}, age, educational level and income status. Access to, and contact with, community activists was facilitated by the researcher’s prior experience of working in this sector both as a paid and unpaid worker for most of the past two decades.

Given the ‘private’ nature of the affective and relational aspects of people’s lives, including those articulate and active at a community level, the one-to-one interview as opposed to a focus group approach had been selected as the most appropriate method. Using a strategic set of open-ended interview questions, experiences of social class inequality were explored in-depth with all individual research participants. Resistance to the inequalities experienced, as well as the role of care relationality in this resistance, was also explored in equal detail. Throughout, interview questions were open-ended and conversational. Questions were very general and allowed the interview participant to volunteer information and dictate the general direction of the conversation (see appendices).

\textit{Table 1:} Interview participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Class position</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Interview Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>Participant on community employment (CE) scheme</td>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>CE scheme participant/ Women’s Group co-ordinator</td>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{5} The gender profile of the interview participants will be disproportionately female as women are disproportionately over-represented in community social class activism at a subaltern level \textsuperscript{3} (Crawley and O’Meara, 2002; CPA, 2009), and in terms of managing poverty and inequality with respect to family units (Daly, 1989; Nolan et al, 1999).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role/Title</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lorraine</td>
<td>CE scheme participant</td>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorna</td>
<td>CE scheme participant</td>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>CE scheme participant/ Welfare Advisor</td>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joline</td>
<td>Community activist/ Manager of Community Project</td>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janice</td>
<td>Community activist/ Manager of Community Project</td>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lara</td>
<td>Community activist/ Manager of Community Project</td>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Community activist/ Advocacy Worker in NGO</td>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Community activist</td>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.4 Learning circles

Employing an emancipatory design allowed the methodology to incorporate a more educational-based approach to dialogue than a traditional focus group or interview approach to gathering data. Using Freire (1970) as an inspiration in this regard, the learning circle was chosen as a core tool for generating and gathering data but also for educating both researcher and participants about class and care. The learning circle was an opportunity for the researcher to respect the expertise of people in
making sense of how they live with inequality. It was a chance for them to engage in more than just telling and play an interpretative role in the research process. As Lisa Dodson explains:

After years of participative research, I have come to believe that marginalized people have interrogative histories, histories of being questioned by authorities as suspect people. In such a society, verbal camouflage becomes the language of survival. I have been taught that some questions should not be asked. And some may be asked, but ethical interpretation of what is answered must include those who know from everyday life, when telling lives (Dodson, 2007: 829).

For the purpose of this research a learning circle was like a redesigned focus group where participants were invited to discuss ideas with the facilitator as an active participant too. Participants were not asked to talk about personal experiences but rather to comment on wider ideas around inequality and activism. The circle was presented as an opportunity to share ideas about inequality and to learn from others as well as the researcher/facilitator who was also active in the circle. Sharing ideas and knowledge was the basis of the circle and it was carried out over 3 sessions for each learning circle. As a form of data collection, the learning circle provided an emancipatory approach to engaging people in research about their lives but also served the purpose of the grounded theory approach as they allowed concepts generated by the autoethnography and saturated in the one-to-one interviews to be challenged and nuanced before becoming finalised as key concepts for the theory developed in the thesis discussion.

The data generated in the learning circle, therefore, was created collectively with the researcher playing a dual role of ‘facilitator’ and participant, sharing knowledge rather than taking knowledge and developing theory in a dialogical way rather than an individualised and privatised academic manner after the data has been collected. This methodology is in line with the communicative methodological approach to research developed by Gomez et al., (2010) and Flecha and Soler (2014).

By ensuring that the learning circle was as much about generating ideas and explanations for situations and problems posed, the emancipatory methodology ensured that the participants were not just involved in the sharing of knowledge but in the development of new ideas. For this reason, the research and ideas herein are
collectively owned, although there is no escaping the individualised gain of a postgraduate qualification that the overall research document brings to one individual: the researcher. The ethical dilemma, thereafter, lies in how the researcher honours the participants by following through on ideas generated and developed at the field research stage, particularly in sharing these and co-creating new knowledge at community level.

Two learning circles were conducted. One was conducted at the outset of the field research (circa 2013) and a second was held in 2015 towards the end of the field research. A learning circle differs to a focus group in a number of ways. Firstly, it is not a question-based data collection method but rather one based on an interactive dialogue, of which the researcher is both a guide and participant: sharing knowledge and learning at the same time. Each circle comprised 3 people living on low incomes, with one person from the first circle and two from the second circle having also participated in a one-to-one interview with the aim of getting their insight on how the interviews were analysed and interpreted. Those who had not been interviewed were chosen for the learning circle given that they had experiences of living with class inequality.

The duration for the learning circle was three sessions over three weeks with each session lasting one to two hours. Three sessions were held, therefore, for each of the two learning circles, amounting to six learning circle sessions in all. The sessions were recorded and participants were aware from the outset that the discussion would form the basis of a postgraduate study. The researcher played the role of both participant, engaged in conversation and the sharing of stories, and guide/facilitator whereby the researcher identified a key idea to explore at the outset of each session. The first session was usually a general session with introductions and people getting to know each other. It was used for the researcher to explain the background to the research and to share with participants that there was a need for higher-level institutions to start conducting research in tandem with people who experienced inequality. This was in contrast to ‘normal practices’ in research of taking experiences and theorising without asking the original people that were the subject of the data collection if the interpretation is true to them. It is as if, by virtue of a third-level qualification, people have a natural ability to theorise when really any person,
engaged intellectually, can generate ideas and reasoning for why things happen, as opposed to just telling what happens.

Once participants understood this aspect of the circle, their confidence to do more than ‘tell’ was consolidated or at least promoted. As the session progressed this point was reiterated and each time it drew more theorising from participants. The second session was premised on a need to explore current experiences of poverty or social class inequality and this resulted, each time, in a lot of story-telling and emotion. The third session followed on from subthemes of the second session where the idea of survival and struggle was discussed. This final session brought the discussion of survival to questions related to organised politics and was used to explore the general ideas that had come up over the sessions. The final discussions had a focus on how the participants, including the researcher as a participant, felt that personal and community-based struggle could be translated into stronger politics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Class position</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pauline</td>
<td>Unemployed mother</td>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Lone parent</td>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clara</td>
<td>Student/ mother</td>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2: Learning circle participant 2013*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Class position</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>CE participant / mother</td>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: Learning circle participant 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>June</th>
<th>Lone parent</th>
<th>Working class</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>30-40</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>CE participant/mother/Women’s Group coordinator</td>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3 Data Analysis

The use of mixed methods of data collection generated a large level of data. Data obtained from all methods of data collection include: autoethnographic notes; learning circle data (interactions and narrative) and one-to-one interview data. This data was analysed using a grounded theory approach to analysis (Glaser, 2008; 2015). The use of grounded theory was explained above but it is important to point out again that the main use of this approach to analysis was to enable new concepts and ideas to develop in the context of the data.

5.3.1 Analysis of autoethnographic data

The use of autoethnography brought a specific form of analysis, which demanded a manual analysis and rereading of texts and cross-reference with personal reflections and retrospective memories (Gwyther and Possamai-Inesedy, 2013). In addition, the use of grounded theory (Glaser, 2008; 2015) meant the autoethnographic material had to be written, read, coded and memos added as a method to generate concepts for further empirical analysis through the interview and learning circles.

The autoethnographic material generated the first substantive codes for this thesis, which were informed by common concepts and dimensions arising throughout the

* also participants in one-to-one interviews
data. Open-coding was used such that everything and anything was coded for in an effort to identify core concepts.

The autoethnography was an ideal data source for use with the method of grounded theory. The process of coding and writing memos alongside the autoethnographic notes generated the key concepts to be tested by the other qualitative research methods. Open coding was used to code everything and eventually the core concepts become clear (Glaser, 2008). So codes were put beside texts that were noted as incidents of relevance and some specific codes become saturated as they arose numerous times. When the code is saturated, the code earns its place in the theory and is now termed a substantive code (Glaser, 2008).

Throughout the process of coding, theoretical memos were written about codes and their (potential) relationships with other codes. The memos were critical for developing the theory and identifying the key theoretical concepts. Using the memos, further selective coding took place with the literature and the theory was grounded in the qualitative and documentary research.

5.3.2 Interviews and learning circle data analysis

Once the core concepts and theory was identified using the autoethnographic material, selective coding and theoretical sampling was used with the interviews and learning circles. Each interview and learning circle was digitally recorded and transcribed and, subsequently, analysed for recurring themes and patterns. These themes and patterns were compared across narratives. In some cases, when respondents preferred not to have their interviews taped, the interviewer reconstructed the information as soon as possible after the meeting. The qualitative data was analysed manually. Welsh (2002) advises that whilst the computer searching facilities in Nvivo can add rigour and validity to the analysis process by allowing the researcher to carry out quick and accurate searches of a particular type, this searching needs to be married with manual scrutiny techniques so that the data are in fact thoroughly interrogated. The grounded theory approach to this research meant that manual analysis proposed a far greater capacity for the researcher to
think theoretically through memos as well as code events and code reoccurring themes and dimensions.

5.4 Emancipatory research

A key aspiration for this thesis is to create a piece of written work that is transformative and thoughtful for academics and non-academics alike. For this reason, it is emancipatory in design as it is intended to use the final content as a discussion point for women’s groups and community activists in low-income areas as much as it is intended to inform academic discourse.

Emancipatory research is concerned with reducing the distance between the researcher and the research subjects - minimising the amount of hierarchy in research (Oliver, 1992; Byrne & Lentin 2000; Naples, 2003). Feminist and Marxist epistemology puts a focus on performing research with a tendency towards action that can improve the lives of people experiencing inequality. This perspective is also supported by those who have developed a communicative methodology in undertaking research (Gomez et al. 2010).

The emancipatory element of the research design is also informed by the discipline of Equality Studies, which works within an epistemological tradition which supposes that the purpose of academic discourse is not only to describe and explain the world, but also to change it (Lynch, 1999: 43). Lynch explains the focus on politics and power in Equality Studies:

Like other cognate disciplines and fields of enquiry, Equality Studies also recognises that research is inevitably politically engaged, be it by default, by design, or by simple recognition. No matter how deep the epistemological commitment to value neutrality, decisions regarding choice of subject, paradigmatic frameworks, and even methodological tools, inevitably involve political choices, not only within the terms of the discipline, but even in terms of wider political purposes and goals. The academy itself, and academic knowledge in particular is deeply implicated in the business of power (1992: 43).
This focus on how knowledge is produced, who produces it and how it is used is central to emancipatory research. These questions were part of the research design for this research from the outset. Emancipatory research involves a recognition therefore of the moral right of research subjects to exercise ownership and control over the generation of knowledge produced about them and their world (ibid: 55). This research has institutionalised that ownership through the ways in which the research created knowledge in the learning circles in particular and through the community education planned after the research completion.

5.4.1 The significance of everyday practice and ideas

Feminist standpoint theorists such as Dorothy Smith, Patricia Hill Collins and Sandra Harding draw attention to the fact that an individual's own perspectives are shaped by his or her social and political experiences. This research is informed by the insights of feminist standpoint theory, which argues for the importance of starting from the experiences of those who have been traditionally left out of the production of knowledge. Naples (1999) maintains that feminist standpoint theories privilege the everyday lives of women and others who traditionally have been invisible within scientific and social scientific analyses. With standpoint research, central proponents of this view (Harding 1986; 1991; 2006; Hill-Collins 1997; 2000; Harstock 1998) suggest that the value in this approach lies in uncovering the relationship between knowledge and power.

At the core of this thesis is a belief that people are experts by experience and that experiential knowledge can be harnessed in the way that academic knowledge is produced once the space and tools are provided. The autoethnographic approach and the interviews in the field research are informed by Dorothy Smith’s (1987) “everyday world” perspective in which she defines experience as always social and always bear[ing] its social organisation. Smith’s (1992: 91) mode of inquiry calls for explicit attention to the social relations embedded in women’s everyday activities. However, it does not end at the level of the individual woman as ‘knower’ but also what she does not know, which Smith describes as the social relations and organization pervading her world but invisible in it.
Standpoint theory, in addition to viewing the individual as having knowledge from the everyday world, also brings attention to the site from which to begin research. In this way, the individual and her wider community matter as the relational aspect of people’s experience is critical for standpoint theory. This mode of inquiry calls for explicit attention to the social relations embedded in women’s everyday activities. For this research, this means giving explicit attention to people’s love, care and solidarity relations. Smith (1992, 91) explains that her approach “does not privilege a knower” (or subject of research) whose expressions are disconnected from her social location and daily activities. Rather, Smith starts inquiry:

…with the knower who is actually located: she is active; she is at work; she is connected with particular other people in various ways. . . .Activities, feelings, experiences, hook her into extended social relations linking her activities to those of other people and in ways beyond her knowing (1992: p. 91).

Smith’s analysis “of ‘standpoint’ as a place to begin to explore ‘how things are put together’ and as ‘a method of inquiry’ ” (Smith 1992: 88) offers a valuable methodological strategy for exploring how resource and care relational inequalities are experienced in a community context.

5.4.2 Autoethnography and knowledge

To illustrate the significance placed on standpoint theory and the importance of everyday and experiential knowledge, the research design used autoethnography to make larger conceptual and theoretical points about social class inequality in Ireland using a classed-care narrative. The use of autoethnography places biography in context without assuming the generalisation of such experiences to a whole group of people. Key events and thoughts in my life were compared and validated with the interview and learning circle participants in a way that generated an understanding that was more collective analysis than individualised reflection.

Cook (2014) explains that autoethnography is a case study approach that is informed by personal observation, experience and reflection, and social theory and research. It blurs the distinctions between the personal and the public (Crawley et al., 2008; Harrison and Lyon, 1993 in Cook, 2014: 271), through being reflexive
about one’s own experiences, and helps to develop new ways of understanding the self and the world (Foley, 2002; Somerville, 2008 in Cook, 2014: 271).

Gwyther and Possamai-Inesedy (2009) maintain that autoethnography privileges the researcher’s subjective experience and that, although this is contrary to the ‘scientific’ method, it actually presents a space for developing new knowledge and conceptions of social issues. Cook (2014) states that, as a qualitative and experiential research method, autoethnography enables students to explore the relationship between their personal, lived experiences with wider social structures and forces, thus actively developing and engaging their sociological imagination.

Analytical and critical autoethnography focuses on connecting self-experience to existing research and theory, moving beyond the representation and description that characterises evocative autoethnography, to critical analysis. As a result, analytical autoethnography serves as a method to directly understand and critique social structures, processes and forces (Anderson, 2006).

This thesis study uses critical and analytical autoethnography (Anderson, 2006) to ‘connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social and political’ (Ellis, 2004: xix). Anderson (2006: 373) proposes the term analytic autoethnography to refer to research in which the researcher is (1) a full member in the research group or setting, (2) visible as such a member in published texts, and (3) committed to developing theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena.

In analytic autoethnography the researcher is a full member of the group under study and uses reflexivity, along with the words and perspectives of other group members, to consider wider analytical issues (Anderson, 2006). While this is not exclusive to autoethnography, personal narratives expose the author directly (see Ellis, 2007) and therefore, as Dashper shows, need considered attention when going to final print. As Ellis notes, autoethnography, is about making oneself vulnerable. It is exposing one’s strengths, weaknesses, innermost thoughts, and opening it up for others to criticize (Forber-Pratt, 2015: 1). However, there is a benefit to this too as ‘when you write vulnerably, others respond vulnerably’ (Peseta, 2007: 16) allowing and encouraging alternative readings and multiple interpretations (Ellis & Bochner, 2003 in Gwyther and Possamai-Inesedy, 2009: 107). Dashper draws attention to both the advantage and disadvantage of autoethnography for the researcher:
I hope to show that, while this process is challenging and at times personally and emotionally uncomfortable in a way that most other forms of academic writing are not, the process of autoethnographic writing can be hugely rewarding, even transformative (2015:513).

Autoethnography has been critiqued and even described as lazy (Delamont, 2007). In response, Delamont (2007: 8) states that:

Although autoethnography does not necessarily involve hours of fieldwork, it does involve considerable reflection and mental work to consider how to connect the ‘auto’ – the self, or the personal narrative – to the ‘ethno’ – the wider society or social groupings – through ‘graphy’ – the form of writing or communication.

Hume and Mulcock (2004) write about the ethnographer as the prime instrument of data collection and discuss how they embrace multiple techniques to gather data, most notably participant observations, interviews, documents and artefacts. In the case of autoethnography, the experiences and data collected is that of the researchers. These are tested and validated by the interviews and learning circles with the other participants.

5.4.3 Knowledge and multiple positionings

When using an emancipatory design for research and in recognising that people shape, and are shaped, by the systems that structure their lives, it is necessary to acknowledge the multiple positionings that people have in society. So a person can be a carer on a low income from an ethnic minority. People by virtue of these positionings have multiple identities and priorities.

Intersectionality refers to the socially constructed categories of race, class, and gender as converging and interlocking dimensions that contain specific power relations which impact and structure all of our lives (Hill-Collins, 1993; Weber, 2001; Anthias, 2005). This research was designed on the premise that all individuals have multiple biographies, identities and social positions. The research question is concerned with how class and care intersect and the research participants were invited to participate based on the criteria of growing up in a family that lived on a low
income and are currently living on a low income. However, the research was open to people with additional positionings had they volunteered to participate. Notably, and this is noted as a limitation of the research below, no person with a disability or different ethnicity participated in the research.

5.5 Research limitations

The research, being emancipatory in design, faced a number of limitations. These are discussed here with suggestions as to how these limitations were or were not addressed.

5.5.1 Power imbalances

The research was premised on the significance of experiential knowledge and the potential for people, outside of academia, to generate theories about inequality. Using learning circles was viewed as a way to overcome the imbalance in how people’s knowledge is interpreted. By engaging people in dialogue about the findings and proposed concepts, people were given an opportunity to inform the discussion.

Dodson et al (2007: 821) maintain that researchers committed to feminist participatory research must grapple with power and vulnerability; both those of other people as well as their own. To address this Dodson et al (2007:822) describe a methodological practice called “interpretive focus groups” (IFGs) that they have found critical in efforts to analyse meaning with ‘people under study’. They place this in the context of collaborative research:

Similar to other “feminist-infused” participatory research (Lykes & Coquillon, 2006; Maguire, 1987), our work seeks to engage participants reflexively in research collaborations that treat lived experiences as central to building knowledge (ibid: 822)

Dodson et al (ibid: 822) highlight how involving participants in research practice is commonly theorised as a critical component of social justice–oriented research but how it is less utilised during the interpretive stage when researchers commonly revert to the habit of relying on professional or academic expertise.
Likewise, in this thesis, incorporating an educational aspect to the field research means that the researcher can use the learning circle to inform participants of ideas and, in turn, participants can ask questions and develop their own thoughts on the key concepts in the thesis. In this way, the knowledge produced is developed in partnership with participants. At least, some of the people being described in the research would have a chance to exercise control over the definition and interpretation of their lifeworld (Lynch, 1999: 50).

The fact that most participants knew something of the background of the researcher also meant that the power dynamic was somewhat changed as they felt that they too could make claims about their experiences equal to what the researcher was doing as the expert element of the researcher was not as typical. The use of autoethnography also introduces an element of insider knowledge to the research that ‘transform[s] the conditions of knowledge production’ (Clough 2000: 172–173, 174).

Academic research has limitations on the degree to which this partnership approach to knowledge production can be done and so the way it could be incorporated into this thesis was minimal and not as comprehensive as it should be. Lynch (1999: 59) states that

[T]o institutionalise a truly radical approach to research, however, would require the development of new structures at both university and departmental level (and ultimately at central university and research planning level).

In addition, given that the research is utilising people’s experiences and ideas, it seems unfair that the researcher solely gains academically from this as there is no way to collectively write and submit a study for a postgraduate qualification. So to some degree, although the experiential knowledge was referenced and utilised in discussion, the actual write up and final interpretation of people’s knowledge, even from the learning circles, is conducted singularly by the researcher. For this to change there would need to be changes at an institutional level.

5.5.2 Social action for egalitarian change
A dilemma, identified by Lynch (1999) for the operation of emancipatory research is establishing procedures whereby radical understandings can be utilised for challenging structural inequalities. Turning ideas into action can be a limitation for emancipatory research.

It is planned that the findings from this thesis will be disseminated to the activists that participated in the research in the hope that it may influence their organising at a community level. It is envisaged that drawing attention to the affective system may be a useful tool for how community activists frame equality and justice issues in their community.

5.5.3 Insider/outsider knowledge

Because the researcher is a member of the social group being researched, there is the issue of insider status, which compliments the standpoint theory and emancipatory elements of the methodological approach. However, because the researcher was University educated and not necessarily living in the same community as the interviewees, there was also an element of outsider at times. The researcher also lived in that contradictory space of being an academic insider and an academic outsider at the same time (Hill Collins, 2002). This insider/outsider knowledge posed real challenges for the research and some limitations.

Despite the personal biography of the researcher, participants were also aware that she was educated and conducting research that they were not in a position to conduct. Naples (1996) views insider/outsider statuses as shifting categories that are constructed in part through researcher/participant interactions. Naples draws attention to the fact that even research participants can feel like outsiders based on one dimension of their lives and this comes back to acknowledging the importance of intersectionality when conducting research.

As Bourdieu (1999) argues, our ability to take part in verbal communication, such as an interview, depends on both our social position and our habitus (see also Järvinen, 2000). The insider aspect of the researcher and, in particular, habitus played a critical role in facilitating trust in the interviews and in facilitating a fluid interview.
However, the insider aspect of the research also brought limitations. The researcher was so conscious of not invading into people’s lives that the interviews developed into general conversations rather than specific questions. This open ended interviewing was great for generating data in a general sense but sometimes failed to generate specifics about direct experiences of poverty or inequality. Participants spoke to the researcher about inequality without needing to reference specifics as they used terms like ‘as you know’ and ‘you know yourself’; they assumed they did not have to explain as I lived that life too. Because they felt relaxed, they did not volunteer information that a more focused interview with specific questions may have elicited. They may have also been more willing to volunteer information to someone more anonymous that they perceived as having more ‘power’ or seen as more ‘professional’ or simply seen as ‘not knowing the score’ of poverty, class and gender.

5.6 Ethical considerations

The research was granted ethical approval by the Human Subjects Ethical Review Committee in 2011. The main ethical concerns were confidentiality for participants; how participants would be identified and approached; and consent for participants.

These are outlined in some more detail below:

Ensuring informed consent: participants were invited to volunteer to take part in the research. A detailed information leaflet was circulated which explained all aspects of the study: this detailed what the research was about and why it was being undertaken (see appendices). Participants were also made aware of their right to refuse participation whenever and for whatever reason they wished and that should they agree to participate they could terminate the interview at any stage.

Ensuring confidentiality: All research participants chose to have pseudonyms. Once transcribed interviews were completed, all tapes were destroyed. Ensuring anonymity and confidentiality was more problematic in the learning circles. However before discussions began all participants verbally declared they would not disclose what they heard with the group setting.

Potential exists for colonising research participants: Many studies have been conducted on low-income people in Ireland, with much data is available on the lives
of the economically vulnerable in our society. Therefore the potential exists for women’s lives to become the “subject” of research. The emancipatory design of the research was developed to address this concern and all research participants were invited to hear and comment on both the interpretation of the data and the research findings.

*Unbalanced power relationship between researcher and participants*: the concept of “Othering” is a central challenge when engaging in feminist and class analysis. The insider/outsider position of the researcher played a role in balancing the power relations in the one-to-one interviews. The Freirean-inspired approach taken to facilitate the learning circles also addressed power issues as participants were invited to participate as ‘experts’ and to comment on concepts and ideas that the researcher had generated. They were also asked to suggest ideas.

*Autoethnography and ethics*: Relational ethics are heightened for autoethnographers (Ellis, 2007) and refer to the fact that some people in the autoethnographic accounts may have a different recollection of an event; a different interpretation; or may even not want an event to be put in writing. Etherington (2007) shows how autoethnographic accounts implicate other people in addition to the primary author and that this can raise ethical concerns. One way of countering this was to edit stories and events to hide the identity of the other people or leave them out of the story or, in some cases, if possible, getting feedback on the text from the people mentioned. This has the potential to expose the autoethnographer in ways that may be damaging in terms of career, relationships with others and with the self (Bruce, 2010; Tomas, 2009). I addressed this issue by having dialogue with the living members of my family and getting their consent to narrate the stories I have recounted, some of which were personal to me given my position in the family. As both my parents are dead, I have respected their memory by documenting the many ways in which they loved and cared for me outside of my classed gendered position.

**5.7 Conclusion**

A feminist and emancipatory methodology, with a focus on the everyday as political and the role of insider/outsider knowledge, brings a new analysis to social class inequality concerned with moving from a solely class-based narrative to a classed-
care narrative. It involved treating data compilation and analysis as a form of praxis oriented to emancipatory change. The use of autoethnography, learning circles and one-to-one interviews has allowed a mixed methods approach to data collection, which led to rich and comprehensive data. The use of grounded theory meant that codes and key concepts underpinning the theory could be identified from the autoethnographic data and challenged and further explored using the other qualitative data. Priority was given to data, with theory evolving with the data, dialogues and learning conversations.
Chapter 6 Autoethnographic findings: self-knowledge as data

6.1 The autoethnographic journey

When I first commenced this research in 2009, I had just given birth to a baby girl having just nursed my two parents both palliatively ill from cancer. In December 2008, my mother had passed away two weeks before my daughter was born and my father passed away two months later. That close experience of birth and death, becoming a parent whilst losing my own parents, and having to negotiate this new journey in life in the midst of an economic recession that beset Ireland around the same time, all combined to make the environment for this thesis, a fairly insecure and vulnerable period in my life. But insecurity and vulnerability are not new encounters for me (or many others in my class/gender/care position) as I spent my childhood and early adulthood watching my mother and father survive the same type of environment. Unlike me, they had no academic credentials and no way of ever escaping the poverty they were living in whereas at least I had gained cultural and social capital that I can use once the economy changes and my children get to an age that childcare costs make working full-time more viable.

The findings that follow were derived from the data using a grounded theory approach (Glaser, 2008) to analysing the material; the autoethnographic material had to be written, read, coded and memos added as a method to generate concepts for empirical analysis. To avoid the generalisation of subjective experiences to a whole group of people, key events and memories in my life were compared and validated with the interview and learning circle participants in a way that generated an understanding that was more collective analysis than individualised reflection.

6.1.1 Retrospective autoethnography

It was not until a few years into the research process that I decided to use autoethnography as a method for data collection. I realised that my own lived experience and self-knowledge (Peseta, 2007) could inform the thesis. However, I underestimated the task as, in hindsight, the last few years, for various reasons, raised many challenging personal and familial issues for me. The simultaneous process of retrospectively writing about my childhood and upbringing in the context
of analysing the material and affective inequalities that I encountered, added a stress that I had not envisaged. In saying that, it also achieved what I had originally hoped by choosing it as a research method; it assisted me to develop new ways of understanding myself and the world (Foley, 2002; Somerville, 2008 in Cook, 2014: 271).

Even at the stage of writing up the findings in 2015, reading through my own personal transcripts since 2013, and referencing personal diaries not written for use in the thesis, in which I had documented many happy but also many painful memories, was a difficult emotional process. There were many questions of what to include in the final thesis document and what to omit; trying to be ethical and use the data as I had drafted it, and yet trying to protect some level of privacy at the same time, was challenging. This personal and methodological challenge has been recognised by many autoethnographers and experts in autoethnographic research (Ellis, 2007; Forber-Pratt, 2015; Dashper, 2015). There is also the challenge of what impact my recollection and analysis will have on those other significant others that feature in my autoethnographic accounts, my parents and my brothers as well as neighbours and extended families (Anderson, 2006).

To overcome these challenges, I have edited the autoethnographic material in the same way that researchers edit other qualitative research data, such as one-to-one interviews, to protect privacy and protect people mentioned in an interview that are not present to also comment on an interviewee’s interpretation. I have discussed these challenges in the methodology chapter in more detail but it is important to mention them here as a findings chapter is sometimes read in isolation from the methodology and the text that follows must always be read with the above challenges in-mind.

6.1.2 Lived observation

Throughout the six years that spanned this thesis, the researcher also lived in a local authority housing estate where the majority of neighbours and friends were living on low incomes or unemployed and living on social protection payments. Although, conversations and daily interactions with friends, family and neighbours was not recorded for the purpose of being used as data for this thesis, these daily experiences inadvertently shaped the thinking and theorising for this thesis. In this
sense, it was a form of lived observation rather than participant observation. Talking to friends and neighbours and sharing stories about trying to pay for school books, or fights with the local authority over housing repairs and other issues that present for people living on low incomes, allowed the retrospective autoethnography to be grounded in the more immediate lived observations and lived experiences that my daily life presented.

6.2 Autoethnographic data

Although I have been keeping written diaries for a vast bulk of my adult life, I threw out childhood diaries when I was 19. We were moving house at the time and my reason for throwing them out is not really clear to me. What is clear now, is the data loss for this thesis as the autoethnographic data for those early years is now retrospective without written field notes. In 2013, when I decided to officially use my own life experiences in the data collection rather than influencing data from the ‘sidelines’ so to speak, I began to write up childhood memories. I was especially interested to write up those events or situations that marked an epiphany\(^6\) in my life and relating them to wider socio-economic and political and affective analysis.

So at the research stage of analysing the autoethnographic findings in 2015, I have eight years of adult diaries (mainly documenting mundane, every-day, life events), two years of retrospective autoethnographic writing about my childhood and early adult hood, and various documentary correspondence with state institutions, photos and newspaper clippings (relevant to personal life events) that all served to inform the autoethnographic account. The headings that follow are a result of this manual analysis of my own life narrative juxtaposed with the wider qualitative data in the research (presented in chapters 7 and 8).

6.2.1 Hidden injustices of care

For me, looking back over my childhood experiences and my adult experiences, there is no mistaking the dimensions of inequality\(^7\), such as resource, power and

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\(^6\) Epiphanies are specific or significant events or moments in a person’s life or as Zaner (2004) maintains a crisis that forced someone to analyse lived experience.

\(^7\) These dimensions of inequality are taken from the Equality Studies Framework developed by Baker and Lynch et al (2004; 2009) for analysing inequality.
respect and recognition inequalities, which comes with a low income and relative poverty in a Western country such as Ireland.

I coded the data according to the dimensions of inequality that Baker and Lynch et al (2004; 2009) identify in their egalitarian framework for analysing inequality. Most of my early childhood recollections are so riddled with memories and stories that reflect these inequalities, that it is hard to choose specific examples without wanting to include every recollection. For the purpose of utility and thesis word limits, I will include here the stories that also allow me to then present the affective inequalities so that the same findings can serve a double-purpose. This type of purposeful selection of recollections will be used throughout the chapter.

Dimensions of inequality and the place of love, care and solidarity

Resource inequalities, associated directly with the economic system, featured prominently in my life in the form of housing. But they are so implicated with affective, power and cultural inequalities that memories, on first reading, reflect all four dimensions:

My parents had met in the sixties in England, both of whom were economic emigrants from Ireland during the fifties. They had married there after my eldest brother was born but returned home because my father could not settle in the large local authority flat complex they had been allocated in England. My father used to talk of how they were the only white family on the block, and although he was far from a racist person, he equated non-white with poverty in the UK at the time and he used to say how he knew his son would end up in trouble if we stayed there. My mother recalls how my father didn’t return one day after work and then made contact with her through a relative from Blennerville, where his family lived in County Kerry. My mother, a town woman at the heart, returned to Ireland reluctantly and joined him in Kerry. She was mad that they had left a good flat and here they were with nothing in a rural village. My father was adamant that they would get one of the new council houses being built in Blennerville but my mother soon tired waiting. The work was sporadic as it was rural Ireland in the late seventies when they had returned. My father was an experienced skilled worker with bricks but he
had never got his cards (final qualifications as a bricklayer) in England so he was classified as unskilled. Finding regular work became difficult once back in Ireland. The local authority gave them a small ‘shack’ as my mother used to call it. She explained that it was a small concrete, two-roomed building, which is now used as changing rooms for the local football club. My brother took a photograph of the building when he was visiting Kerry in 2013 and it was pretty emotional to look at the small ‘shack’ as my mother had rightly called it and think that was my first home. My mother had me in Tralee in 1979 and used to recall how she left my older brother with his godmother, and walked to Tralee hospital that morning to give birth. She knew I was coming, gave birth to me and then returned home to that small house with, as she used to say, rats dancing on the window sills. She hated it there and told many a story of how she fought with my father about leaving but he maintained that they would get a new house when they were built. She used to say my father wasn’t pushy enough for a house, that he was too proud to make a big deal about it and wouldn’t let her make a big deal about it. His memory is certainly one of shame as he told me many times in his later life how he hated that time in Kerry, how he hated being looked down on by everybody else getting on, and his brothers buying their own homes. He said it made him look like a failure; ‘a useless, returned emigrant with nothing to show for twenty years of sweat and work’ he used to say over and over again when thinking back.

Two years later, still living with no heating, no proper windows, half the roof falling in and no new house, my mother left Kerry and returned to her home town Bray, with my brother nearly four and me nearly two. Once again, the challenge was getting a house, and she moved in with her brother in the family home. However, her brother was an alcoholic and there were lots of men in and out, all drinkers too, so it was not the most stable or safe place to have children. Still, she had no choice. My father travelled up to Bray after a few months and moved in also but he could not stand the fighting or drinking and left shortly after my younger brother was born. My mother never forgave him for that as she was stuck with 3 small children and no income. She had to go to the social welfare in Bray whom she always said made her feel like nothing but she didn’t care much for what other people thought and she
persisted, got her deserted wife’s money and moved to another brother’s house until she was finally allocated a house in what was then called the White City. My father returned to Bray and moved into the new house with us but it wasn’t much of a move-up from the ‘shack’. The houses were flat roofed and had no heating. They were made with a type of galvanised outer covering and had very little insulation. One of my mother’s greatest heroine stories was how she got that allocated house and she used to tell it with pride, not to my father’s liking, as the story went ‘I walked into Bray council and I had the three of you with me, I had [names eldest brother] out of school and you and [names my youngest brother] running around beside me. I let you shout and cry and scream and I sat [name of younger brother] up on the desk and I said to the housing officer at the time that he could keep the three of you here as it was safer than where they were living. I said the Government could pay the costs of three kids in care or else give me a house and the next day I had Cllr. McManus arriving up at my brother’s door to say I had been allocated a house.

For my mother, the economic and power inequalities associated with being reliant on others for her housing was not her main concern, nor were the feelings of shame or pride of concern to her as they were to my father, for her the concern was housing for her children so that they could go to school and be safe and warm. This concern for us, her children, drove most of my mother’s actions over the course of my lifetime and yet not once did she ever reflect on her life as something hard or difficult. She told stories of hardship, and what I would call suffering, as if it were a tale of life that every person can tell. She never dressed it in pity or a sense of thinking she deserved anything else. In hindsight, I wonder did she ever have ambition or did she accept her lot because she had no choice. She had very basic literacy and numeracy, as did my father, what they had was enough to get them by but I spent most of my early life, once able, writing letters for them and doing all the forms that come with years of claiming social welfare. Again, looking through the many epiphanies that come with interacting weekly with social welfare, it was easy to pick one that captured the various dimension of inequality:
In 1986, my father was in and out of the Eye and Ear hospital in Dublin as he was going blind. For a man that had spent his life working on buildings, this spelt for him, long-term unemployment as he was not interested or able, as he would say, to do anything else. Social welfare is not meant to be a life-long income, it’s meant to serve a purpose for a short time. You can’t save on social welfare; you work week to week. You can’t have any unexpected expenses like a funeral or a wedding because that means borrowing money, and with no access to credit, that means money lenders with high interest. In fairness to the money lenders in my home town, my mother had three collectors each week with a minimal amount to each and some weeks she would miss them and then be in arrears. They never made an issue of it and always treated her with respect and understanding. The social welfare, on the other hand, fills me with dreaded memories. I hated the building, I hated the people working there and I hated the long waits and bad moods that mother got in every time we had to visit the welfare office. You had to collect your money each week and sign for it. Because it was in my father’s name, it meant that the one specific week it fell on a hospital appointment; he had to tell them he wouldn’t be available to collect it and asked could he get it the following day. Both my mother and father tell the same story and told it regularly so I have never forgotten this particular welfare incident. When he went to collect it the following day, they had deducted a full day’s money from it and when he asked why it was down, they explained that he hadn’t be available for work whilst attending the hospital and unless he got a letter from the hospital stating that the appointment was unavoidable then he could not be reimbursed. My mother recalled how she was devastated when he came home with less money. She was so angry because she used to say she knew he would had accepted it with no fight and walked out cap in hand. She hated him for being so meek and she went straight back down to the welfare. For her, being down that money, because she did all the money dealings, was really serious as going in and out to the hospital was an extra expense as it was. I remember accompanying my father to the Eye and Ear and spending time watching families buying the paper cups and sandwiches and just knowing, no matter how long we were there, we would never be buying one of
them teas or treats. So the fact that the money was down, on top of bus fares to Dublin, was a straw too far for my mother trying to manage the bills. She tells how she walked back down to the welfare and caused a mighty row and refused to leave until the money was reimbursed. She said she was taken into a side room by one of the community welfare officers and told to ‘calm down that it wasn’t life or death’ and to my mother, at that time that was like red rag to a bull. She said she let rip into them how, for her, this was life or death because it meant food and lights and money for a gas cylinder. She said she went through all the expenses she had that week and at the end the welfare officer, who usually showed no care or empathy, wrote her a cheque for Dunnes Stores food shop and gave instruction for the money to be reimbursed. I’m not sure in hindsight if my mother tells the true story of what happened that day as she always kept face. Something tells me, for a social welfare officer to give in, that she had actually broken down in tears that day, as they are usually well able for the hard-talk and fighting that comes with a daily job in the welfare office. She never told the story with as much pride as she told others and I often wonder if she was hiding the real story of what happened when she stopped shouting. I’ll never know as she is not here to ask now but even in recollecting this story, I doubt her original account.

For me that memory is caught up with hurt and memories of having very little growing up. But like my mother, I have learned not to moan on about what we didn’t have as there are people throughout the world that were lacking clean drinking water whereas at least we had free water in our taps. Yet I can’t help but feel a certain pity for my mother when I think of her telling this story. It filled me with an on-going hatred for the social welfare and how it was run in terms of how people were made feel when claiming their money or having to apply for another benefit. My father, all my life, was filled with shame at every dealing he had with them and although he was not happy to go blind, he always said how being on disability gave him a renewed sense of pride that the unemployment benefit had taken away. I suppose, for him, he had a reason why he could not work. For my mother, I have no memories of shame on her behalf or her ever talking of shame; if anything feeling shame was something that drove her mad about my father. She saw welfare as her entitlement if she could not work: she was rearing three children and it was the responsibility of the
State to support her in doing that. Again, with the account above, it is easy to see the economic, power and respect inequalities but the affective inequalities are that a bit more hidden. The role of emotions in living through poverty, the actions of my mother, whose primary identity and motivations for challenging the injustice was her role as mother, was care rather than class-based. The narratives above do not fully reveal the function of the welfare system as an affective institution in the lives of poor families.

**Vulnerability and insecurity**

The various intersecting inequalities combined in my life to produce a sense of vulnerability and insecurity that I still carry in my adult life. Having Generalised Anxiety Disorder as an adult is not an accident for me; it is a result of early childhood developmental neglect and an early life of knowing the insecurity and the vulnerability that comes with living with no resources. For others, there may be other factors that safeguarded against such feelings, but for me, and my life narrative, they are a defining part of my experience of growing up in a family reliant on social welfare. It is even hard in looking through the autoethnographic material to take out stories or accounts that highlight vulnerability or insecurity. In actual fact, it is near impossible to isolate memories specific to insecurity or vulnerability as these themes are implicit more than explicit in the writings. The autoethnographic material here, then, is taken from recent encounters with counselling that I had to attend in the last few years as my anxiety got to levels I could not control.

Deciding to attend a counsellor, for me, was like admitting failure as I had watched my mother deal with a lot more than me and she never needed a counsellor. Yet, an episode of post-natal depression after my second child, coupled with falling out with both my brothers to the point that we haven’t spoken for the past three years, forced me to face the fact that maybe there are some things from my childhood that were causing the anxiety I was facing in this period of my life. My GP insisted I use the primary care counselling service, which was free, to look at some of the causes of my anxiety. He had known my parents too and had been my GP since a child so he had a good insight into our family history. Although I and my brothers were functioning on
the outside, the fact that we didn’t have the life-skills, the ability to function as siblings was niggling at me. I was starting to think that the dysfunction we experienced as kids had done more damage than it outwardly appeared. I remember my younger brother asking me if I felt we had a hard childhood and I remember going mad at him for the suggestion but he was dealing with his memories at a time when I wasn’t ready. When I did finally do those counselling sessions and when the counsellor was helping me to work through memories using childhood reminiscent therapy, I realised, with her advice, how much early childhood developmental neglect we had went through. This was not neglect done purposely by my parents, who did their utmost best as parents in difficult circumstances; it was developmental neglect because of what happens when trying to provide love and care in vulnerable and insecure conditions.

One incident brings all this together for me. After my father had news that he was going blind, facing long-term unemployment, he also got news that his mother had died by suicide. In the months after this, he had a nervous breakdown and burned our family home down. We had just been moved by the council back into a newly refurbished house when it happened. The council were refitting the whole of the estate with proper roofs and chimneys for heat by fires and putting block around each house so that it was properly insulated. It was a massive refurbishment undertaking at a time when the Government had little money and was reflective of the dire condition of the houses in the estate. We had just moved back to a lovely newly done house when my father burned it down. The day of the fire, my mother remembers attacking the housing officer from [named local authority] who was standing alongside her in the hall of the burned house. He was lamenting the house and much it would cost to redo it and she was looking at her home and meagre belongings all burnt and just thankful her children were not in the house at the time. The council decided to take charges against my father for the fire and treated it as a criminal offence. He spent some time in the Central Mental Hospital until they decided he had no psychosis and then he was referred to a prison. He was only there as he waited for a trial but I will never forget the sadness and pain as a little girl that I experienced at that time.
Again, I blamed the council as they didn’t have to make it a case like they did. They also put us back in the unfurnished house and tried to make the case that we should have to wait until the end refurbishments before our family was rehoused and this was with my father, the person who had done the fire, not living with us. Why they felt the need to punish the family, I’ll never know. All I know is that my mother spent days fighting them and getting councillors onto it, and anyone else that she could, so that we could return to the original family home when refurbished from the fire. In the court hearing, the judge had one question for my mother and that was whether she was willing to have my father live with us again and she said she did and she said she explained to the court that a breakdown can happen to anyone so not to judge so lightly. For my mother, my father not being charged, was a small victory. But the fear of where we were going to live, would we lose the house, would our father do that again, who would care for us if our parents were taken away, were all very real worries for a seven year old. In the months after that incident, my mother ended up in hospital with very bad pleurisy that she had let go too far. This small time away from her has never left me and I remember learning the real meaning of fear at the thought of her dying. She survived the pleurisy but was always in ill health and never looked healthy as such. It was like she carried all the worries on her face but never talked them out so they never went away but just aged her and made her always look tired and unwell. But how she looked didn’t bother my mother and when I look back I often think of her outlook as day-to-day survival.

In school, I remember the above incident and the time around it being a period in my life when I was getting everything wrong and I have vivid memories of always failing spelling tests. I remember my teacher at the time getting me a communion dress as my one had been too smoked in the fire. She was a lovely teacher and I wonder, if I met her now, how she viewed the families she was dealing with from our estate. She also brought my mother in bags of toys and clothes and gave them to her outside of school time. It was also this time in my life when I remember the Vincent de Paul taking an active interest in our family. We had weekly visits from a young couple, with who I am still friendly as an adult. When I ask what them visits were about, one of them explained to me that it was mainly financial support but also some practical
support for my mother. They used to take us to the cinema and to the Zoo, places we had never been. They also organised the one and only family holiday that we ever had. They organised a guesthouse in Arklow for us, still in County Wicklow, for five days and those memories are forever in my mind as they are for my brothers. The reality of course was that my mother and father were still in conflict so it wasn’t happy families for them in Arklow. There was too much anger on my mother’s behalf and too much shame on my father’s behalf for the life they now led. Love, in any sense that it may once have meant to them, was no longer part of their relationship and I only ever remember them having hatred, bitter and derogatory remarks for each other. It is often said that when poverty comes in the window, love flies out the door so my parent’s relationship is obviously common in poor households. How this impacts on children then is not a question of fixing a broken relationship as the relationship is broken because of a broken society and not the other way around. I often think of this in terms of policies, especially in the UK of late, that aim to ‘fix’ broken families as a way to help society.

6.2.2 Care consciousness

The concept of care consciousness was generated by the autoethnographic field notes as the affective relations, practices and institutions in my life started to feature again and again in how I experienced inequality. It started as a code and started to come up again and again throughout the autoethnographic material that became part of the memos. I started to theorise about affective inequalities and their interface with social class, much in the same way that cultural inequalities of the class system were neglected until Sennett and Cobb (1970) highlighted the hidden injuries of class. Care inequalities are neglected when theorising class inequality and are aptly termed the hidden injustices of care. The codes that triggered the concept of care consciousness as a substantive code were accounts of how inequality was lived in public in an unequal society yet experienced and fought relationally and privately. I was interested in how the code of private suffering came up regularly in the autoethnographic notes, and also the code of public performance, which was the general getting on with life that we did in unequal conditions. As these codes interacted, a more substantive code of care consciousness started to become evident.
Private pain and public performance

On the outside, to teachers, to friends, to wider society, we were getting on with life. Every family in the two-hundred odd houses that made up my housing estate were getting through each day and surviving. Yet behind this daily survival, the inequalities, the vulnerability, the insecurity and the pain that I have written of in my life, was there to a lesser or greater degree in other people’s lives\(^8\). When I became politicised in my late teens, I remember being angry that my family and neighbours were just getting on with it. I was angry as to why they didn’t want to change things so that they could have better lives. I remember my father laughing at my mention of Marx and saying that he had enough of Marx and socialism in England in the seventies when he was struggling to make a week’s wage and the socialists were begging him for a few bob for a drink. The fact that he couldn’t link what Marx was saying to what was happening in his life puzzled me, for my father was a highly intelligent man, though never formally educated. For him, I think, as I reflected back on my many talks with him, and how he influenced my life, the emotional experiences of being lesser and always being the worker and that powerless feeling, were too much a part of his psyche for him to contemplate radical class politics. For him, he just wanted to work and get on with living and he didn’t see owning the means of production as part of this. If we could get educated and not end up like him then that was success for my father, and that was his version of change. For my mother, although less informed than my father as she didn’t even know who Marx was, talk of changing society actually appealed to her and she was very anti-establishment. Yet, as I read over the many accounts I had written up of arguments she had with different institutions, like the social welfare, local authority and the health system, I began to see how she had never actively engaged in politics or any movement for change and this just didn’t feature in her life despite her anti-Government talk. Her struggles against injustice were always private and personal. The ability of my parents and those around me to live each day in the face of such injustices, that I could see so readily attached to the system that not many of them were in a hurry to tear down, made me reflect more and more on the idea of false consciousness in their lives. But my own later life experiences were to teach me

\(^8\) See next chapter for cross reference of codes with other qualitative findings.
something more striking about injustice when it intersects with love and care. In vulnerable conditions, the love and care given and received become the main concerns and victories, the political mobilisation can sometimes take second place or no place at all:

It’s like the story of all woes, it doesn’t rain but it pours and that is exactly what happened for my family when illness knocked on the door. In late 2007, my father was diagnosed as palliative ill with bone and prostate cancer and in early 2008 my mother was diagnosed as palliative ill with oesophageal cancer. She had always been my father’s carer as he had got sicker in life, and always been our carer so it was difficult for her to accept being cared for. She had no choice though as her cancer was progressive and she got sick very quickly. I was also due to have my first child in 2008 so it was bad timing all round. Because they both had a low income, and because of the lack of palliative care or home care supports in the community, the care for my parents fell between myself and my two brothers, and also an aunty that brought more trouble than care. The trouble with my mother’s family, in the form of fighting with them about her in hospital when she needed to be, and then the constant worry of trying to juggle care with work and trying to negotiate appropriate care with the HSE, made the whole year so traumatic that each week felt like a battle. The fact that my mother didn’t accept she was dying, and never spoke about it even up to the last day, added to the stress of trying to support her to die with dignity. Although everything that year was caught up with the unequal economic system, I found myself fire-fighting, unable, time-wise or energy-wise, to engage with what was happening as a political issue. Instead all that mattered to me was minding my baby in the womb as she grew whilst caring for my parents and trying to make sure they had all their needs met. Looking back on my personal diary notes from this period in my life, they are littered with feelings and thoughts of sadness more so than recollections of organising against an unequal social care system or advocating for better health services. If anything, I was willing to get the most for my parents, even if that meant someone else lost out, so I had quickly lost sight of the bigger picture or total view. When I argued with the public health nurse for more home care hours for my father, she said that if she does that
then somewhere down the line someone will get fewer hours as there is only a set budget for each area. I was just happy to get more hours.

For me, as I wrote the above, and as I looked at other accounts of when my parents were ill, it reminded me of their lives in many ways and the many days they had struggled just to make sure we had the basic resources to grow and live with dignity. Parenting my own two children over the last six years on a low income has given me a glimpse into their worries from the point of view of a parent but my situation will never be like my parents as I have hope that I can get a better income, a light at the end of the tunnel that they never had. Other stories from my childhood that revolved around struggle and survival on a low income reinforce the urgency and inevitability of love and care demands. Suddenly, looking back over my parents struggles, with this awareness of love and care, the notes from my autoethnographic accounts started to take on a different analytical light. Combined with academic reading on love and care inequalities and the whole relational field of life, I could interpret the lack of political organisation in my parents’ life, and that of my wider family, friends and housing estate, as less a case of false consciousness to one of care consciousness. Their tending to the daily relational field of love, care and solidarity is living and organising in the face of inequality. Indeed, some of the private struggles and wins could be conceptualised as micro social-revolutions albeit the change was only felt at an individual and familial level:

My father’s memories of childhood were never glorified. He loved the land and the small farm he had been born into but he was resentful of the lower status he always held. He often spoke of how the teacher and shop owner sat up front in church, how he was kept out of school to work whilst others kids learned to read and how the local Garda never really took an issue with his parents on this although it was unlawful. He always used language like ‘them and us’ and he always put himself down as ‘people like me’. When he emigrated to England, he spoke of how he had money and how he loved being able to work and get so well paid. Sending money home, for selling his labour on the building sites in England, was a symbol that he had made it. But of course, Marx would read this as him having accepted his place in the grander capitalist scheme. My father, and we often had this argument, would
refute that he was accepting capitalism and say to me that he had accepted life and how to live and what you needed to do to make a living. He was of the opinion that those on about changing the capitalist system obviously had too much time on their hands and obviously weren’t the ones working. He was cynical, yes, and I often said that to him, but in hindsight, he had seen enough poverty and struggle in his life to want to take it on as a political choice. It was easier to get a job, get resources that he needed and make a family. He always said that when my eldest brother was born, he felt that his life was made-up that he had done it all now: worked, had money and had a family. It was a simple enough equation and when I often challenged him on the fact he had to do that on the lower rungs of the social ladder, and he was accepting an unequal society, he said he had set his sights on making sure that we had a better life than him and that was his fight. He saw the injustice of inequality and he was well versed on history throughout the world and struggles for social change. Yet, here he was accepting his position and setting his ‘political’ aim as improving the lives of his children. He saw through the media and didn’t believe that the State cared for him or for us; he was shrewd politically and always warned that the political class look after themselves first, which is why he voted Labour. Yet, still I always found his giving-up as unsettling. I’ve written before in my notes about his emotional well-being and how I think emotions like shame, pride and a deep sadness at having to emigrate from the land had plagued his mind for his life. I don’t think he ever had the time to deal with these emotions, or process them in a way that allowed him to see that these personal ‘political’ aims - to see his children succeed in an unequal system whilst accepting that system when he knows is wrong - were in actual fact a product of his emotional experiences from early childhood. My father spent most of my teen years telling me how much he hated living in a council house and hated us having to grow up ‘like this’ as he put it. His one hope was that we would get educated, even to second level. My older brother recalls how he didn’t even fill out a CAO form for college as it wasn’t even known about in the house; instead he just did it in school because other lads in his class were doing it. My mother thought hard of paying for it. So when my older brother got an offer from Trinity college that
September of 1996, my father, for the first time without alcohol, cried and I remember him shouting at the top of his voice and with a real feeling in it ‘they can take that , the b******s’. I don’t know who the b******s were but I suppose, for my father, that were everyone that had put us down to fail and we hadn’t. This is how he told the story in later years when I used to ask him how he felt that day. That personal triumph, for him, was a win against an unequal system that was structured to keep him in his place.

My brother’s educational success changed his life-course. Whereas many of his childhood friends have ended up on drugs, or had moments of employment and are now long-term unemployed with the recession, he has had a relative steady employment pattern and lives a modest life, buying his own home, with a modest income. Only he can truly assess the influence of my mother and father in his success, and of course his own efforts and ability, but it can be hypothesised that my father’s own lack of education made him make his children work hard at school and my mother’s ultimate aim to make sure we wanted for nothing meant she supported him through school even if educational success was not her priority. For her, she always said that making sure we did not end up on drugs or drink or pregnant young were her main aims. So what can be deduced from my recollections is that the role of emotional thinking and experiences in the case of my father, and the role of identifying as a carer in the case of my mother, combined to support my brother in accessing college. These are not cultural practices that can be written into a support programme to promote people from disadvantaged estates to go to college. It is not a case of good parenting or bad parenting as the facts on paper would tick a lot of bad parenting boxes. The success in education for my brother, and subsequently me and my younger brother, are the products of my parent’s lived experiences of poverty and the personal biographies and affective relations and practices that made up the affective field of their lives: where they gave their time and energy to rearing us. The only way I could make sense of illustrating this was to generate the concept of care consciousness, which is an awareness of how love and care relations are part of everyday actions in your life. At a practical level, without being politicised about it, my father drew on the affective experiences in his life to influence his children’s life trajectories; it could have easily went the other way as his depression about his life could have negatively impacted on us. My father’s awareness that his
children’s lives would be negatively impacted by our economic situation, where we lived; our cultural situation, how people looked down on us; and our political situation, in how we lacked power to access capital or change things to suit us; gave him a drive to want us to be educated so that we could escape this impact. There was nothing he could do politically, economically or culturally for us as he lacked in all of these capitals but he could be a parent and he could influence us in that way.

6.2.3 Relational justice

Identifying how the concept of care consciousness is brought to a political level, beyond the individual level, was a key concern for me once I had generated the idea of care consciousness from my recollections of inequality in my life. I started to see if codes were evident or recurrent in my own life history notes that could indicate what politicising love, care and solidarity would look like in practice. I was interested in whether there were incidents or events that I could code as relational justice. But Raymond Williams (1977: 11) suggested that when taking up a definition, one should start with basic social practices not fully formed concepts. So instead of affective politics, I was interested in the relations and practices that indicated some form of relational justice. I started to use codes like isolated affective relations and practices; inequality in producing and receiving love, care and solidarity in unequal economic conditions; relations with law; relations with the State; hidden injustices of care; and care consciousness.

Isolating affective relations and practices

A common mistake made when the affective relations and practices are examined in poor people’s lives is to isolate the affective as if it can be managed on its own. So supporting lone parents with parenting skills or helping people to learn how to buy more fresh food with little money becomes a key focus for social policy. Indeed, much of social work and wider social sciences, when concerned with families and communities, the focus has been on fixing family relationships or caring practices without a focus on how this system intersects with other social systems. For my family, when social workers visited, her interest, as my mother recalls, was what we had for breakfast and whether we get up for school on time. My memory of that visit
is basic but I have supplemented it here with my mother’s regular telling of the story as her version has stayed with me:

I remember being home from school that day for some reason. Maybe it was because she was coming or maybe I was sick, I just can’t remember in retrospect. Either way, I was there when a social worker called to our home, probably a year after the house fire so I was a little older than eight. A visit a year later seems a bit lapse, if there were child protection concerns, in hindsight. Anyway, the morning is vague in memory but my mother often told the story afterwards. As with all my mother’s stories, you have to know there is the element of her always coming out on top but to be honest, I am sure she was more polite than she let on in telling the story as she was always well able to communicate with professionals. This one professional, whether she did so purposely or not, insulted my mother more than anyone in the social welfare for council ever had. My mother used to tell the story with scorn and it went something like this…” well she called in early, and I had been told she would call in the afternoon so that was done on purpose, I knew that’ she would say, as if there was a conspiracy to catch her at something. I suppose she just did not trust any services or professional. She then used to explain ‘she started asking me about the kids and how I got them up in the morning, asking me was it hard to wake them, did they stay up late, did I have a time they went to bed at every night’ and then she used to list off other questions, which don’t come to mind now. My mother was adamant afterwards that the social worker had been sent to see if they were fit parents and she was highly insulted that a woman who had no children (because she asked her that question) was judging her on parenting. She also resented that she had no control over whether the social worker was allowed call or not and she always went on about that, regularly saying ‘I should have been able to say no’. My own thoughts then are hard to recall now but I do remember her visiting and I do have a recollection of crying, again probably out of fear that we or my parents would be taken away.

What is significant about this life event is that the affective relations and practices of the family are identified by the State for intervention but the focus is on the family,
isolated from the wider socio-economic conditions that they are structured within. So in this scenario, the problem identified by the State, when myself and my brothers were missing time at school, was the family and the solution was to send a social worker to assess the family situation. There were no questions that day about how hard it is to live on so little money with no potential to save or get credit. There were no questions about the emotional impact of having no job and living in a society that looked down on you for ‘living off’ the State. There were no questions about the stresses of being a woman and carrying the pressure of rearing children in an estate fast-becoming an area associated with drugs and anti-social behaviour. There were no questions that linked their parenting skills to anything outside of the care labour that the social worker was most interested in. So once she was happy that my mother fed us, got us out of bed and to bed at structured times, could discipline us without beating us, and once she felt that there were no child protection concerns, that social worker was content to leave that affective unit, the family, to function on in an unequal economy.

My own autoethnographic stories have numerous accounts of interaction with the law and with the State. Like the political economy, the affective economy is deeply regulated and governed by law and state. This private domain can usually operate without making those regulations explicit until you are poor and reliant on direct State services, which puts State institutions in a powerful position over your life. Controlling your money, your access to benefits and supports when needed, controlling your housing access, and controlling the definition of your family, are very significant controls when you are face the State in a powerless position as a beneficiary of State support. I often witnessed how the lone parents, all of whom were women, living in my estate dealt with these services and I often thanked the stars that I had both my parents living together, albeit in conflict. I have had many conversations in my adult life with lone parents and they always tell the same tale of how they feel under surveillance and controlled by the State. Here is one account that captures this:

I cannot use names in this autoethnographic entry as I am writing about a neighbour so instead I am going to just note the event and try being vague on the details. In saying that, the reason I have chosen this specific incident is
because I recently met this woman (my old neighbour) in a GP surgery in [area] and we chatted about this incident. She was surprised that I remembered it. Now much older, she retold the story as I remembered it, so I am confident, as I write this, that it is a good recollection of the happenings that day. The event has stayed in my mind because I remember being so curious as a child that there were two suited men outside of my neighbour’s house and that she was in there and wouldn’t open the door. It was the early nineties and I think, in hindsight, there must have been a crack-down on lone parents. This is what my neighbour confirmed for me in our latter day conversation regarding this event, when she noted that Social Welfare, at the time, were calling in unexpectedly to lots of lone parents. The reason she would not open was because she did have someone living with her but only sporadically and he was certainly no source of income. The two men finally walked away but only after a lot of shouting down from the top window from my neighbour and a lot of them shouting up. In the days that followed, the Social Welfare cut her money stating that they had evidence she had a partner. They also wanted her to get maintenance from the fathers of her two girls. She was in tears in our house at the time and she was a hard woman so it was strange for me as a young girl, now in my teens, to see that particular neighbour crying. But they had got her and she could do nothing about it. They didn’t have proof of course but she didn’t have power to challenge them and who could she turn to. I know the Vincent de Paul stepped in with financial support, as my mother contacted them, but other than that, there was nothing she could do. She explained when we spoke retrospectively that day in the surgery that they eventually reinstated her payment but that it had taken weeks. How she would feed her children in those weeks, no one seemed to care. She still had bitterness talking about the incident as an older woman. She also used the conversation to say how my mother had always been a good support to her. Although my mother is now passed away, she said she often thinks of her and how good a neighbour she was and how she helped her get through that time even though she herself [my mother] had nothing she could give. My neighbour also recalled how my mother had sorted another neighbour out who had nothing for Christmas day, again by alerting
the Vincent de Paul about her situation. It was nice for me to hear how my mother had helped others but I wasn’t surprised because that’s what happened when I was young. The only support was the Vincent de Paul or your family and neighbours; the State and the law were against you and that was just common, unspoken, knowledge. My mother hated anyone in authority and for many years, after I was educated and had to work alongside professionals, she would often find it discomforting that I talked about council officials and health workers as friends as for her they could never be trusted. Even in her late days, she would say to me, ‘it doesn’t matter how nice they are, and tell them nothing about here’. We would laugh as adult children about this but her paranoia was well-founded from years of witnessing how the State intervened in her life and the lives of friends and family.

**Affective inequalities and hidden injustices of care**

The autoethnographic findings on what has developed into a concept of hidden injustices of care (see earlier section in this chapter) also featured regularly in the memos for theorising relational justice. There are of course the affective inequalities directly generated by the affective system so gender inequality in who does the majority of care work like the fact that it was mainly my mother carrying the worry of rearing the children in our family unit. The fact that we suffered early childhood development neglect was also an affective inequality in the context of the receipt of love and care work, but this was not because of bad parenting practices or bad love and care relations between us and our parents, but a result of how the affective relations and practices at this stage in our lives intersected with the other social systems, especially the economic system. My parents loved and cared for us in the same way that I have witnessed other parents love and care for their children but the unequal resources, so prominent in our early life especially around housing and income, led to insecurity, vulnerability and conflict between parents that impacted negatively on our development as children. These affective inequalities were hidden from public knowledge, yet my autoethnographic reflections have brought me to a realisation that a lot of the inequalities experienced in my life in terms of love, care and solidarity were caused because of the economic system. The gendered and privatised structure of the affective institutions and practices in society reinforces the
hidden aspect of how resource inequalities are so intrinsically interconnected with the love and care needed to grow, sustain and develop human beings. Having a steady home for me as a child was more about a place to play and grow than it was about private property.

**Care consciousness**

The first stage of reading and coding the autoethnographic material related to care consciousness were for moments when I could identify care consciousness as a driving force for why people seem to accept unequal structures, or why they are driven to challenge unequal structures on an individual level. For care consciousness to be political and to be able to use the memos for developing a theory on relational justice, I needed to read my accounts again to see if I could pinpoint moments when I could see how affective inequalities were directly in conflict with how my life was structured and whether this generated any political activity at a collective level in my life history. I have written above of how personal triumph in education and my father’s acute awareness that this could get us out of poverty was a form of care consciousness at a personal level and the challenge to inequality stays at that level. Now I was interested in that same dynamic operating at a collective level. What stood out most in this regard, for me, were the drugs marches in my estate in the early nineties and the groups of parents who took turns to stand on the outskirts of the estate to stop dealers from coming in.

By the early nineties, drug dealing and drug addicts were a regular part of my estate. We had a fairly well-known dealer living directly on the block directly facing our block of houses and people came and went day and night. I remember when the situation started to feel kind of out-of-control, like when everyone I once knew as a child was suddenly taking drugs. Of course this wasn’t the case but there were a lot of my old street friends that were now strung out on gear. More than me, my older brother had seen most of his old friends either die or become life-long drug addicts (switching heroin for methadone eventually). I was a teenager by the time the parents in the estate started to get angry and get organised. It had happened many years before in Dublin so Wicklow was slow to organise but then the drugs has only taken
their grip outside of Dublin and I do believe it caught parents off-guard. I remember finding our estate, at this particular point in time, a real dodgy area when compared to other estates. Still, it was my community and I never had fear walking through whereas none of my friends, from outside of [name of my estate] would walk through. Instead they would wait at the top of the estate for me and I always found that embarrassing. Anyway, the organisation against drugs was the only time I remember my community organising. Suddenly there were Coalition of Communities Against Drugs (COCAD) signs all over the estate and people marching at night on 'pushers' houses. I remember watching from the window as they marched on the house across the road. My mother didn’t march as she though it was unfair on the other family members in the house. She didn’t like the bully tactics. Plus, her relatives had been marched on in [names part of wider geographic area]. So the drugs issue was too close to home in that regard. However, I was impressed with the fact that parents were getting organised and I was impressed that the local Councillors suddenly started talking about investing in the Community Resource Centre. There was suddenly lots of talk about the need for youth facilities and the need for jobs and the need to improve the conditions of people in the estate. One woman in our estate lost her four sons to drugs over those years and that always made me think of it like sending them off to war only this mother had not sent her sons to war. They had died in their own communities. The graveyard in my area has a disproportionate number of young people from my original estate when compared with surrounding private estates. Every time I visit my parent’s grave there, I walk and count the graves of names I recognise and I leave every time with the same thought that their loss of life through poverty could have been avoided.

I often used to see that mother who lost four sons (she is passed away now herself) and I often used to feel sad looking at her and thinking does she feel that people think it must have been something in the house that they all turned to drugs. I would like to think that she could have politicised that hurt, and could have been supported, through community supports or counselling to realise that the State and the law have to answer for their deaths because
of the way they have structured the economic and affective systems. A small family should not be carrying the stress of poverty and expected to survive amidst resource, power and cultural inequalities.

When I read the above autoethnographic piece over a few times and when I cross referenced it with other autoethnographic entries I had drafted on drugs in my estate, I started to see a pattern around writing about parents and family relations where I was writing about a father that was a drinker and so on. I was falling into the trap in my own recollections of finding blame within the family. An avoidable death is probably one of the most starkest ways to interpret the impact of inequality on an estate. An avoidable death of a son or daughter lives with a parent forever, self-blame and guilt reinforced by the fingers pointed from outside by the State and by others who blame the parents is an affective inequality that is seldom measured. The talk of love and care deficits that always accompanies talk of drug addiction, and certainly did in my accounts of drugs in my estate, is care consciousness at that individual level. Of course, a child that is born into a family of addiction who, in turn, stays out late, hanging with the older lads has a risk of drug abuse. That link between family home situation and anti-social behaviour or drug use is well known. Yet bringing that affective inequality to a political level might just raise that pertinent question that starts to define issues of relational justice: what is the role of the State and other social systems in structuring the production, distribution and receipt of love, care and solidarity in society? Do all families have access to equal conditions and resources to provide, sustain and reproduce love, care and solidarity in a way that positively affects the significant others in their lives. How do we structure society such that communities and wider social groups can carry out solidarity relations and practices? These are just some of the questions raised from reading my own autoethnographic accounts of living with affective and economic inequality.

6.3 Conclusion

The autoethnographic material was analysed for these findings through a process of being written and then read and reread, and coded for recurrent themes. These codes were then, in turn, coded for substantive codes and then memos added to
generate theory. What developed is a mixture of personal stories and personal reflection that generated the core substantive concepts of hidden injustices of care; care consciousness; and relational justice.

The autoethnographic analysis highlighted the many ways in which care injustices are lived privately when there is no framework or means to make them political. They are, in C. Wright Mills’ (2000) terms ‘private troubles rather than public issues’, and, as such, stay below the radar socio-politically and sociologically. They are hidden in their privacy, exercising control over lives through fear and anxiety about children and loved ones, especially when intersecting with stigmatised classed positions.

The autoethnographic data also show how the care consciousness that drives people to try to overcome the impoverishment and powerlessness in their economically poor lives, struggles against a backdrop of under-resourcing in a class-divided society. The victims of poverty and economic inequality are blamed for their assumed ‘care’ neglect of their children or families; they mostly learn to accept the ‘blame’ not realising the deep intersec between care politics and economic politics.

Only in the communities against drugs was there any evidence of the politicisation of care in my autoethnography, and then only in a very extreme situation when young people were dying. The everyday politics of care, questions of relational justice, returned to their private place after the fight against drugs. It is for this reason that it matters to highlight the interface between class positioning and care, to show how care consciousness operates and to make care consciousness a political consciousness for relational justice to address the hidden injustices of care.
Chapter 7 Interview findings: conversations on classed care

7.1 Introduction

The methodology outlined in chapter 5 gave an overview of the process and steps involved in the collection and analysis of the qualitative data collected for this thesis. Chapter 5 introduced the terms code, substantive code and memos, which are terms associated with the grounded analysis of the autoethnographic data. These codes and memos have been further found, utilised and developed in the interview and learning circle analysis.

This chapter will present the data generated from the 10 in-depth interviews: 5 interviews were held with working class women who are living on low-incomes or different forms of welfare or disability benefits; a further 5 interviews were carried out with working class community activists.

7.1.1 Conversational interviews with activists and non-activists

The purpose of the interviews was to explore how family, personal and community relationalities impact on the narratives of class action that inform people’s lives both individually (the 5 ‘non-activists’) and collectively (the community activist). So the interview conversations were premised on the participant being treated as a relational person. Given the codes and themes emerging from the autoethnographic analysis, the key interest was the interface between love labouring and social class in their lives.

It was hypothesised that the activists might bring a more political understanding to their lived experiences of inequality. What seems to have actually happened is that the conversations with the activists, although they brought in a focus on the wider community and societal context, still revolved around personal stories and anecdotes. The ‘politics’ or activism that they engaged was at a local, community level and they presented their narratives in a similar way to the non-activists. This is significant when trying to conceptualise what action around the relational justice issues, connected with love and care inequalities, would look like in practice and is
something that will be visited in the discussion chapter (chapter 11) on relational justice.

7.1.2 Differing from the learning circles

The interviews were conversational in style and allowed the participant to chat about how they live with inequality. The learning circles, however, were more concerned with discussing the concepts and ideas that came out of the autoethnographic data and for that reason; they form the basis of a separate findings chapter (chapter 8). However, overall, the interviews and the learning circle data affirm the core concepts generated by the autoethnographic data. What follows in this chapter, therefore, is how the stories and reflections on inequality from the interviews allowed these original concepts to become more defined. What happens in the next chapter is how the learning circles take these concepts and the memos that accompany them and nuance and develop the core concepts in this thesis further again. For now, attention is drawn to the interview conversations and the many ways they have enriched this thesis.

7.1.3 ‘More of the same’: shared narratives between participants and the researcher

By design, the core substantive codes were originally generated by the autoethnographic research and presented in the previous chapter. These codes, from the autoethnographic findings, in turn, guided the data analysis for the findings in this current chapter. Yet, at all times, the process was open to new codes and new themes, which could in turn generate, improve or even disprove the substantive codes, identified through the autoethnographic data. For example, if it was a case that love and care inequalities did not feature in any of the interviews or was refuted by the learning circle participants, then the substantive code and concept of hidden injustices of care would have to be abandoned.

So, in analysing the data, the researcher was interested in the intersection between relational and resource inequalities in the lives of people living with social class inequality, which the autoethnographic study had conceptualised as the hidden injustices of care. There was a need to see how the lived experience of other women
on low incomes could inform this concept and how their experiences and stories could help define the hidden injustices of care.

Secondly, the researcher was interested in how this intersection between the affective and economic field impacts on organised resistance to social class inequality or even just an awareness of inequality in general. The key theoretical concept being developed here in the autoethnographic memos, is care consciousness. The interviews allowed this theoretical concept to be developed further. Finally, the politics of the affective system had been explored to highlight the salience of resistance in this system to the oppression of love, care and solidarity for other inequalities.

The most interesting thing about what follows in this chapter is how the core concepts generated from the autoethnographic data featured in the lives of the research participants. It was very much a case of ‘more of the same’. There were many similarities between the narratives of the participants and the life narrative of the researcher especially in the emotional responses to inequality in their stories; the resource inequality issues; the relational experiences to significant others in the participants lives; and the general public and private ways in which inequality is lived in each of their narratives.

7.2 Conversations on classed care

When you listen to the interview transcripts, it becomes clear that the interviews (for reasons outlined in the methodology chapter to do with insider/outside status) develop more like conversations than interviews. In this way, the substantive codes in the autoethnographic accounts were not used to inform the questions or responses as the questions were simply open-ended, broad and general, and revolved around inequality and living on a low income in general. The main aim for the conversation was to just talk about economic inequality and to explore how people struggle and survive when their lives of love and care are structured by unequal systems.

The affective inequalities, affective relations and affective practices and institutions that came up in every interview, did so by virtue of the interviewee’s own admission of their importance. This is significant because it substantiates one of the main
findings in the autoethnographic research, which is about the hidden injustices of classed care. The headings that follow break this conversation around these hidden injustices down into more tangible aspects of what constitutes these injustices.

7.2.1 Relational lives: mothers, grandmothers, friends and neighbours

What was most striking about the conversations was the way in which the women referenced, at all times, significant others in their lives. Their stories, of course, contained their own admission of hurt or loss, but their narratives constantly included reference to children or other significant loved ones or wider neighbours, friends and community. One of the hidden injustices of classed care then, which is providing and sustaining love and care in unequal economic conditions, is the relational aspect to inequality that we seldom explore when talking about economic inequality.

When participants were asked generally about inequality, they tended to speak about significant others in their lives, more than just their own individual experience:

There is a hidden struggle that we don’t talk about. Now my daughter is an after-school teacher. She is doing level 6 in childcare now and she doesn’t know if she will get it. She does not want to be stuck where she is but she can’t see any way out. Nobody cares once you just keep plodding along and you have to because no one will do it for you. [Lorna, grandparent, age 60+]

I worked hard all my life, I worked 12 hours a day for 20 years and only I was made redundant and I did a CE scheme years ago but the childcare was too much for to keep working once I was a lone parent. [Lorraine, lone parent, age 40-50]

Susan’s story, although about her own experience of inequality, included many references to other family members and to other community members:

People only see statistics but for instance I think if you say what we do here, you only move from one system to another. You come off one statistic and you move to another one. It does not tell what is happening in your life. It does tell what is happening for people at that kind of Government level or where you stand in their books but not the other stuff in your life. It looks good on paper. People don’t realise how hard some people have it. In my
circumstances, well my husband works so I’m okay but some people trying to manage even a birthday party is a nightmare. Imagine your children not able to have a party. When you face that reality everyday..You know, as well, like here I can see it, a lot of the women are widows or deserted wives and you can’t say a lone parent is a young girl. They are diverse. So say here we have all been invited to a wedding but there are girls here that can’t donate to the present so that’s where you really feel for people. I would not have realised that only that I work here. I would not have thought about it until I seen it first-hand. [Susan, mother, age 30-40]

The importance of friends and neighbours was also a recurrent theme in the conversations:

When we first moved here there was nothing. But the people were good to each other because I didn’t have any more than you had and you didn’t have any more than I had. We shared with each other and if I borrowed, I’d not give that back as you knew you could come to me the next time you were in need.

[Lorna, grandparent, age 60+]

7.2.2 Scarce affective resources
Some of the other injustices of classed care that featured in the interviews were those usually associated with economic inequality such as food, shelter and money. Yet, here, the resources featured as parts of the relational lives of the participants and they spoke about these resources in the context of providing and maintaining love and care, the love labour that they carried out daily. The scarcity of these resources impacted negatively on their capacity to provide and sustain love and care, in the performance of love labour, and the sacrifice that came with countering such scarcity was presented as the only way to protect the significant others in their lives from the impact of inequality. So the struggle to ensure children have the same material goods as their friends and class mates, or that a mother has the same elder care as other older people, was more than just economic for the research participants; for them it was a struggle about love labour in an unequal society.

Food
One of the most basic needs in human survival is to be fed. In a Western context, food poverty is usually conceived as rare but in countries with growing levels of
inequality, food poverty is becoming more and more regular in the narratives of those living with that inequality. References to food poverty were very common in the interviews for this research. People were usually referring to someone they knew or a family but the common mention was very significant:

Some of the kids there have had nothing to eat. What about them children. They don’t have cereal. I just think, that’s why I do the food cloud, I just would hate someone to have nothing. Listen I have had my traumas and I know what it’s like to have been a lone parent. Nobody ever knows what goes on behind closed doors with anyone. You don’t know when people go home to their houses what they have to face. The one thing I learned from my mother is that my money goes away each week for my bills. That’s the way I was brought up and I see how hard my mammy and daddy had it and they passed on them skills. [Susan, mother, age 30-40]

Another participant, who also does welfare advice in the local community centre, had this to say, based on her experience with many families in the area:

For some on social welfare, you are not talking about school uniforms, or having a night out, you are talking about how much food and the quality of food that goes on the table. I can afford fresh vegetables but if I was on social welfare then I’d have to buy mainly processed food and then that leads to obesity that then puts pressure on the health service. Social welfare is not a well off thing. You are living hand to mouth. You do not have luxuries like cars etc. I can guarantee you that the majority of women getting the back to school allowance are not using it for back to school but for week-to-week living.

[Jennifer, mother, community activist, age 40-50]

Housing
Insecurity around housing was a recurrent theme too and many of the interviewees spoke about income worries, housing worries and worries about their children’s future:

It’s my children and I wonder do they think I’m a failure. Not having a home or a steady job. I feel sometimes that I don’t want her to regret not being with
me. See, on the outside it looks like I have done this and that but I don’t want to be here at this stage in my life [Kelly, mother, age 50-60]

I went to the information office because I don’t want to be back depressed again if she can’t afford to go to college or I get another set back. You need security in your life and their lives [Lorraine, lone parent, age 40-50]

For Kelly, the insecurity is on-going:

I’ve worked all my life…I was working and then the rent allowance was dropped and I couldn’t pay the extra I was paying so I ended up homeless. Now imagine at my age, just think what my children thought of their mother? The bottom line was that. At first I phoned the council and I went on a RAS scheme then but it is a four year contract so in four years I’ll be looking for housing again. [Kelly, mother, age 50-60]

Some of the more detailed stories told in the interviews captured, more clearly, the interface between the struggle with housing and the maintenance of care:

My daughter has a little bungalow. She has two beautiful kids. Chronic asthmatic the little one has. In Crumlin [hospital] all the time. Beautiful child and a little boy of four and they gave her a bungalow. Now she was delighted but it had no back door so she had to get 500 euro from the credit union in my name to put in a door in her bedroom and they said that’s the way it is – you take it or leave it. So then what happened, didn’t it swamp three times. She lost everything. Not covered. She was out of it 6 months and when she turned up the cot there was all fungus and they put her in a house and she has a case pending but what she wants is for a proper place to live. To this day, she only wants back what she put into it. Now there is a house on the block where I live and the house is beautiful. Now you can only meet the housing officer every 6 months. And my daughter tried to get that house and they still have not written back to her. [Lorna, grandparent, age 60+]

Money
The structure of the family as an affective institution, where poverty is managed in poorer households, was a constant feature in the interviewees. Research participants spoke at length about family set-up in terms of who was the ‘boss’, who
earned money, how the bills were managed and other features of family life that mattered to them when talking about living with inequality. They also spoke a lot about the social welfare system. Here is an example from an interviewee very aware of how the family structure overlapped with inequality in her life:

I come from a separated family. My father had an affair when I was ten and I seen my mother always struggle. And my father would be a great man to men, he would always be first to put his hand in his pocket at the bar but we had no electricity. I remember my mother coming back from the parish priest and she was distraught. She had gone to the priest because we had nothing, now bearing in mind my father wasn’t a poor man, he had money, and he chose not to give it to us. The priest told my mother to go back and forgive her husband. That was his attitude. We were without everything and yet she still put us all through school. [Jennifer, mother, community activist, age 40-50]

Our CE has been extended to May but we are on borrowed time. It doesn’t matter how hard you work. You could be the one that does all the work so that’s on my mind too. The fact that it is only 20 euro more than the dole. I came here of my own accord and I do a lot of work. [Kelly, mother, age 50-60]

When the researcher chatted more with Jennifer about inequality and the worst aspects of living with no money, she went back to talking about the family and this time, her own children:

The first thing is not being able to provide for their children. It’s the practical side like whether they get a new school jumper. Now, mine won’t be getting two new school jumpers. They’re in them two years and they have another year. The jumper has to last three years. It’s things like that, and then that affects them. They’re going back to school with kids that have new jumpers. [Jennifer, mother, community activist, age 40-50]

The impact on children of having no money came up again and again in the interviews:

If you look at a kid kept on an estate all the time because they don’t have the money and if they do go somewhere they suddenly realise they are different. I don’t want that for my daughter. [Laura, lone parent, age 30-40]
Most of the interviewees were asked about whether they feel people have enough and asked if really it is the media and politicians trying to say there is poverty when people are content. I was interested in how they viewed the social protection system and whether they thought it provided a safety net from poverty. Most of the interviewees agreed that without welfare they would be begging on the streets but they still said no one sees the other side of just getting enough to live so you are not begging. For them, there were emotional costs to living on welfare and trying to manage it so you are not judged. Jennifer, who was on a CE scheme, also did the welfare advice in her local community centre, so her response in this regard is very informed:

There’s an old saying begging from peter to pay Paul and a lot of people are doing that, on social welfare especially. Social welfare is not designed to maintain you for the long term. It is designed as a fix to get you out of a hole. But now people are dependent on social welfare and that is why there is poverty. Take for example the new initiative for one parent families to empower women. It’s not about empowerment; it’s about saving money saving the Government. Women are losing money and they are targeted at women: 99% of the people claiming the payment are women, it’s them that’s struggling. Their wage pushes them over the ceiling for the back-to-school allowance. So a huge per cent at the start of July took a forty euro cut a week and now expected to get their kids back to school and no access to back to school. If Joan Burton [the Minister for Social Protection] had applied the criteria to their payment instead of changing the payment then it could have been empowerment. [Jennifer, mother, community activist, age 40-50]

Another woman had said:

It’s not that I don’t have money or can’t manage money. I’m actually good with money. I just can’t keep doing this forever. I don’t want to always be living and worrying and the children seeing that and thinking I’m a miserable person. I want to be a happy person. [Sarah, lone parent, community activist, age 40-50]

Some of the women, because of their own position as lone parents, were particularly interested in talking about the social protection changes to the lone parent family.
payment for working lone parents. When I asked if this was an attack on care or
class, they mostly agreed it was a bit of both, again highlighting how care and class
intersect especially in the lives of poorer women. As Jennifer explained:

This change was brought in, yes, for economic reasons. And she [referring to
Minister Burton, Minister for Social Protection] has dressed up the change as
women’s empowerment and a device to get women back to work but she has
put them in a bigger poverty trap….That type of thinking. That discretion. That
human discretion should not be allowed. I do be distraught from the state of
this country. I have seen families struggle to the point of getting the Vincent
de Paul in. That is not an easy point for a family to get to. [Jennifer, mother,
community activist, age 40-50]

Time
Trying to provide and sustain love and care through love labour at a primary care
level takes time. Love labour is also defined by imminence and the need to be
present to do the love and care work. From the conversations that made up the
interviews, it became clear that time and presence was not something the
participants took for granted. It was also clear that the lack of time impacted on their
capacity to engage in organised political groups. This was particularly true for the
lone parents that spoke. One of the activists interviewed, Lara, handed me a print
out of a conversation that her sister had with the social welfare over the telephone
(see appendix). She explained:

Look at this [hands researcher a page]. That’s a conversation my sister had
this very day with the social welfare. She rang them from Waterford to ask
about a different matter and the women proceeded to ask her why she was
ringing from a line outside of Wicklow. My sister said to her if she was serious
and she said that she should be informing Social Protection when she leaves
the County. My sister is a quiet women, she was shocked. I phoned back
pretending to be her and tried to get a name. She was happy to give her
name and had no problem reiterating that people have to contact Social
Protection if they are leaving their house overnight for any reason. This is
what people are facing here every day. This is the real battle for people. [Lara,
mother, community activist, age 40-50]
When asked further could her sister get involved in the SPARK campaign to challenge changes to the lone parent payment or to challenge how lone parents are treated more generally by the Government, she replied:

Sure how could she, she works part time and she is the only one caring for [names children]. She doesn’t have the time. I don’t have the time myself but I make it but I’m lucky, I have another half so he can pick up the tab. [Lara, mother, community activist, age 40-50]

7.2.3 Emotional experiences of inequality

The interviewees also brought up the idea of being judged. They did not spell out who was judging them but many accounts referred to making sure their children and families had the best of material things to ensure they were not judged for not caring:

You know the others are thinking, what she is going to put on them and then they turn up dressed to the nines, and I don’t care if I had to borrow twice for it. I wouldn’t have them looked down on. Not on that day, anyway.

And;

Well, I think you have to sacrifice as a mother because you want people to know that you put effort into them even if you can’t get the most expensive things. They have to at least have something of value. When I was young, we had nothing and I know they judged me for that so I don’t want my ones putting up with that. My eldest is dying to get a part-time job. Can’t wait for it.

And;

I made sure she [my mother] had the best of care. I wasn’t letting anyone talk about how I treated my mother because that’s all they remember…oh, she put her mother in a home or oh, she bought cheap clothes for her mother. She always liked cotton, none of this new synthetic stuff, so I still bought her that.

Shame, as expected, was a constant feature in the conversations, again coming back to their relational lives:

If you come through them doors then that is a huge thing. One day this lady came in and it was about social welfare and I said I’ll do my best to help and
then she explained to me her situation. Now you can’t judge a person by how they look. She explained how her son was in school and he had cereal and lunch but she was eating nothing from one end of the day to the next. One day he went to school and he rang and said there was all mould on his roll and really that just hit me. I just thought ‘oh my god’. My kids just take things for granted. I went home and she stayed in my mind. [Susan, mother, age 30-40]

I do think it is so hard for people. I think it is more here even though I live in a council estate too. I don’t know, I think people are hiding it. Thinking of the kids. People say they’re a charity case. Even if you have two wages, there can be poverty. You can be poor on two wages. You can be poorer than someone on welfare. I have been there; I had my own daughter when I was 16. I can’t talk about anyone. You can’t stereotype poverty. I’d love to know do many people apply for back to school grants. I wonder has that increased. [Susan, mother, age 30-40]

Even the community activists made reference to shame:

Embarrassing things like being 8 punts in arrears and having the electricity cut off and having to hide that from the neighbours and having to play games with my daughter to pretend. Eating out of the chipper because I could not get the gas put on. I managed all that poverty. I had to. It was a terrible shame. I did feel shame. [Janice, mother, community activist, age 60+]

7.2.4 Private sacrifices for public goods

The idea of public performance and private pain was a core concept in the autoethnographic data and it presented in the interview conversations in the guise of sacrifice as the women spoke about the sacrifices they made to ensure their families had goods and services equal to other people in society.

Money featured in the reflections on participating in society and more cultural aspects of society. Laura explained about how money is always in her mind:

I think even like bus fare, you wouldn’t have the fare to go to an art gallery so you wouldn’t go because you have this fear of being asked for money. We miss out on opportunities because we were never given them. If you are not
aware that this is the reason why you don’t go in, you can’t say you are imposing it on yourself. It is only when you get to sit and look at it. I don’t want my daughter to think like that. [Laura, lone parent, age 30-40]

Laura’s narrative was actually very insightful in terms of culture and class and how she interpreted this through her relationship with others, so in this case below, with a potential partner:

As I got older, I’d avoid going out with a guy if it meant going for a meal. I remember it put me out and put me back in my class because I had the inhibition because of how I was brought up. Maybe I kept myself in that box. Like I would never order alcohol thinking I wouldn’t be able to pay for it….I was afraid of going to the theatre and he said it was black tie. Then I made an excuse and didn’t go. It just keeps you in your box. [Laura, lone parent, age 30-40]

Her story went on to include comments on how she wanted her daughter to be able to engage with culture and the arts, something she could not:

Do you know what? My daughter and her friends were talking about how some of their friends are rich and they have only started noticing it. I put money into the credit union for her as I think she needs to be able to socialise. She has a good guitar and we saved up and got her that. I think she needs to be able to socialise and integrate with others. [Laura, lone parent, age 30-40]

Without explicit mentioning of their own situations, many women interviewed alluded to the fact that people put on a public face and you never know what has went on behind a closed door.

When my husband was alive, I went out with a smile on my face and you would not have known what went on behind that door. Women won’t put up with that now. They’re standing up for themselves and getting very independent. It’s like the role has changed. He’s at home and he’s minding the kids. The cost of living is too much. I think the Government is very unfair that no one from the hierarchy sit and really justify themselves and see what it is like to live on a low income. We are paying for bankers and we will always be paying. I wouldn’t even mind paying water rates if we all had clean water
and if others did not have so much. I come out of here with 336 and I pay 58 euro in rent. Two euro is to maintain your boiler but even that is a lot out of your wages. I honestly think too you have no incentive to come here as money is not good enough. But as I said to the supervisor here if someone can get a nixer they are going to take it. I’d take it and I’d say to my own take it. [Lorna, grandparent, age 60+]

The impact on health, and more specifically mental health, was clear from the conversations. The burden of living with poverty was carried in a very private way in how it impacted on the mental health of participants.

In many interviews, the topic of post-natal depression came up and was discussed openly. I was happy to share my own experience in that regard if someone introduced the topic but it was interesting that it came up in discussion of income inequality:

But he saved me. My third son saved me. My son. It was him that made me keep going. A woman is seen as weak if she has post-natal depression yet the same woman that has that depression is getting up every day and dressing her child and shopping with her depression. I started house cleaning, cleaning other women’s toilets and then I set my self a goal and said I’d take 8 years and take any job that paid into the hand and when my youngest lad turned 2, I went back to work professionally. [Jennifer, mother, community activist, age 40-50]

I had my little boy 5 years ago and I had horrific post-natal depression and I got a leaflet in the door for the resource centre and it was the best thing that ever happened to me. Going to the centre made me get up in the morning. [Susan, mother, age 30-40]

The women spoke about post natal depression as something they had to endure whilst still having to make sure they ‘did’ their love and care work. This raises an interesting point about private suffering and yet giving a public perception that all is okay.

Mental health
One interviewee explained how general depression was a part of her life for as long as she can remember. She had many stories of hurt and loss but she was adamant in the interview that she just had to get on with life. She did not see the point in complaining. I have cut and pasted some parts of her interview here to give a sense of her struggle without giving too much of her identity away through too much detail:

Well I got switched from lone parents to Fás and it was supposed to be another 20 euro but it didn’t work out like that. I love my job and yet my CE ends in October and I’ll be put on the dole. I’m 53, who’s going to employ me now. I have a kid in secondary school and one in college. I’m living on 260 a week. I get no maintenance, only abuse. It has taken me a long time to get where I am as I was in an abusive relationship. It took me a long time. If he had told me my mother hated me I would have believed him. It takes a lot out of you. I have found someone and I’m waiting for the downfall.

I suffer with depression and some days I just didn’t want to get out of bed.

Things in those days were harsh. My mother wanted a funeral for my older sister who died when she was two and they said she was going to heaven and they said behave yourself or that other child will be taken off you and then I was sent to Limerick for two years. It wasn’t that she didn’t want me but that is the way things were.

Try dealing with…my mother committed suicide and my kids don’t even know that and I had to go through those emotions and kids have to come first.

[Lorraine, lone parent, age 40-50]

Once again, the idea of private pain or hurt is discussed against a backdrop of just getting on with life for the women.

7.3 Awareness of the oppression of love and care

Although the women reference love and care when talking about their lack of resources, do they see this as oppressive of the love and care in their lives? Do they see the lack of money that controls their children’s participation in wider society as an oppression of the care they struggle to provide and sustain in a classed society? It is known from care research that women, as the default carers in gendered
societies (Lynch et al., 2009), are acutely aware of the need to provide love and care. In what follows, it is clear that there is also an acute awareness that economic inequality impacts on the capacity to love and care. The affective disposition that comes with this knowing is an affective disposition related to doing love and care work in unequal conditions.

7.3.1 Love and the classed struggle to care

One interviewee, Lorna, was an older woman nearing retirement age and she spoke at length of her own life struggle and then spoke about her daughter. She had a wonderful way of articulating how she felt about the economic system and how unfair it was. Yet she continually alluded to the idea of just getting on with it. She did not talk about being involved in politics or any kinds of organised movement against the inequalities that she spoke so articulately about. She was a natural story teller and captured, in a story about her mother, how acutely aware she was of how care and class intersected in her life:

*If my mother did not have me she would have had nothing…Now my mother when she was in the nursing home, they started putting these cheap nappies on her and the bed was getting destroyed. I started buying the polycare but they’re not free so they are 17 euro each. You could get them free at home but not in the home. So the nursing home manager said one day that she would have to put the other ones on her and I said she’s not your mother and she needs to keep her dignity and I’ll never expect you to feel the way I do about her. So I paid for the good ones for another year and a half but I could not afford it. So finally after a long battle the HSE gave in and started sending them free to the nursing home for her. But look at the hoops I had to get through to get them. True as god. Really the country is run very wrong.*

[Lorna, grandparent, age 60+]

The awareness of the intersection between class and care was a clear part of most interviewee’s stories when asked about living with a low income, with many talking mainly about the impact on family and, more specifically, children:

*I’ll have nothing for the grandchildren. His pension will be gone. I’ll only get the €188 and that’s nothing. It’s for your family, you see, not yourself or for others, you want to be able to help them out, buy the grandchildren things.*
But that’s just the way I feel about life, but it is very unjust. [Lorna, grandparent, age 60+]

I think the impact on children is the hardest and one of the other things is, if you move further up Irish society, the lawyers and all that, they are an incestuous click and they have the law power. I don’t know much about law but when you come up against the law then you will know how unequal Irish society is. [Nancy, mother, age 60+]

Excruciating poverty, you know children that are reared in lone parent families, they are extremely disadvantaged. As I say the village rears the child but if there is a lot of hooliganism in your area then it is almost impossible for young women to keep their children uncorrupted. [Nancy, mother, age 60+]

One woman felt that the younger women were even, in poverty, getting too much for their children as if they were ‘trying to prove something’. This public performance comes back to an earlier hidden injury of classed care but features here as an example of how people made sense of other people’s actions in the face of inequality:

You’re stopped everywhere. Yet, I have to say now too from working here with the younger age group that they go on with a lot of nonsense. One girl there said she bought 7 pairs of trousers. I firmly believe that. I don’t care for wealth or any of those things. I do think that today they want everything yesterday. When I got married first we had to save for the 5 rolls of wallpaper. We got lino on the floor. I do think the expectations are too high now. You need to know where to cut the cloth but I’ve learned that through not having anything. I don’t [see] people learn that now. Maybe they think they have to prove something or people will think they are not good mothers, I just think there is a lot of silly going-on. [Lorna, grandparent, age 60+]

Some of the interviewees also articulated how their suffering was because of other people’s actions and how their care inequalities were not lived by those with money.

When the wealth went and we’re still paying for all their sins. The Government did not change policies so they still get 3 pensions. And I’ve worked all my life and I’ve nothing. My pension means I’ll die in poverty. I don’t mind that but
what about my grandkids watching that. I can’t fight it. I’m too old and I’ve always been working so how could I have time to take them on with their three pensions. You may be sure they’re able to take their grandkids on holidays never mind worrying about getting them a Christmas present. [Lorna, grandparent, age 60+]

What is clear from the references to children and trying to care on a low income is the intersection between class and love and care work for the women.

7.3.2 Affective resources and parenting alone

The hidden injustices of classed care included a lot of references to scarce resources when living with inequality, particularly for those caring alone. The awareness that this impacted negatively on love and care in the lives of the interviewees was clear:

I contacted the council to change my rent after having my child and they said it would come down by 2 euro and I said here, do you think it costs only 2euro to rear a child! I’m not into politics but the Government has a lot to answer for. They don’t understand us. These people delegating the rates, they have never lived our lives. They have had cushy upbringings. You need ordinary, run of the mill, people to run the country…If you have no one to take two children and your kids are up all night and you can cope in the day maybe but at night when you have no help, with bills coming in and rent due. People can’t cope when the money isn’t there. Like the medical card charge, I know it is only 2.50 euro but that is milk and bread for people. [Susan, mother, age 30-40]

Again coming back to changes to the lone parent payment⁹, interviewees expressed concern that the impact on care would be immense:

Huge, it is an attack on care. For the first reason, they had four years to object to this. The second thing is that a woman who has a child under 7. A woman with a child over 14 has to look for work. So she is saying that a 14 year old

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⁹ At the time of doing the interviews for this research (over 2013 and 2014) there were changes to the social protection payment for lone parents. The payment was being reduced for those working and it was being transferred to jobseekers allowance once a child became seven years old.
can be home alone while her mother works. For families already struggling for support. [Jennifer, mother, community activist, age 40-50]

I have two children with disabilities. One is deaf and one is epileptic and I work but I have family around. Now I’d have to leave them two home on their own. And according to the policy change, the economic policy change, that’s acceptable. She was supposed to introduce childcare and she brought in 500 places whereas 60,000 families were impacted by the changes. [Jennifer, mother, community activist, age 40-50]

An interviewee that is a lone parent activist was very clear that lone parent families, as lone carers, face specific discrimination:

We are saying that there is discrimination here against [the] one parent family. In a two parent family one parent is allowed to be not seeking work and can be at home caring once they are a qualified dependent. [Sarah, lone parent, community activist, age 40-50]

The rights of children came up a few times and one interviewee, an activist for lone parents stressed this very clearly:

It is a bit of both, a class and a care issue. But it is also a rights issue for children. I am finding it hard to understand. The changes are brought in as they said paid work is route out of poverty and dignity and yet the changes to lone parent’s payment are impacting only on women that are working. There is a devaluation of…like today one woman was called in as her daughter is 15 so she has to be seeking work now so this happens on the 4th July right on the summer holidays. But the welfare said she is a big girl now and could mind herself in the summer. these 14 to 18 year old category of children – for them it is a human rights issue. [Sarah, lone parent, community activist, age 40-50]

She went on:

I want to be able to care and I want to be able to mother. I really think the 14 to 18 age group is significant. The issue is children have a right to care? Who
is thinking about the children in this Government. [Sarah, lone parent, community activist, age 40-50]

Notably, some interviewees drew attention to the obstacles to challenging an unequal society:

Well if you try to strike out a blow against injustice. If they have a brother who is a lawyer well you know…they are all a clique. The lawyers in this town all know each other. They probably have lunch together. You are just dealing with an incestuous clique. They can turn a case to suit themselves. This renders people powerless. Of course it does, because they wouldn’t get away with so much if they didn’t think they could. They actually have the cash to get out of it. They even all come from the same area. They’re all from the one class. So if you can pay for education in these places, they all know each other. They can buy wealth and privilege. But we, well we have to try get on regardless of this and all the time, it is there to keep you down. [Nancy, mother, age 60+]

I just feel if they did not get what they’re getting then we would be better off. It is greed. They have the country like this. [Lorna, grandparent, age 60+]

What these quotes show is a clear insight by the women on how their capacity to do love and care work is hampered by the conditions in which they find themselves as carers.

7.4 The struggle to sustain love and care

It was difficult to isolate quotes about struggle that specifically referenced the word struggle, instead people spoke about getting on, maintaining families, getting children educated, minding aging parents and the maintenance of other care relations, work and practices. This section of the interview findings is significantly informed by the conversations with the activist as their conversations included many remarks on activism against inequality.

Interestingly, when looking at the interviews, the words of the activists become most relevant to this section and they are rarely quoted in the earlier sections of this chapter. This is not a coincidence nor was it purposeful. Instead, what seems to
have happened is that the conversations with the activists, although they included personal stories, tended to focus on the bigger picture. Their concern about love and care, and how economics impacts on that aspect of their lives was viewed in a wider context of their community and wider society. This is significant when trying to conceptualise what the politics of love and care would look like in practice and is something that will be visited in the discussion chapter (chapter 11) on relational justice. For now, their narratives are used to help explore what the struggles around love and care look like in the lives of people living with economic inequality.

7.4.1 Love, care and ‘Getting on’ with things

Most interviewees, talked about the need to just get on with life. They were insinuating some power or opposite forces but never articulated what it was that they were getting on with life against:

I think the best thing to do is get on with life. You can’t fight it. The only thing that will save you is your bit of working class intelligence. If you are faced with bleak unemployment, everything strikes out. You can’t expect the Gardaí to handle everything. [Kelly, mother, age 50-60]

I’ve lived here all my life and I was the heart of the community and I always fund-raised and in them days if we all went off for the day …now we never went to restaurants because we had no money but you would be so happy to go but now there is a big difference. We just made do with what we had. We didn’t need what they had, we were happy and we had good neighbours. Just get on I say, there is no point begrudging. [Lorna, grandparent, age 60+]

Some interviewees noted how the State does not care about them. In doing so, they were acknowledging that they were on their own:

It is not so much …they don’t care, obviously they don’t care. Since the state came into being, it was immediately a few elitist cliques around the country and it has got worse and at the moment, for ordinary people, if you come up against corruption.. [Nancy, mother, age 60+]

As someone said to me the other day there is no use in asking for thanks. We’re not fools but we are only the little pod fighting the big one. [Lorna, grandparent, age 60+]
But that’s just my opinion. I’d like to see the younger crowd get and to see a big change and to be listened to. I get so angry. [Janice, mother, community activist, age 60+]

I think you have to keep going. No one is going to pick you up. They {her children} are looking at you and thinking come on mam, I need this or I need that. You have to try keep it all together for them. [Sarah, lone parent, community activist, age 40-50]

Notably, the women seemed to imply a sense of getting on with life as a form of resistance against the conditions they talked about.

### 7.4.2 Women holding things together

One of the interviewees was very articulate about the role of women:

*Women hold communities together. You look at this centre, there are no men working in this centre. It’s all women. It has always been women that take an interest in communities.* [Jennifer, mother, community activist, age 40-50]

When asked what she felt was lacking at a policy level or in the eyes of those with power to make change, she replied:

*They are missing …it sounds like the simplest thing in the world. They are missing reality. I mean you can write all the papers you want. Unless you have been there and lived in those conditions, you cannot understand. I watched a programme called living on the dole and I just thought for people to live with people on the dole for a few weeks. I thought that’s not good enough. They were not been giving 188 euro a week or 242 a week. Like one girl on it, the councillor, could go in and see her life but she did not have to live her life and never will. To have to go home and lie in bed at night and think about what you are going to do for dinner. Worry about what you have to do for dinner, you’re afraid of the school asking for money, you’re afraid of the kids coming back looking to go to the pictures, cause’ you know you don’t have it, you know in your heart and soul you don’t have it. You don’t want to leave them without so you are going to get it from somewhere. It is okay to say everyone should have this but they don’t see the effects of it. It is the reality of...*
it. To come down to ground level and see what people live like. [Jennifer, mother, community activist, age 40-50]

She went on:

It’s about my community. I don’t care if there is a man here getting paid more than me if I can go home at the end of the week and put my kids in a warm bed and put a roof over their head and keep them warm. That’s my priorities. It is women that hold men up. [Jennifer, mother, community activist, age 40-50]

One activist spoke personally about her mother holding things together:

My mother was a great manager. It was part of who she was. She managed poverty. You didn’t moan about it. She didn’t share the struggles that she had so maybe that’s why I thought things were fine. She was the eldest herself of 14 and grew up in terrible poverty and swore she would never be poor again and her children would not be poor. So she was a great manager. I felt I was bad compared to her. [Janice, mother, community activist, age 60+]

The struggle for other interviewees was more complex when family relations were bad. One woman explained:

My sister blames me and says it’s all mammy’s fault. So she goes on about needing to be protected and I say let it go as it eats you up inside. You miss life and you carry it with you. I just …my attitude is get up and get on with it as that is the way you get on with it. Don’t live beyond your means. That’s the way I go. I blame the Government for things, yes I do. [Lorraine, lone parent, age 40-50]

Personal triumphs and personal struggles featured in the interviews without prompting as the interviewees incorporated stories about hurt and loss whilst talking in general about struggle to get on with life:

I have had personal experience with my son and he was suicidal when he was eight. I got him through it. Now that took all my time. [Lorraine, lone parent, age 40-50]
I think if people had previous generation life skills. Like to do a dinner for 5 euros and some people can’t even afford that. I just think even being able to cook and live on little is a win for people. [Susan, mother, age 30-40]

The focus on women raises an important point for thinking about classed injustice as the participants seem to place women as central to challenging this injustice.

7.4.3 The care from the community centre

Some of activists interviewed referred to the community infrastructure as critical to the young mothers and other families in the estates they live in. One woman stated:

I think a resource centre like this is incredible. [Jennifer, mother, community activist, age 30-40]

Another activist was very articulate about the community infrastructure and the role it played in supporting people. She felt however that the community activist work was being undermined:

That’s what scared the State, you see. We were getting too powerful, too political. They thought we propping up a particular political party and that worried them too. They can’t help the people the way we can; we are cheap frontline services to them. But that never bothered me because I knew we could support our people better than them. Now it bothers me because they made us all about delivering services and we lost that fighting side, then they hit us hard. [Joline, community activist, age 60+]

Another participant, a non-activist this time, talked about the role of emotions and community support when talking about the council estate she had lived in all her life:

There isn’t that much vandalism. I see the English council estates on the computer. But there isn’t that much hatred here and I think the resource centre has played a role in that. I think this place is powerful. If you have a husband with a drink problem, you can come here. For a young woman now say of 22, they’d even mind the child so she can do a class. I mean even one class or maybe they might teach some psychology and that can alter your whole life. The resource centre is powerful. There are a lot of young men and they won’t access the centre. If you had to write a solicitor’s letter and they
even give you an envelope and that takes away absolute powerlessness. 
Even just being here, it is reassuring. [Nancy, mother, age 60+]

From these points, it is clear that community infrastructure is important as part of resisting classed injustices.

7.4.4 Becoming Political about Care: the example of lone parents
For the community activists interviewed, the personal struggles have been brought to a more public and political level. This was particularly evident in the narrative of a lone parent activist:

Actually, Kathleen Lynch’s book on affective inequality and this was before I did the Masters, I read that and I remember reading it and thinking that is so fundamental and that is before the lone parent cuts ever came in. I was angry with feminism and I still am in a way and feminism went about we’re looking for access to the labour market but unless we deal with the care system. The women that were successful they farmed out the care work and for lower-paid women they are doing both care work and paid work. We started feminism from a wrong point and we needed to deal with care first. There is nothing wrong with care work but not being paid for it is the issue. [Sarah, lone parent, community activist, age 40-50]

Yet, when this lone parent activist explained how she got involved in more public politics, she quickly referenced a personal story. She speaks of how she had got angry about cut backs to lone parents’ income, and was able to use her links to the media from another campaign to highlight the lone parent issue:

It was funny how SPARK started and I remember sitting at home the night the budget came out and I started reading through all the changes and I could see what was coming at lone parents and I went onto a parenting site that night and some people write back saying this is outrageous. We set up a facebook page that night and by Friday we had our first demonstration that week. By that Friday we started the demo and there was such a negative view about lone parents that no one was interested. But the cuts to lone parents were the most vicious. It was a politically correct position from the
Government’s point of view. [Sarah, lone parent, community activist, age 40-50]

Although a lone parent, she put time and energy into a campaign to reverse changes to the lone parent payment:

So in 2012, we were campaigning all the time. We did loads of events. Always involving the children and that is the only way we could do it. [Sarah, lone parent, community activist, age 40-50]

She explained how the media and the politicians misrepresented her:

The huge increase in lone parent but only because all widows etc. are under the one-payment [lone parent system]. Statistically, lone parents in the under 20 category has fallen steadily. Family breakdowns cause lone parenting and that’s caused by the recession and they are blamed on the breakdown of society when really they are breaking down because the economy is in ruins. Politically, Labour and the Government are playing to people’s worst stereotype of lone parents. [Sarah, lone parent, community activist, age 40-50]

She explained how it was difficult for lone parents to get politically active:

We don’t have time, we don’t have money. [Sarah, lone parent, community activist, age 40-50]

Asked then what motivated her and other lone parents, she explained:

They are terrified of what is coming down the line, the ones that are most active. We have 3000 members but 1,200 in the closed group but when I look at the core group who is most active, we are all lone parents who are going to lose 25% of our income. We can’t afford to lose 25% of our income.

She uses a story from one of the other lone parent activist to show the care injustice in the proposed changes:

She said ‘I have two choices’. She is going to be down 100 euro. I can’t afford to lose the hundred euros so I work extra hours and leave my son roaming the streets and forget the junior cert as he won’t study on his own or else I live in
poverty. The societal problem like if you have all these 15 year olds on the streets with no parents. What would she do for ‘child care ‘for him? [Sarah, lone parent, community activist, age 40-50]

The other activists interviewed for this thesis all told a similar story when asked what motivated them into more organised or ‘public’ politics at a community level; each spoke of how personal situations drove them to take their issue to another level. For example, here, Janice, an activist of 30 years explains why she got involved in activism beyond her own private struggles:

All of my adult life I have been involved in activism. I suppose as a lone parent in my twenties…when I ended up a single parent living in a one bedroom flat in Ballymun, I suddenly saw a side of the world I had never seen and I wasn’t happy. When people you knew and grew up with and when people knew you live in Ballymun, you were judged so much. I struggled quietly and nicely in a man’s world. Nobody ever seemed to stop me but suddenly when I was a single parent things were different…When my daughter was two, I decided I wanted to go back to work. I realised the huge level of discrimination…I decided that next interview I would make up a story and not say I had a child. From then on I knew there was a certain way to get on. I knew discrimination was out there. I had huge stresses hiding the fact that I had a child. I had to be a different person in work. [Janice, mother, community activist, age 60+]

The role of emotions in activism also came up. Another long-time community activist explained how her activism, then and now, was driven by personal as well as forced attributes:

I was always bolshie. My ma knew me as the bolshie one but I wasn’t always angry. The anger came with the more crap that was thrown at me in life and boy was I angry. I had nowhere for the anger though so it went inwards and I ended up having a breakdown. Then I found an outlet for that anger and did I direct it to them bastards, yes I did and I will ‘till the day I die because they are still hurting my people. [Joline, community activist, age 60+]

The same activist went onto make a very interesting point about culture and care:
You see our children are numbers to them. That’s all they are. I am a number cruncher for them and they don’t give a damn about us or our children. They want them out of trouble, yeah, don’t want them near their areas or harassing them in their parks. So they want us to keep them occupied but they don’t care. They don’t come from a culture like our culture, for me, your community comes first and that is the way I was reared. For them, community is second to their success. They want their children successful and they make god damn sure of that. [Joline, community activist, age 60+]

Her work as an activist spanning most of her life is not served justice in these few short lines but her general thoughts on living with poverty echoed what the other women interviewed had said. This was true especially when she spoke of the tears behind closed doors when you do not know where else to turn and you have nothing left, money-wise, until the end of the week. Her involvement in activism was partly driven by her understanding that what she experienced behind closed doors was very much linked to the public domain of politics:

> I joined an education group and one of the things we did, and we found it hard at first, was to dig where you stand. That was a Freirean philosophy to unearth what mattered in your life there and then. We started a process then of saying why is this happening; who is making this happen; what can we do about it. That was a very personal journey but let’s be honest a very political journey because we started looking to the Council for answers and we started to make the men answer and we started to ask questions. Asking questions of the ordinary is the first step in empowerment. This changed my life. [Joline, community activist, age 60+]

It was interesting that none of the 5 activists had been party political activists. Two had some involvement with party politics but all five stressed that political actions needs to happen where you are at. By ‘at’ they were referring to their community or their current situation. When one activist was explicitly asked why she did not choose party politics, she explained:

> It was really having a child and living in Ballymun that politicised me. I never got into party politics. I ran for election as a community candidate. I don’t think I ever wanted to be tied down. Every political party, then and now, had
elements that you could get on board and elements you had to compromise and I could not do that I always felt free outside. I would have written stuff but I wouldn’t have joined a party. [Janice, mother, community activist, age 60+]

For her, the community was a better site for what she needed to do:

I got into community development in Ballymun. How I got active was we had no hot water for 7 months, in our block. The hot water is controlled centrally in Ballymun and for the most part we were just in our own flat and wondering when it would come back. Then I started talking to neighbours and we met outside on the green and only 3 of us turned up and we called another meeting and 4 turned up and we decided that the four of us would be good enough. So we contacted the corporation and that was my first time to ever contact the State in advocacy and that was my first activism. We set up a residents group in the flats and we did leaflet and people started to get active and contact us. We wrote to the corporation and they wrote back saying they were waiting on a part. So we wrote back and we asked for the date it was due in. Suddenly they did the work and it showed me if you take action you can get things done. [Janice, mother, community activist, age 60+]

She then pointed out some of the difficulties in trying to be an activist now:

It is all red tape getting anything started now and there is a level of expertise that stifles creativity. I don’t see any young women getting into activism. I don’t think things are easier now. [Janice, mother, community activist, age 60+]

What comes across from the narratives of the activist is the important of place and personal experience to their activism. Their challenge to class inequality and classed injustices of care was directly related to their lived experiences and not an abstract resistance to capitalism.
7.4.5 Institutions and regulations

Each of the activists had stories about interactions with the social welfare, the local authority, the law and other institutions. In each interaction, they spoke of issues like surveillance, bureaucracy, and disrespect towards low-income people from the institutions, a failure of staff in an institution to understand the lives of the people they were serving and general stories of negative interactions between individuals and these institutions and organised community groups and these institutions. One activist explained:

*When I was fighting them on my own. That was grand; it was every week something about the house or something with the Health Board regarding children or the law regarding him. But when I started being involved in groups, suddenly I had more power. It was not as easy as they got more resistant but I could send letters now and I could use the power of numbers.* [Joline, community activist, age 60+]

Another noted:

*It is a very powerless feeling for someone else to control your money and say if you do or do not get it* [Jennifer, mother, age 30-40].

Notably, when asked to talk about living with inequality, the women chose to bring in these topics about social welfare and other institutions. Their narratives, therefore, involved placing themselves in a wider context where their lives are impacted by institutions beyond their control.

7.5 Conclusion: hidden injustices, consciousness and politics

There are three fundamental theoretical concepts being examined and developed by this research based on the autoethnographic data; that of the hidden injustices of care; care consciousness and relational justice. The interviews in the field research allowed these concepts to be explored and further elaborated. The interviews also added dimensions to these core concepts that were not originally generated by the autoethnographic material. In this regard, the narratives here help to define the concepts in more detail.
So from the interview data, it is clear that when class and care intersect in unequal societies, the result is a relational inequality where people interpret their classed-gendered inequality through their relations with self, family, friends, neighbours and other classes. Within this relational frame, the impact of resource inequalities on love and care became visible, including the emotional elements of loving and caring with inequality. What was also visible is the internalised conflict of living with the public and private face of inequality and the sacrifice and struggle that comes with managing that public / private interface.

The data in this chapter has also helped to illuminate the idea of care consciousness. The lived experiences of inequality were interwoven with relational narratives because there was an acute awareness for the ordinary women and the activist women that economic inequality impacted on love and care in their lives. This consciousness was part of their general awareness of the practical reality of love and care work and how resource-related inequality adversely impacts on that relational reality. These affective dispositions, that arise from doing love and care in unequal conditions, impact on how people experienced class inequality.

The struggle around love and care in the final section of this chapter has contributed to informing the concept of relational justice, which was first identified in the autoethnographic material. Here, the discussion for the ordinary women, who were not activists, was around caring and the reality that ‘you have to get on with it’ even in the face of inequality. Their narratives told of women holding things together. In contrast, the activist women brought in the role of community infrastructure, like community centres, and they also spoke of political activism and power, the potential of organising together in solidarity around care. For all of the activists, their impetus to become active revolved around their identity as a carer, be it care for their children or their wider friends and neighbours.
Chapter 8: Learning circle: experiential experts

8.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the findings from the learning circle discussions. Two learning circles were conducted. Participants were selected strategically for the learning circles based on their long-term involvement in local working class community groups and their high levels of activism. Participants had lived experience of living on a low income and all participants were currently living in local authority housing. One learning circle was conducted in the middle of the research (in 2013) and a second was held in 2015 towards the end of the research. A learning circle differs to a focus group in a number of ways. Firstly, it is not a question-based data collection method but rather one based on an interactive dialogue, of which the researcher is both a guide and participant: sharing knowledge and learning at the same time. Each learning circle was about mutual learning and very much informed by communicative research methods (Gomez et al., 2010). Each circle was made up of three people living on low incomes. The second learning circle included three participants who had also taken part in a one-to-one interview with the aim of getting their feedback on how the interviews were analysed and interpreted.

The duration for the learning circle was three weeks with each session lasting one to two hours so in total six sessions were held over the two learning circles. The first session was usually a general session with introductions and people getting to know each other. It was used for the researcher to explain the background to the research and to share with participants that there was a need for higher-level institutions to start conducting research in tandem with people who experienced inequality. Once participants understood this aspect of the circle, their confidence to do more than ‘tell’ was consolidated or at least promoted. The second session was premised on a need to explore current experiences of poverty or social class inequality and this resulted, each time, in a lot of storytelling and emotion. The third session followed on from subthemes of the second session where the idea of survival and struggle was discussed. The final session, which was the third session, brought the discussion of survival to questions related to organised politics and was used to explore the general ideas that had come up over the three sessions with a focus on how the
participants, including the researcher as participant, felt that personal and community-based struggle could be translated into stronger politics.

The first circle was conducted as the researcher was initially developing concepts and so the discussion was less guided by the core concepts later generated by the autoethnographic research. The second circle was held at a time when the three concepts of hidden inequalities, care consciousness and relational justice were better developed. This difference impacted on the discussions. The first learning circle was much more open ended and involved general discussions about making sense of activism against inequality and how care interfaced with this. The second one was much more focused on the actual three concepts generated by the autoethnographic material.

Both learning circles raised some gaps in the theoretical concepts being proposed by the thesis. They did this in different ways, in that the first learning circle was generating ideas without bouncing them against the suggested concepts whereas the second learning circle generated ideas against the backdrop of the researcher explaining the three concepts being developed. Both groups, however, seemed to come back to three areas that have helped to tease out the concepts further. These included a focus on material inequality more than originally allowed for by the researcher; a focus on the powerful and power; and a focus on the practical side of trying to mobilise people who are caring. As one participant put it:

*Affective politics sounds nice but who is going to do it? If the issues and people it’s about are too busy doing the issues it’s about! [Jennifer, mother, community activist, age 30-40]*

### 8.2 Stressing the role of resources

In both learning circles, there was consensus that you could not talk about class inequality without talking about love and care inequality. The stories they gave, just like the interviewees, all involved reference to both material and care related inequalities. But the more they chatted about caring in an unequal society, the more they became exercised that their capacity to provide love and care was dictated by their economic situation. They also seemed to agree that this was too often ignored:
Well they are interested in the family but only to blame you! They are too quick to say oh that’s a bad mother there on her own not having the time for that many kids or that’s the father drinking too much, but they’re not as quick to say maybe she works that much because the money is so low or maybe he drinks that much because he is so down not having a job. [Clara, mother, age 20-30]

Of course, what you are saying is very real, it is definitely very real. Like I know that I did a good job when you say it like that. I suppose like when you are living on a low income and you have your kids. I think the effect…you can see it…I’m a lone mother and I used to look at my kids and it’s like history repeats itself. I feel guilty that I didn’t do better. Then I look at their high hopes and I worry I can’t do anything for them. It’s like the graduation, she is babysitting to go to that. It is guilt. [June, lone parent, age 30-40]

Limits of money
Money was talked about a lot in terms of how it limits life for people on low incomes:

The Holy Communion is important for families and all you see on the TV is the rich demeaning your one special day. If you are wealthy you have many special days. Eating out is not a privilege. I remember we got a few bob and I brought my kids and their friends out for a Chinese. It was the most amazing experience. We remember it because it was a one off. [Pauline, grandmother, community activist, age 60+]

But as they [kids] get older, you need to explain what poverty is and I feel I’m putting that burden onto her. So not only do we have to suffer from the stress from it but then our children have to take that stress. [Laura, lone parent, age 30-40]

Even though I agree it is about looking after your family, they can do it a lot easier. I know they have their problems too but money makes like easier and it makes caring for children easier, making sure they are with the right crowd [June, lone parent, age 30-40]
Link to other social systems

All participants in the learning circles were worried that the focus on people’s personal lives would also mask these wider systemic problems:

*We had all the love and care we needed. I’d be worried that drawing attention to how we care for children in poverty would be skewed by the media into poor me stories and the bigger thing you are talking about would be missed.* [Laura, lone parent, age 30-40]

And;

*I remember the priest of the parish coming down and when he walked into the kitchen his mouth dropped open at how little we had. His reaction made me conscious. We were so used to it that we didn’t see it. I was always politically active. I’d like to make sure the focus is still on that because what we didn’t have was the hardest part of being poor.* [Pauline, grandmother, community activist, age 60+]

And;

*It is, yeah, it is about love but money dictates a lot and I just think they don’t care about us so why would they care even if we show them how we really hurt. They’d just get to know more about you. It doesn’t mean they would care.* [June, lone parent, age 30-40]

What is clear from June’s comments and those of others, that they feared that a focus on love and care and affective injustices would only be used to further pathologise and demean those who are poor.

Participants in both circles felt that a focus on love and care could be empowering but they had suggestions as to how you could talk about love and care but bring in the ‘bigger picture’:

*If you get people who have these feelings and say this is why you are feeling like that. If you inform people of why you’re poor then the shame around poverty goes. It is not your fault you learn and you can turn the responsibility on society. So it is right to talk about their feelings but it needs to be linked to the bigger picture.* [Pauline, grandmother, community activist, age 60+]
You could try to get people thinking about what makes rearing kids harder and get them to start thinking about that work the way you are talking about it but you still have to make sure people can relate that to the way that their lives are made like that because of money. Or lack of it in my case [laughs]. That way they can see the way they don’t have control because people blame themselves, women do, and I know that. [June, lone parent, age 30-40]

Knowing your position in life
In both circles, the women came to a consensus that you have to talk about where people find themselves, the position that they are in. They talked about how people do not see themselves as part of a class but how they would see themselves in terms of being a mother or a daughter. Part of the problem of making affective and materially-related injustices political is that those who live out these experiences do not frame them politically.

You should not have to live in poverty to care for your children. But our work in the home is not acknowledged and it is only when you have to pay someone else to do it that you put a value on it. The way I looked at my deserted wives’ allowance but that is an income from the State to rear my family and I still take care of my community and the wider area and that [they] get good value for money. But you care in poverty and you care with stigma. [Pauline, grandmother, community activist, age 60+]

I’m just a person so I don’t think I am working class as I don’t work but I am a mother and I am a daughter [June, lone parent, age 30-40]

At the end of the day when you don’t have money, all you have is each other. I was thinking the other day of all the stuff, we didn’t have as kids but we had each other. And it came up as being from a single parent home and I was saying how all the other kids, they didn’t have much, but they had more than me but then I had a good family. [Laura, lone parent, age 30-40]

It is clear that many women defined themselves from their position as carers and they connected this to struggle on low incomes but there was no sense that they perceived the injury to love and care work as a political issue.
Being judged

Just like the interviews, emotions were a regular part of the conversations in the learning circles. When the researcher asked about the emotional aspects of living with class inequality, the participants were quick to use words like guilt, judgement, shame and sadness. Judgement and shame were the most commonly used terms and the stories that followed were always linked to judgement even if the other emotions were hurt or sadness from being judged:

There are people that think we should not be getting what we are. There is always someone looking down on you. I think it is what they learn at home from their parents and then they become to think like that. So people like were the whole house is working have their own outlook on life. Everyone has their own outlook on life but here, we don't look down on people. [Clara, mother, age 20-30]

I know people judge me and I kind of accept that now. I think I deserve it in a way that I made the choice to pick up with an abuser too young and he got me pregnant and when I got pregnant after that my mother would say ‘when are you young ones going to stop bringing kids into this terrible world’. I used to think she was wrong to say that but I know what she meant and I did feel sad but it was just that you knew you were looked at differently [June, lone parent, age 30-40]

That’s the way it is round here for people, they know they’re looked down on and some don’t care. Others do, I never did but I do for my kids, I hate them being judged. Don’t worry about me but I hate thinking of them. [Jennifer, mother, age 30-40]

It’s your home and you have no control over what happens. Imagine what my daughter thinks of me at my age. I know I said this before to you but I think that. She has to be let down. [Kelly, mother, age 60+]

Throughout both circles, the lone parents participating raised issues specific to lone parents who seem to still live with a high level of stigma in Irish society:

When I had Cathy I felt I had to make up for being a lone parent and I always felt like I had to work. That was with no schooling. All the time, I neglected
her. Well she was with family but I still felt I had neglected her. I could not access grants for child minding or anything like that. I was getting charged huge rent for living in my mother’s house. When she got to 7 there were no child care places. On the one hand you are being forced to work to prove yourself and then forced out of work because you can't afford it. [Laura, lone parent, age 30-40]

In the learning circles, women highlighted the material, resource-based nature of inequality. While they recognised the affective injustices that ensued, they felt that these were ancillary to economic injustices in many ways. It was the lack of money and resources that disabled them. However, the degradation of poverty was experienced as damaging love and care relations; it was in the affective domain that most damage was felt be it in terms of guilt and shame for one’s children in particular.

Turning the lens on the decision makers

The learning circle participants focused on those with power more than I had done in the academic literature reviews I had not considered those with privilege or focused on literature that looked at power or wealth in society. Yet in both learning circles, the more I spoke about affective inequality, the more participants raised discussions about politicians and wealthy classes in society:

*What about the care inequalities of those in power? No one seems to think they have any problems yet they stuck in this country too and they think they have it all stitched up but they know their families suffer. They know their kids do drugs. They know they are the same. They just have money. That’s the difference.* [Pauline, grandmother, community activist, age 60+]

But this confidence that the rich had problems too was also presented in a different context when participants acknowledged the perceived security that they live with:

*You see these people, the people not living like us; they know how their life rolls. They know they will get a house, get married, have kids, and go on holidays. Okay, yeah, they probably work hard for it. But they have that luxury...*
of knowing it. I don’t know that. I live one year to next standing by my children and making sure they have enough. [June, lone parent, age 30-40]

Access to culture
The participants also reintroduced a focus on cultural issues that maybe they felt the affective focus was neglecting:

_It is about more than money though like most people now would be well equipped going out. That has changed now. When they just talked about being insecure in a restaurant, like we go to restaurants now. I think it was a cultural thing._ [Clara, mother, age 20-30]

The other participants challenged the reference to culture:

_No, it came down to spending and disposable income. We just didn’t have the money to go to a restaurant and then of course it becomes a fear when you do get money because you don’t know the set—up._ [Pauline, grandmother, community activist, age 60+]

I also think one of the participants referred to not being able to be creative when you have not money. That is important to emphasise here, not just the culture of going to restaurants

### 8.3 Being practical

The researcher opened discussions about organising people around the love, care and solidarity issues in their lives by asking participants if they felt there could be such a thing as relational justice. To talk about relational justice, the researcher explained the politics of the affective system as being similar to economic politics and the explanation was as follows:

_So, we all recognise economic politics, it is about how resources are produced and distributed in society. We have laws around this and the State plays a role in structuring how this happens with tax etc. So the politics of all that is disputes over how resources are produced so what people get paid to make things, the conditions of their work etc., how resources are distributed and then the role of the State and the relations with other systems like law. There are also politics over culture so what jobs have a high status and who_
says being a doctor is more important than being a road sweeper. You are all familiar with these types of arguments and familiar with unions as one way of organising around economic politics.

Yet what I’m saying to you here is that the operation of love and care in society, so the fact that it is mainly children from poor households that grow up to fill the prisons, that this is not just about how resources are distributed but how love and care operate in an unequal economic system. So the politics of how love and care solidarity are produced in these unequal conditions is the essence of politics about love and care; how they are distributed and received, the relations between the practice of love and care and the law and the State. They are the exact same questions that present when we think about how resources are managed by society only this time the resource is love and care and economic resources like housing are also part of affective politics and relational justice because homes are needed for love and care relations etc. [Mags, Researcher]

Participants found the explanation clear as they were then easily able to give their own examples of the politics of the affective system. Yet they also added some reservations:

I get what you are saying but really, how could you politicise what you are talking about? Like how could we get people to think about a house like that? It still costs money? [Clara, mother, age 20-30]

And;

You are either a carer or a mother or struggling to be both they think; they can give you 6 months off after a baby and then throw you back into work. They want a part time mother, full time worker. You have the child, you want to raise them. You feel guilty if you are not washing bottles. You feel guilty when someone is doing your job. I get that there is a kind of political issue in all that but if you start talking about the love and the care here instead of the need for proper time off work then I think people will be lost with what are they asking for. Does that make sense? [Clara, mother, age 20-30]
These points about power and the danger of misrepresenting love and care are significant in trying to develop a greater understanding of what relational justice is and what affective politics could look like when brought to a political level outside of the politics of the personal and the community.

The women in both circles were also at pains to point out the importance of working with people where they are at. They talked about how residents groups and other community groups are really the only thing they have ever engaged in that would be considered active. The importance of place for the women affirms what other writers on women’s activism like Naples ((1992; 1998) and bell hooks (1990) have said about the importance of place to political activism as a community level.

I think like a Facebook page to get people thinking about what you are saying is a good start, people are at home so it is easy to access [June, lone parent, age 30-40]

Time
A conversation in both circles centred on the time needed to be part of organised groups in a local area or time to take part in political actions. Care demands informed the use of time, and political action was not a priority given the immediacy of love and care. The first learning circle involved a discussion around how people have to prioritise family events and how political issues just have to take ‘second-place’:

Like the amount of people that would turn up for a Guinness book of records thing, something stupid, but would not bother to turn up at something about changing the country. But I kind of understand it because when I’m not in work I want to do something with the kids, I don’t want to be dragging them to a march so that political stuff takes just second-place. I know I should ‘because they are getting away with murder without us fighting back but I just can’t get the time for everything. [Clara, mother, age 20-30]

And other participants felt that people just didn’t have the time to be thinking in the way that political action demands:

Nobody wants to take on the job as it takes too much away from you. But they don’t have time. That’s why I’m saying, make it more practical. Make it simple
decisions, like I support this or I don’t support that. Make it easy for people to challenge things. Try do what they do. [Jennifer, mother, age 30-40]

And;

In the Dail the only thing I have seen them doing is install a crèche. I’m sure other workers avail of it. They don’t make life easy for women. Even myself, in a political party and that was on the left. [Pauline, grandmother, community activist, age 60+]

And;

People are just busy with their daily lives. People see what is going is a disgrace but people have to get on…But Yeah, I do actually, but it would have to be different. I don’t know what I mean by that [laughs], I just know the way it is now won’t work for what you are saying. [June, lone parent, age 30-40]

I think most parties are formed in patriarchy and political life is difficult for women, unsociable hours, not enough peer support, having to always be on call. Women can’t be that free, they have families. [Pauline, grandmother, community activist, age 60+]

Women were sceptical of organising around love and care because of fears that it would distract from economic politics and because they also felt they did not have time for this, the world of politics was not organised around care lives. It was not a world made by women who had care responsibilities so the politics of care were not in the frame.

Other Concerns: Race, Disability and Mental Health

The participants were keen to discuss the fact that people have concerns other than just love and care issues. Although the conversation still came back to how these other concerns were interconnected with care, the women were adamant that other concerns also needed to be addressed politically. For the participants, they were not sure if the idea of relational justice could address these issues.

I know what you are saying and I agree with that. But at the end of the day if you are a migrant then you might be more worried about getting kicked out of
the country or getting race abuse than about. I don’t agree with the arguments that they take our jobs, I mean we all have to travel now to get work so I don’t like them being abused for being not Irish. It still happens. I don’t fall for all this Ireland of the Welcomes. So, yeah, I suppose I am trying to say that racism is important for some people, even our own people if you take Travellers, and I know a Traveller family ran out of an area. So like racism is not something you can say is about love? Is it? (Jennifer, mother, age 30-40)

Another highlighted disability:

People with autism don’t get a look in as far as I’m concerned and I’m not sure that talking about love and care will answer their needs? Like, say in the local school, we have no special needs assistants, well a few, but none for certain kids that need them. Now that is political and something I would get out about but I wouldn’t be doing it because I love or care for them kids but because people with a disability have a right to be equal so it is different for them. Different for people with disabilities. (Pauline, grandmother, community activist, age 60+)

Some of the participants made an important point about people’s mental health and how living with poverty can bring you down. They talked about this is the context of self-minding or taking time to even think about yourself. The politics of love and care, for the learning circle participants was also made up of how class impacted on a person’s own mental well-being:

I mean I look after the kids but I wouldn’t even take a minute to think about myself. I don’t think like that. Maybe that’s why many of us look wrecked. You just can’t do everything and it does bring you down so that is a part of it too. [June, lone parent, age 30-40]

The first thing the system will do is get the media to pick holes in you and now with Facebook they can discredit you in any way. If you are talking about caring then that is a great one for them especially if they can get something on you to show you don’t care about others or yourself. [Pauline, grandmother, community activist, age 60+]
The Politics of Family, Friends and Neighbours

The discussions about being active in communities mainly centred on problems for families or neighbours. People spoke about drugs, homelessness and general estate issues that made them do anything ‘political’ or active in their community. They all agreed that it was about people close to them at the end of the day:

*It’s about my family really. I can’t have time to be fighting other people’s battles but I do care about my area so I would do something about that but I can’t be getting political or joining a party or trying to change the Government because that’s going to do nothing for my children who need me here and now. [June, lone parent, age 30-40]*

*There is more to it than just me or my family, like I do care about this area and I would fight for it and I have. I do agree, it is so much about all of the people around us. I just don’t know how you get people seeing that. [Jennifer, mother, age 30-40]*

Yet, one participant was keen to point out that women can have fractured relationships and that this can impact on local organising:

*Women’s relationships are much fractured and one group of women are played off against each other. Men conspire and women betray. It is fear based and insecurities. It’s like she is getting ahead of herself so you have to pull her back. It is [not] very petty. [Pauline, grandmother, community activist, age 60+]*

Caught in a trap

In both learning circles, the analogy of a trap was used. This was interesting as the women used it to talk about how they felt trapped by having little money and how this impacted not only on them but their children:

*I seem to always be caught in a trap. When I went back to school I chose to study and study. I made a lot of sacrifices but then I could not get the grant I needed. Because I was on lone parents, I could not travel out of the country with a grant. [Laura, lone parent, age 30-40]*

And;
I agree it is a trap and they [meaning the welfare] are quick to take money. When I went on maternity benefit, my husband was getting back to education and claiming for the two of us but his payment went down when I got maternity benefit. So I had no payment and his payment was kept down. [Clara, mother, age 20-30]

And;

Working Class people have a different lens that they view the world through. Like the cost of school books, the cost of a communion. You see this programmes that demean it, but that’s there one special day. So it’s like a trap to be very honest [Pauline, grandmother, community activist, age 60+]

Women used the metaphor of the trap for their lives, they knew the issues, the injustices, the way they felt these impacted on those they loved, but they also felt caught in a class-gender-care trap at times.

Women as leaders
Although women were frustrated with the politics of their place and the ways in which they felt trapped, there was also a lot of discussion about women as leaders:

Women change things, women encourage men to step forward. I heard a great story on the radio about an aboriginal woman. She became one of the first women spokespersons for her community and every time she went back to her community she took a step back. Like the traditions they held dear, the men were the leaders etc. She made great changes. She was responsible for a referendum on aboriginal rights in Australia. I just thought that is what we need. We need men because power listens to men. They respect men whereas they do not respect women. We can encourage men to step forward. [Pauline, grandmother, community activist, age 60+]

And;

I think what happens is and I’m thinking it is very practical what we need to do. I think the best way is to have little think tanks, like what is going on here. We all have the same issues; it should be laid out in black and white. I don’t think you can have in this day and age, maybe when people are starving, we’ll
be on the streets but maybe until then we can do it in a practical way. [Laura, lone parent, age 30-40]

Along with a general discussion about women, there was a general discussion about care in the first learning circle when affective politics and relational justice was being raised by the researcher. Laura made the following points as she reflected on relational justice:

At the end of the day, it is women; even if a man stays at home it is still women that do the care.

I think yes care is a practical consideration. But at the moment there is a bigger picture that is affecting everybody. I mean we can’t, I can’t see the fight for the rights of lone parents when the Government is still implementing policies against them. We can start changing them rather than us. We need to have the power back ourselves.

The eldest woman in the first learning circle was more versed in her thoughts about the political dimension of love and care work but also referenced women and practical considerations rather than fully embracing the concept of relational justice:

I remember when I stood in elections, my mother who had been in politics for years, she used to say, enjoy your family. Everyone else is getting on with their families. I think the type of politics we have in Ireland today will never work for women. Little groups like this could work. We [need?] time to care. Caring is very important. [Pauline, grandmother, community activist, age 60+]

So, even though women were recognising their role as leaders, they were also framing this experience in terms of its opportunity costs, especially its care costs in terms of their families. They did not see the political institutions as changing to accommodate primary carers like themselves becoming leaders.

Over-emotional
It also seemed like participants equated affective with getting too emotional and some felt the aim was to avoid this:

We need to take the passion out of the fight against them. We need to get cold like them and be practical about it. Like it works for them. Like they are to
us. We don’t need to get on the streets. We don’t need all that time. We don’t have that time. [Laura, lone parent, age 30-40]

Take the emotion out of it. It doesn’t put the onus on any one person. Takes out the petty fighting and the power struggle. [Pauline, grandmother, community activist, age 60+]

Important systems for love and care
Both learning circles had consensus that there was a need to fight for affective institutions like the welfare system. In this way, they were supporting the concept of relational justice as the researcher had defined it. They were also agreeing that bringing love and care to a more political level would mean a different way of doing politics:

Society does need a safety net. It is all right for the banks to get it but not the people. Yeah, that is worth fighting for. [Clara, mother, age 20-30]

I think it could work for women as women are natural carers. They appreciate the effort and value that goes into care. Whereas men don’t feel like they have to. And within this system, it is not valued at all. [Laura, lone parent, age 30-40]

Look at childcare in this country. Look at what it presents for women. [Pauline, grandmother, community activist, age 60+]

The only time I witnessed women coming together was the rape case around Fiona. Unions don’t work, the idea is good but they only work as gatekeepers. Political parties have too many different things happening. I think change needs to start with a movement of women. Somewhere, where women can come, not excluding men but a place when people can gather. [Laura, lone parent, age 30-40]

I think just people sharing injustice and people can say this is what we have to put up with. I think men are too, they don’t feel like they have a right. If change happens, it is going to come from women. [Clara, mother, age 20-30]

Again, the older participant, Pauline, in the first learning circle, had a more detailed thought on a different way of doing politics:
Maybe there is another way we could do it. What’s our issue then girls? Everyone should be able to participate. It is not about being elected to the Dail but you need to have your voice heard. We have to value people, which is the bottom line.

I was in a union. But it is always the same. It is led and said by men. You have to be a particular type of woman to get through it. Women sacrifice a lot to get to the top. You ditch a lot of your feminine to get there. It is ruthless. I think many women are not willing to pay that price; the value of care and love and relationships. I think at the end of the day who do you have? And as things get harder, people will realise that more.

The role of relationships also came up in conversations about organising for change. This included reference to the role of parents but also wider relations between different classes:

A lot of women know what is going on and they are all feeling down but because we are so aware of our situation, we are able to talk about it. I’m sure if everyone had a mother or father like my mother then there would be change already. [Clara, mother, age 20-30]

And;

If you need to get anywhere you will always be around people who have money. If you want to succeed you have to learn how to get on with them. When we used to walk through estates when we were younger and the guards would pull up along you and say move along. We would want to fit but we didn’t. [Laura, lone parent, age 30-40]

8.4 Conclusion

The learning circle participants were in a position to pose more fundamental questions for the three concepts generated by the autoethnographic material and affirmed by the conversations with the interview participants. They were able to question the original ideas from the autoethnographic material. In this regard, the concepts were enriched from being discussed in the learning circles.
When the learning circle participants discussed affective resources, participants in both learning circles focused on maintaining the material as part of the discussion as they felt the turn to talking emotions or just love and care could undermine the real financial and material inequalities that they live with as poor working class women. It was clear that affective resources were also economic resources rather than stand-alone affective resources as originally theorised from the autoethnographic material and the interview conversations.

The idea of care consciousness was first generated by the autoethnographic material. The codes that triggered the concept of care consciousness as a substantive code were accounts of how inequality was lived in public in an unequal society yet experienced and fought relationally and privately in terms of loving and caring in unequal conditions.

Awareness of love and care was a central part of the conversations for the interviews so it became clear that women, living with economic inequality, were acutely aware, and well able to articulate the impact of inequality on love and care in their lives. However, the learning circle participants highlighted how this unavoidable reality of love and care in women’s lives does not necessarily mean that they will be political about the love and care; they could be (and were when the activists spoke about motivations for activism) more exercised about threats to their income from social protection or lack of employment. Politicising the love and care dimension of people’s lives so that this awareness of loving and caring in unequal conditions becomes a political consciousness was not easily identified from the learning circle discussions. There was no clear consensus as to how to politicise the contradictions between unequal economic conditions and trying to love and care for yourself and others. The participants talked more about the practicalities of trying to make love and care work political issues. They could not envisage care politics as a serious site of political action yet they, at the same time, saw merit in how love and care is political. For them raising this contradiction was an important part of trying to figure out how to make what matters most in their lives also matter politically. Their concerns were more around finding the time and place to do this type of politicising work. Overall, the learning circle participants did not know how to organise around the politics of love and care injustices. Not only did people not feel they had the
power, time and space to act, they also felt that they did not know how to operationalise care politics.

The findings here have highlighted the centrality of power inequalities in determining how unequal class positions impact on love and care in unequal societies. Power and powerlessness, and related emotions and states of vulnerability and insecurity, are key dimensions of organising for economic and affective equality. The hidden injustices of classed care generate unequal power relationships in people’s lives so that those living with poorer economic resources live with poorer affective resources, and in turn lack control over aspects of the love and care relations, practices and institutions in their lives. They lack the power to act due to time and resource constraints, and also due to lack of other forms of capital that one needs to be effective in politics. The discussions in the learning circles also drew attention to the importance of place in organising around classed love and care injustices. Love and care work is unavoidable in people’s lives. There is no leaving it as even when people are alone they are engage in love and care for their own person. So place and time are central to politicising love and care as people must be in a place that is accessible to being political and active and they must have time. People were tied to place in terms of the activism they talked about. They were tied to the local in political terms and this reflects their classed and gendered positioning. Their focus was on community politics at best; their lens was local and in this sense, without power. Their caring confined them to ‘small’ politics. They were also tied by time, the urgency, immediacy and inalienability of nurturing others to become human meant there was a lack of time to engage in a political system that did not recognise time and place constraints.

The learning circle discussions have built on and challenged the core concepts originally generated by the autoethnography and verified by the interview conversations. The challenge for the discussion chapters is to take these findings and fully develop the key concepts of hidden injustices of classed care; care consciousness and relational justice.
Chapter 9 Love denied: The hidden injustices of classed care

9.1 Introduction

This is the first of three discussion chapters. This chapter will utilise the findings from the autoethnographic material, the interviews and learning circles to make sense of how the relations, practices and institutions of love and care at a primary care level are impacted by unequal economic conditions.

In the autoethnographic chapter (chapter 6) the types of injustices that occur when trying to provide love and care in unequal conditions were presented; it was clear that when love labour takes place in unequal economic conditions, the result is classed care. This finding was further substantiated by the wider qualitative findings in chapters 7 and 8. It was the learning circle participants and interview participants that highlighted the need to define classed care as a core concept on a par with the core concept of hidden injustices. This chapter will develop these core ideas into a combined concept, the hidden injustices of classed care, by defining both of these terms more clearly, illustrating the dimensions of classed care and hidden injustices and how they can be analysed further. It will offer a framework for testing the wider concept of hidden injustices and thereby show that the hidden injustices of classed care are different from the economic, cultural or psycho-social frames used when discussing economic inequality.

9.2 Classed care

Whilst exploring inequality, in both the autoethnographic life narrative of the researcher and the participants’ lives, material inequalities were inseparable from affective injustices. Yet, we know that resources, fundamental for the production and maintenance of human life and development, become scarce resource in unequal economic conditions. So trying to provide and sustain love and care in unequal class systems should be central to social class analysis. Yet there is an assumption that the love and care lives of people will happen anyway and therefore it does not present as a justice issue when conceptualising the ills of unequal economic systems. The presumption is that people will ‘get by’ because they have no choice
but to do love and care daily. The way care and love work is a generative site of injustice in a classed system is overlooked, as economic inequality is not defined as having a relational dimension, and relational lives are not assumed to have a classed or racialized character.

Focusing on love and care at a primary care level in people’s lives has long been a feature of social work and the wider social sciences as they describe and manage inequality in society (Garrett, 2014); usually the parent is blamed, or held accountable individually for what is a classed condition. In terms of education, the focus has been on parenting skills or parental involvement in education. Power et al., (2003) has rightly identified this move to an affective analysis in education as one that, by focusing on emotional capital and parenting, serves a neoliberal agenda by placing the blame for social reproduction at the door of the private household with women, (mothers that is) being the culprits (Power et al., 2003). What needs to happen is the reverse; the focus must be placed on the unequal conditions that shape affective dispositions and issues of relational justice. Caring and loving in unequal economic societies means that love and care is classed in such a way that people endure injustices directly linked to providing and sustaining care in unequal conditions.

This thesis is proposing that we need to start exploring the relational injustices of caring in these unequal economic conditions. These injustices are the hidden injustices of classed care. Conceptualising economic inequality from the perspective of classed care means recognising the idea of relational justice and recontextualising economic resources as affective resources necessary to produce, preserve and repair people. It means reading economic inequalities through an affective lens, highlighting the way affective relations as a primary site of injustice through which economic injustices are filtered and which, in turn, create affective dispositions that are classed in care terms. When care is classed at a primary care level, it has two key dimensions, the first of which is how affective relations replace the primacy of economic relations and the second is how affective dispositions define how people view their world.
9.2.1 Relational lives

The empirical findings informing this thesis are closely aligned with the literature reviewed that placed an emphasis on care relations as central to people’s lives. Lisa Dodson’s empirical work on the lives of poorer women is complemented by the feminist theories that place care at the centre of social justice issues. Tronto’s work (1993; 2013) has drawn attention to whether the organisation of society is fair in the way some are privileged in the amount of care they receive while others do not get their basic needs met, so they aren’t sufficiently cared for. Tronto (2013: 126) maintains that:

for a society to be judged as a morally admirable society, it must, among other things, adequately provide for care of its members and its territory.

Although feminists (like Gilligan, 1982 and Okin, 1989) have also drawn attention to the ethics of care as a basis for justice in society, Tronto claims that they have failed to contextualise their ethics of care in the political context shaping their position. For Tronto (1993) and others like Federicia (2012) members of unprivileged groups such as the working classes and people of colour do disproportionate amounts of caring, a fact neglected in broader ethics of care debates (Gilligan 1982 and Noddings 1984).

The questions of equality in the affective field of care is then as much about class and ethnicity as it is about gender. But how can society ‘adequately provide for care for its members’ in the way that Tronto proposes? Moreover, how can society address the ethics of care and justice if this demands more than just gender equality and also means challenging inequality in class and ethnicity? This would mean going beyond ensuring equality in the doing and receiving of care work (Tronto, 2013) and requires a recontextualisation of how we view economic resources and commodities. If egalitarian social change has to encompass a focus on care, then egalitarian research and theorists need to show how care is intrinsically linked to justice and not just the good life.

Equally, theorists approaching inequality from an economic perspective have drawn attention to the need to embrace a more intersectional view of inequality and questions (Anthias, 2013) of justice, and Fraser (2005; 2009) has illustrated how justice is about issues of redistribution, recognition and representation. This more
nuanced view of economic inequality highlights how social systems intersect to generate and reinforce unequal structures. But how does this relate to the lived experience of economic inequality? What if this more nuanced view of inequality has neglected what matters most to people (Sayer, 2011) and neglected the core argument of Tronto’s work (2013) that care is fundamental to justice.

The empirical research for this thesis started with the premise that people are relational beings so the conversations and learning circles were centred on people as relational, rather than simply individuals. The intersection between the economic system and the care system formed a substantial part of the conversations for this thesis and, as chapter 7 has shown, the interview findings from these conversations mainly centred around discussions of care even though interviewees were being asked more generally to talk about their lives on low incomes.

9.2.2 Affective dispositions

The provision of love and care in unequal class systems, featuring in the lives of lower income women, played a powerful role in how they explained and ‘theorised’ inequality in their lives. It was clear that when people live with economic inequality, the love and care in their lives became classed too and it is classed in a way that generates inequalities. The findings confirm Bourdieu’s work on habitus (1977, 1990) showing people come to know the world through the structures that impact on their lives. Habitus is a relational concept and “expresses first the result of an organizing action, with a meaning close to that of words such as structure; it also designates a way of being, a habitual state (especially of the body) and, in particular, a predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination” (Bourdieu, 1977: 214). For Bourdieu habitus exists as a kind of practical logic or a ‘feel for the game’ and when someone is secure in a social situation “he feels at home in the world because the world is also in him, in the form of habitus” (Bourdieu, 2000: 143). When this is applied to love labouring at a primary care level, it highlights the way the hidden injustices of classed care, impact on our dispositions, in terms of how we feel, how we express what we feel or are able to express feelings relationally. These affective dispositions are the feelings that are engendered in classed structures of love and care.
People cannot delay love and care or put it to one side until they are no longer poor; they must continue to provide and sustain love and care no matter how unequal their economic conditions. For this reason, the inequalities in their love and care lives are often ignored when the focus is on positional goods like education or housing. The resource of love and care, needed to sustain and develop other people, suffers when operating in a classed care system.

My own life-history narrated in the autoethnographic data and the wider field research illustrated, time and time again, the pivotal role of care institutions and care relations in experiences of economic inequality. The experiences of inequality that those interviewed spoke of, the stories that they told, and the ways in which they generally discussed living in an unequal economic system, time and time again, referenced the institutions, relations and practices of care. For example, when they spoke of wanting to buy a new uniform for school so their kids didn’t feel left out with used ones; when they talked about how the lady in the welfare office spoke to them; and when they talked about why they wanted their children to do well at school, these were all references to how they struggle and survive in a deeply class-divided society and yet they were all references to the institutions, relations and practices of love labour.

Both my own ethnography and that of interviewees, showed how resource and class inequalities are mediated through the practices of love and care work. It is in affective dispositioning that classed care inequalities are felt.

9.3 Hidden injustices

The findings in this research have shown how economic resources are translated into affective resources which are hidden when relational justice is theorised within a redistribution, recognition and representation frame.

As Bourdieu (1999: 4) noted:

> Using material poverty as the sole measure of all suffering keeps us from seeing and understanding a whole side of the suffering characteristic of the social order.
Thus, exposing the hidden injustices of the economic system in people’s lives is not a new approach in theorising inequality. In care terms, this concept of hidden has been well-utilised in theorising inequality. Folbre (2001) likens the invisible heart as counter-posed to the invisible hand of competition and self-interest. Hochschild has used the term the second shift (2003) and Green (2013) the unspoken shift.

The ability to provide or receive love and care in an unequal economic system is inseparable from the availability of resources to make this possible. Shelter, food and water become affective resources and the equal distribution and receipt of these resources becomes a question of affective equality as much as economic equality. The findings in this research have shown most of all how resource and class inequalities are inseparable from relational injustices and vice versa. The hidden injustices of care are not confined to the unequal distribution of care resources but are also experienced as the emotional and psychic injustices of care, experienced by social groups trying to produce, reproduce and sustain individual humans and collective human society, in unequal economic conditions.

Despite the damage of doing classed care work, people continue to do love labour in unequal conditions. They continue to care for themselves, their children, sick family members and ageing family members despite a lack of resources in terms of money, food, housing, health and time. Because of the imminence and urgency of love and care work, there is no choice but to provide and sustain love in spite of inequality. Yet, all the while, on a daily basis, they experience the damage this does to their relationships with others and the damage this does to their own mental health and well-being. They experience how a lack of resources impedes their capacity to provide what they view as important to caring for children or significant others in their lives. This affective dilemma is a lived reality for a mother that wants her children to ‘succeed’ in education yet struggles to find money year-on-year to afford basics like books and weekly lunches. It is a key dimension of the hidden injustices of classed care as is damage to relationships with others and oneself.

These hidden injustices of classed care must be properly understood and theorised. The remaining part of this chapter attempts to present key dimensions of these hidden injustices using the data from the three findings chapters, which include the autoethnographic material, the interview conversations and the learning circles.
9.3.1 Scarce resources and injustice

In *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (Sennett and Cobb, 1993 (originally pub. 1972), the authors investigated the subjective experience of working-class life in the US in the 1970s, concluding that the workers they interviewed experienced a sense of the indignity attendant upon their social status. More recently Sennett (2003) has explored the relationship between respect and inequality and the way in which welfare clients are denied both respect from others as well as self-respect. Yet, Sennett and Cobb’s observations, as with those of Sayer, Skeggs and Reay, by pointing to the emotional dimensions of classed lives, can also inform ways of understanding the affective inequalities in the lives of poorer people. As noted above from the discussion of caring in unequal societies, when care is classed, inequality is experienced through people’s relational lives and their affective dispositions are shaped by unequal conditions. The hidden injustices that arise from this classed care are defined by two key dimensions, that of scarce resources to do love labour and the lack of affective control that arises from doing love labour in unequal conditions.

9.3.2 Emotional damage

Sennett and Cobb (1972) widened class analysis to include a focus on cultural inequalities. Their work gave attention to the fact that some of the inequalities associated with economic inequality are more adequately analysed using the cultural system. In much the same way, this research is arguing that the love and care inequalities experienced in an unequal economic society cannot be understood without an analysis of the affective system. Social class inequalities are lived out affectively in love and care relations in ways that frame relations, choices, actions and practices. Class inequality is affectively experienced, and affective relations are always classed (and raced and ethnicised) and gendered in form.

When love and care work at a primary care level is shaped by a classed system, the injustices are more difficult to categorise as economic inequalities, and yet they are shaped and generated by an unequal economic system like any other economic inequality. The response to love and care inequalities at this level is usually welfare and social care services and supports rather than the need for more economic equality. Yet they are questions of relational justice and resource inequalities.
generated by the intersection of care and class in society. The findings for this thesis have shown how food, housing, money and time are critical resources to provide and sustain love and care at a primary care level for children and other family members. All of these resources are scarce for poorer people in unequal economic systems. When these resources are scarce and unequal, the capacity to sustain love labour is denied and damage amounts on an individual level through people’s relationships with themselves and damage is done to relationships with significant others in their lives. This is hidden from public attention as it is lived emotionally and privately; it is concealed publicly as it is a source of shame and guilt. It only becomes visible when people are invited to talk about the impact of inequality in a relational way that sees individuals living in relationships with themselves and others at all times.

Emotional damage to self and others

The move within class analysis to incorporate emotions is captured by researchers like Diane Reay (2005: 913) who refer to the emotional landscape of class as the psychic economy, and Sayer (2005) who highlights how emotional responses to class in the UK are directly related to the moral judgements that class elicits. The findings in this thesis affirm what Reay and Sayer have found, but instead of an economic or cultural context, the emotional harms of class featured in this research as relational harms associated with the love and care in people’s lives.

Casey (2008) has argued that it is important to explore the emotional consequences of capitalism, the impact on everyday life in terms of, for example, pleasure, daydream, guilt, anxiety, happiness, melancholy, and so on. Hochschild’s work (1983; 2003; 2012) also conceptualises the ills of capitalism from the perspective of the emotional impact. The focus on shame for Sennett and Cobb (1972) with regard to working men also presented for Darab and Hartman (2011: 788) in their research with welfare recipients:

One striking aspect of the research was that in the realm of emotional effects, the overwhelming majority of the participants who were subject to the welfare reforms (also known in the literature as workfare) evinced a sense of shame, which was not common for the participants in employment. Because this is an emotion not normally visible in everyday life it constitutes a psychic wound,
which we coded as Injured Dignity. What emerges as pivotal is the way in which workfare recipients are constructed as dependants, in a society which privileges independence and ignores the crucial fact of our mutual interdependency.

In this thesis, shame, guilt and judgement also came up but they were raised in the context of the research participant’s relationship with themselves and others, in the form of the shame of being a lone parent or the guilt of not being able to do more for one’s children. Shame, in this research, was a relational and affectively-driven feeling intersecting with status rather than a purely status-related emotion. The autoethnographic material has shown how the shame and hurt felt by the researcher’s father from his classed position was carried into self-hate, depression and bad mental health. But it was more than just his classed position as his identity as a father mattered in how he interpreted status. This was also shown in the interview conversations where women talked about post-natal depression and the links to feeling down about trying to keep well, to hide one’s depression so as to be able to rear a child on a low-income.

The research participants also spoke of judgment. As Skeggs argues, ‘[t]he working class are never free from the judgements of imaginary and real others that position them, not just as different, but as inferior, as inadequate’ (1997: 90). The findings in this thesis show how poorer people theorise that material goods can send out a public message about how much you care about your children. Their private world of love and care, although valued by them, can only gain value in a public sphere if they can show others, those judging them, that they can care adequately for their families. Loveday (2015) carried out empirical research with participants from working-class backgrounds studying and working in higher education in England. Her work utilised what she described as the ‘affective practice’ of judgement to look at shame and the embodiment of deficiency in working class lives. Her focus on judgement as affective practice has been verified in the narratives in this research.

Wetherell (2012, 2014) also writes of judgement as an affective practice. This is useful for understanding the affective system as one of the reasons for conceptualising shame as the product of ‘affective practice’ is to think relationally, whilst avoiding imagining that shame permanently resides within bodies (even if this
is how they are sometimes felt). Wetherell’s (2012, 2014) notion of ‘affective practice’ is helpful also as it allows for consideration of what affects such as shame do (Ahmed, 2004: 4).

Thus, having the right clothes or saving for special occasions or expensive Christmas presents were presented as sacrifices that tell others that they care for their families. But the sacrifice and cognitive and emotional rationale for these actions are presented by the media and viewed by the ‘others’ as a deficit rather than a strength.

Overall, the emotional dimensions of classed care such as shame, judgment and other emotions like hurt, sadness or loss can be theorised here not as an intersection between culture and economics but the intersection between the affective and the material. The hidden anxiety that Sennett and Cobb noted in their research (ibid: 33) is very much present in the affective practice of judgement that participants in this research referred to. The status, when love and care is at stake, is the status as a ‘good parent’. Sacrificing for Christmas was done to ensure that people’s children were happy and that they were seen as good parents. It was about proving to others that they cared even though they obviously know they love and care every day. What was hidden in why they undertook this sacrifice was the way it was driven by the love and care dimension in their lives.

9.3.3 Public performance and private pain
The autoethnographic narrative, the interviews and learning circle participants all discussed how people perform in a class divided society. The narratives told stories of how people struggled at an individual and private level and yet how they kept going and ‘kept face’ amidst that struggle. The idea of sacrifice also presented in the conversations and the learning circles.

This concept of public performance and private pain had a strong presence in the autoethnographic material. An interesting paper by Dicks (2008) draws attention to the notion of performance and class. Dicks (2008: 440) concludes that the men in his research negotiated a continual equivocation between foregrounding dignity and autonomy on the one hand, and acknowledging subjugation and defeat on the other. So on the outside, they performed and on the inside they had a feeling of failure.

Dicks (2008), in researching retired miners who now serve as tour guides for the
mines, maintains that this performance and contradictory emotional state has always been part of the miner’s life, even as a miner. The union pride, for Dicks (2008) is juxtaposed against the miners’ drinking and running away from their miseries. Dicks (ibid: 440) states:

*Though in very different ways and under different conditions, both the mine-worker and the tour guide have to negotiate the hidden injustices of class, and in the person of the ex-miner tour guide they come together. My analysis has shown how the resulting ambivalence is registered in the live performances actually produced.*

The public performance and private pain is a part of what this thesis proposes as the hidden injustices of care. The emotional and private life of the person is hidden from the public perception of class identity and class positioning. Throughout the autoethnographic narrative, pride on behalf of my mother was one of her strongest traits but she was a broken person beneath that outward strength. The strength was needed as an affective resource to keep herself going and to maintain her family, but her psychic health and her mental health were not left untouched. This tells us that those most proud on the ‘outside’ may be scarred and hurt ‘inside’ in ways that nothing, not even class mobility or wider egalitarian social change, can heal. The discussions around depression and mental health in the interviews and learning circles highlighted the negative impact on individuals. The damage is done to the individual already from the unequal structures they have navigated all their lives, the task then is to change those structures at a societal level and collective level and protect against these hidden injustices for future generations.

**9.3.4 Affective control**

The way in which economic resources controlled the practice of love and care in the lives of poorer people resonates with the dimension of class used by Sennett and Cobb who described class as a system for limiting freedom (ibid: 28). And just as Sennett and Cobb discovered something hidden was at work in a class system that injures dignity even when people seem to be ‘doing well’ (ibid: 33), this thesis has discovered something hidden at work when people hold themselves responsible to provide and sustain love and care with unequal resources. They want their children
and loved ones to do just as well as others in society yet they do not have the same resources to make this happen. This hidden anxiety is presented in this thesis as a key dimension of the hidden injustices of classed care. It includes the damage done to people’s daily existence and to people’s futures.

A lack of resources means that people’s care is controlled, through a lack of housing or a lack of money to provide essential goods, people are restricted in how they care and what they care about so a family with limited resources may have to limit hopes or dreams for their children and focus instead on survival. Finally, people are controlled in terms of when they care because a lack of money, food, education, housing, and other vital resources for love labour can mean that a person has no choice but to care. They can not afford to pay for help with care work and lack of education and employment options can mean love labour is the only form of labour they do.

Beyond our control

Although Sennett and Cobb have drawn attention to the emotional aspects of inequality in terms of economic relations, this has only been interpreted as the control over economic and cultural production of goods and status and not theorised as a control over the relational lives of poorer and working class people. The limit to freedom that unequal economic conditions impose, when we view people relationally, involve putting limits on the relations, practices and institutions of love and care in people’s lives. The research participants and the autoethnographic material all pointed to outside forces, beyond people’s power or control, which impacted on the love and care aspects of their lives.

Hochschild (2007) has observed how the demands of the economy have placed care in a serious “time bind” and this is true for all social classes. Juliet Schor has explored why Americans work so excessively and discovered that parents are so concerned to have money to spend on the “right” toys, vacations, and experiences for their children that they spend too much time working (Schor 1992; Schor and Thompson 2014). In ways, the research by Schor sheds some light on how consumption, even for higher income groups, is linked to the affective system in people’s lives. The hidden injustices of care, if explored with the more powerful in society, could illuminate the ways in which unequal economic systems, impact
negatively even on those more powerful in material terms. For now, the focus here is the impact on poorer people and the controls on the where, who, what, why and when of love labour when resources are scarce and unequal.

Limits to where, when and how love labour occurs
The limits to where and how we do love labour in unequal conditions is a central part of affective control. Housing was a resource that came up numerous times in the autoethnographic material and the wider interview conversations and learning circle discussions. Participants were clear that the lack of secure housing makes providing for children and other family members, a difficult task. Having a home, or a place to do the daily work of providing care for children, sick relatives and ageing relatives, was a central resource for the participants in this research. Not having a home, then, was presented as a core emotional and material inequality. This control over where love labour occurs when housing is scarce, therefore, has an immediate impact, which is felt and lived daily by those trying to sustain love labour without a secure place. Yet, this insecurity is only visible if someone is homeless. It is much harder to measure the other aspects of insecure housing that we cannot see. What is often invisible is conflict with other family members if living in an over-crowded family home; the impact of having no choice but to live with people who negatively hurt or injure a person; the impact of travelling long distances to family or schools when housed away from support networks; or the impact of moving home each time rents are raised if living in rented accommodation.

Just like housing, money, when lacking, can have many hidden injustices for those trying to provide and sustain love labour. Consumption, especially in highly unequal societies where some social groups can spend a lot, plays a huge part in the lived inequality for poorer people. In such unequal conditions, people make sense of poorer people’s consumption habits as deficits rather than seeing them as part of an attempt to provide love and care in unequal conditions (Casey and Martens, 2007). Casey (2010: 238) shows that distinction is a key feature of class struggle, and that cultural change, such as the mass availability of affordable consumer goods, and the responses of middle classes to these, offers an example of the real, physical, often painful and humiliating experience of class.
Consumption is one means through which working-class people can seek to prove their respectability and express dignity via the purchase and display of consumer goods. Yet as Casey (ibid: 237) observes for working class people, the right to ownership of culturally valuable goods is never taken for granted. A limited budget means locating affordable consumer goods while maintaining a balance between acquiring goods that equip the self with value and status and putting the finances or the safety of the family at risk. Casey (ibid: 237) maintains that:

Working-class people are routinely denied the means through which they can become respectable, whether it is through unemployment, poor wages, inadequate housing or, as this article considers, through access to consumer goods that equip the self with value and status. Thus, a key part of the everyday operation of class lies in the daily struggle to attain ‘respectability’ (Skeggs, 1997) or ‘dignity’ (Sennett and Cobb, 1972: 191). Ways of gaining this might include gambling and purchasing goods at Ikea.

Indeed, in the context of care, this research has shown how consumption is part of a public performance for poorer people. The emotional pleasures of purchasing may also be present but the participants in this research were keener to observe the functional role of purchasing for public messages and for getting personal satisfaction in knowing that they were providing adequate resources for their families to survive in unequal conditions. They wanted their children to have what other children have, not because they value the commodities in and of themselves, but because the commodities have a relational value and it says to their children and to the ‘others judging’ that they care. This shows the power of capitalism and consumerism over people’s relational lives as they are forced to purchase when their material conditions make that purchase difficult.

For Casey (2010) consumption also needs to be understood in a relational framework and she suggests making sense of working class consumption by returning to Sayer’s account of the ‘struggles of the social field’ (2005: 96). She discusses how Sayer advocates a move away from discussions of struggles on a macro, political scale and towards an exploration of struggle on a more micro and everyday level. Sayer states:
The struggles and competitions are not only against others but for certain “goods” – by which I mean not just commodities, or indeed recognition, but valued circumstances, practices, relationships and ways of life (2005: 96).

Whereas, Casey (2010) argues that the consumer behaviour of working class people represents a symbolic, informal struggle, as well as a more formal competition for consumer goods, the narratives in this research present consumption as part of a wider affective system in the lives of poor people. So when the discussion turned to purchasing, it was about purchasing for others. Purchasing was about trying to survive in unequal conditions and ensure that loved ones have access to the same resources as others even if that requires sacrifice. It was a relationally-led consumption, not just individual status-led consumption, a consumption that was a sign of love and care. Yes, it involved status and dignity attainment, but it was also a way of showing love and protection from scorn and stigma.

Most notable about how resources impact on love labour is the lack of choice available to people to leave this labour. Even if a person does leave a family or refuses to care, someone else has to do that care or love labour. There is no way that a new-born can be left uncared for or an ageing and frail parent left unwashed. People have no control over when love labour occurs because love labour is always part of their lived experiences. Care circuits, areas of connection to others etched into people’s minds, are the way in which people manage and conduct love labour. Without these circuits, they cannot do love labour. This circuit is a way of navigating the care world and a way of ensuring human survival. Yet when this care circuit is compromised or made more difficult by a lack of resources, people experience the emotional and physical damage of trying to manage the two. Love labour is not an option in unequal conditions; it is a necessary labour that demands attention at all times even if that is care for oneself in terms of sleeping and eating.

Limits on the why and what of love labour
People provide and sustain love and care at a primary care level to ensure that children survive into adulthood and develop cognitively and emotionally and to ensure that other family members have the care they need to survive illness or ageing. But people also have other hopes or objectives like ensuring their child goes to college or ensuring their mother or father has dignity in older age or when dying.
When resources are limited, people have less control over these wider hopes and objectives around why they care and what they care about. For some, caring about a child’s education may be beyond the confines of their resources and facing that reality can mean people give up that hope and live with the reality they face daily of getting children to and from school, clean and fed and with a safe home. Luxuries, like college, may be optional extras that some carers cannot contemplate; not because they do not value education but because they have no control over ensuring their child can access further education.

This means that vulnerability and insecurity are linked to a lack of resources and a lack of control over aspects on one’s life like ensuring children can access education. One story in this research revolved around the guilt a mother felt for not having money to pay for college registration and so her son may not continue with the course. She was confident that she had reared him well and he valued education but she had no control over money or the education system that now seemed to be posing a barrier to his participation in education. Being caught in a trap was a recurrent theme in the research and this sense of vulnerability is very much associated with a lack of control.

Curtailing hopes and dreams is related to a person’s future. However, limited affective resources also limits how a person engages with life daily. Money limits people’s access to extracurricular activities so a mother may not have a child in clubs, not because she does not value nurturing other skills in her child but because she has no money for extra activities. The women in this research were aware that this limited their children’s life experiences and access to new skills but they were also aware that this was just reality and they had to accept it. They cut the cloth to fit their care in a way that ensured they could do the love labour necessary to provide and sustain their children and others in their family; beyond that they had no control. So a very real part of affective control, for the participants in this research, is the control and limits placed on people’s daily and future lives by material inequalities when they intersect with love and care in people’s lives.

*Affective institutions and regulations*

So far, the discussion of affective control has examined how limited resources limit love labour. This has mainly included reference to people’s relationships with
themselves and others. Yet, the affective system in society also includes affective institutions and regulations that play a major part in controlling love labour in people’s lives.

The relationship with wider institutions of care in society can be positive relations and or negative relations for poorer people. When these relations are positive, they can serve to offset the hidden injustices of care. The family is a key institution in the affective system where love labour occurs. For example, nurturing capital within the family can protect against a lack of resources to care by ensuring that a young person still receives love and care even if food and shelter is scarce. But when these relations are negative, they further generate and reproduce the hidden injustices of care. Some of the women spoke of abusive relationships and broken relationships and their stories have shown that the love and care in their lives served to undermine them as people and to reinforce, at a private level, the shame and hurt that they felt at a public level. This time instead of being judged or hurt by others in society, the women spoke of being judged by their partners or siblings or parents. Regardless of whether the pain was from other social groups or significant others in a person’s life, the importance of relationships with oneself, others and institutions is central to the hidden injustices of classed care.

In both the autoethnographic narrative and the wider qualitative data, this thesis has shown how the State, the law and other institutions impact negatively on the lives of poorer people. The welfare system, although designed to support affective relations, also seems to play a role in generating ‘welfare traps’ and impacting negatively on the emotional and material lives of those dependent on welfare for long periods of time. The classed regulations, that underpin the law and the welfare system, particularly those that deem the lives of poorer people as deficient or in need of surveillance, play a central role in the hidden injustices of class. For the participants in this research, and from the autoethnographic material, it was evident that regulations around accessing social housing supports or social protection payments impacted on people negatively. This was shown in the narratives about shame when dealing with statutory and regulatory bodies, a feeling of being under surveillance and suspicion when dealing with State institutions, and being governed by
institutions like the law that did not take account of the particularities of classed inequalities in caring.

Affective institutions themselves, such as the family, were also shown to structure the lives of poorer people in negative ways when there was too much poverty and too much pressure for a nuclear family to carry. When the affective institutions like that of the family and social protection intersect, the data showed there was a negative consequence for poorer people. This is particularly true for lone parents involved in the research, but was also a strong dimension in the autoethnographic narrative. This was specifically evidenced in the narrative of the lone parent activist involved in a long campaign to have changes to lone parent payments stopped. Her understanding and insight illustrated how regulations regarding social protection can impact negatively on the material and affective aspects of people’s lives.

The role of classed institutions in generating the emotional pain, considered above as part of the hidden injustices of classed care, is highlighted in the autoethnographic data that refers to social mobility. This has also been captured in other research and Lehmann (2014: 2) claims that as working-class students begin to develop a middle-class habitus in higher education, they do not simply shed their working-class identity. Instead, the students often need to come to terms with deteriorating relationships with family and peers at home, just as they develop new forms of cultural and social capital at university: when children move on in class terms, distances and dissonances can be created within families. The emotional interactions between parents and children when children mobilise into higher education is not treated as an equality issue, and yet the middle class institution, that is higher education, plays a role in generating conflict and pain in families that does not need to be there if the institution was not a classed place encouraging distancing from one’s class of origin and developing a new middle class persona. The positioning of individuals within classed societies means that they do not always relate as individuals, just as Bourdieu and Passeron showed (1990). Instead, they relate through structured positionality and this is particularly important when looking at institutions that structure love and care in people’s lives.

Sennett and Cobb (1972) have referred to social mobility out of one’s class as a form of power that has the potential, whether intended or not, to make others feel
inadequate. Speaking of one of their Bostonian working-class subjects who sent his children to university, the authors conclude that he is “seeing his boys move up, fulfilling their part of the contract he has imposed on them, by staying in school. But this means they will now have power over him, will be able to ‘pull rank’ on him. . . . Indeed, if the father’s sacrifices do succeed in transforming his children’s lives, he then becomes a burden to them, an embarrassment” (Sennett and Cobb 1972:133). This affective system in people’s lived experiences of social class inequality is not always something within their immediate control as it is also structurally controlled by classed institutions, relations and regulations.

*Relational justice*

Injustice is not always visible. Trying to sustain love labour at a primary care level means people who are poor are often strained, tired, living hand to mouth on basic incomes, living with debt, living with a lack of choice and living with no hope of change. Sometimes the impact from these injustices are hidden from public view because the impact is relational, affecting relationships with oneself and with significant others.

Class theorists have widened understandings of how social class is generated and reproduced and have begun to focus on normative and emotional aspects of class relations in particular. Sayer’s work on the moral normative of class experience insists on exploring what matters to people about class and what aspects of class are important to the maintenance of identity and self (2005: 2). Like Skeggs (2005), Sayer maintains that people struggle for goods and for things that are deemed to be worthwhile, and over the definition of what is valuable and worthwhile (2005: 3). Sayer points out that sociology is very good at identifying social ‘problems’, but less good at exploring why things really matter to individuals and, indeed, what the nature of those subjective and complex effects is on an individual’s feelings and emotions and how these might impact upon behaviour and experience (2005: 9).

In this thesis, the provision and maintenance of love and care were found to be central to how people live with inequality. Exploring this relational aspect of people’s lives shows how affective resource inequalities impact on their lives more profoundly than what are typically researched as economic inequalities.
Sayer and Skeggs are drawing attention to an alternative role played by resources in people’s lives. They have moved the discussion of resource inequality to one that acknowledges emotions and identity formation for people and how these are intrinsically interwoven with discussions of economic inequality and redistribution and social class formation and reproduction. Their analysis opens the ground to further recontextualise resources in class-divided societies. The concept of hidden injustices of classed care builds on the opening that these theorists have made. It highlights the impact of classed injustices at the relational levels in loving and caring and how our affective dispositions, arising from these injustices, is primarily how we experience inequality. While Skeggs and Sayer have shown how the status impact of classed injustices have an emotional dimension, this research shows how social class impacts on caring and loving, on the emotional, mental, physical, social and psychological aspects of love and care work. Moreover, what love and care means is shaped through a class lens.

9.4 Conclusion

Lisa Dodson (2009) uses empirical evidence to show how poorer women sustain their families with wholly inadequate earnings and how they balance the demands of the workplace while attending to complex and unpredictable family needs. Her work draws attention to the reality that care work cannot be avoided in the narrative of poorer women. This thesis builds on findings like those of Dodson by showing how the care and class narrative in poorer women’s lives is shaped by an unequal society, thereby becoming classed care.

Wendy Holloway (2006) argues that care is the psychological equivalent to our need to breathe unpolluted air. This thesis has shown that the unequal economic system in society intersects with the affective system to generate and reproduce hidden injustices of classed care. These injustices are material, physical and emotional. The injustices associated with caring in unequal societies are therefore issues of relational justice. They are generated by the intersection of classed and affective relations between individuals and social groups and by the interaction of classed institutions, and regulations, and affective institutions.
When love labour is carried out in unequal economic conditions then classed care means people develop affective dispositions shaped by these hidden injustices. There are many dimensions to the hidden injustices of classed care including how people interpret inequality through their relations with self, family, friends, neighbours and other classes; there is the impact of resource inequalities on love labour and on relationships with oneself and others; there is the emotional elements of loving and caring with inequality in your life; and there is the public and private face of living with inequality and the sacrifice that comes with that public/private interface.

It is known that powerful groups in society control not only the means of production, but they also dominate the cultural meanings and messages in society. Through these intersecting forms of control, as the hidden injustices of classed care show, they also control the conditions in which people provide and sustain love labour. The hidden injustices of classed care that poorer people experience, and the unequal share of affective resources held by powerful groups mediated through material, political and cultural power, gives them this affective power over other poorer social groups. A person’s freedom is limited by the imminence of love labour and relational power is the control of the conditions and resources to produce and sustain love labour in unequal societies.

The participants in this research, as the findings show, presented their experiences of inequality through their love labour relations. Their way of knowing the world was shaped by the injustices that occurred to themselves and others for whom they loved. The hidden injustices of classed care, therefore, are about issues of relational justice when resource inequalities impact on affective dispositions, which arise from love labouring with scarce resources.
Chapter 10: Care consciousness: making the practical political

10.1 Introduction

The concept of hidden injustices of classed care discussed in the previous chapter is premised on the idea that people experience social class inequality through the injustices that economic inequality imposes on their love and care relations with themselves and others in their lives. People’s consciousness, what this thesis calls care consciousness, around inequality and love and care in their lives, has also been a core concept in the autoethnographic data and wider findings. This chapter will outline the concept of care consciousness by defining the key dimensions of care consciousness, and by examining ways in which care consciousness can aid or obstruct people’s engagement in action for egalitarian social change.

10.2 Class positioning and affective dispositions

The empirical data has generated concepts and related theoretical memos that refer to how care consciousness is framed by people’s relational lives with themselves and others and the affective dispositions that arise from doing this caring in unequal conditions. The affective disposition from doing love labour (Lynch, 1989) in unequal economic conditions is evidenced in how the research participants manage and survive inequality in the interests of providing and sustaining a specific form of care work, that of love labour, for children and wider family members. So the stories in this thesis, including the autoethnographic narrative, show how people ‘get on with life’ in the face of injustice even if they find that injustice intolerable and wrong.

To some degree, when faced with doing love labour on a low income, there is no choice but to ‘get on with life’ because love labour cannot be put to one side unless, for a limited time, wider family or the State take on that labour in your absence. Even if people get a break from love labour for a limited time, people are emotionally connected to love labour and the care map is nearly always in their mind. People are also, at all times, involved in self-care and, even in the absence of caring for others, their mind is tending to their own emotional and physical needs. So, love and care labour, whether we like it or not, is forced upon us by virtue of our need for emotional, physical and cognitive production, maintenance, development and repair.
This production, maintenance, development and repair of the emotional, physical and cognitive capacities of human beings is carried out, for the most part, by women. As we have learned earlier in this thesis, when carried out at a primary care level for children, close friends, neighbours and other family members, this care work is aptly called love labour given the unique levels of emotional connection, mutuality and high dependency at certain stages that define care work at this level. The hidden injustices explored in the previous chapter give some insight into how the women engaged in this research were impacted by doing love labour in unequal conditions, but their narratives are also insightful for what they tell about how people accept unequal economic conditions even when they are contrary to their interests.

As the literature review in chapter 4 showed, making sense of why people accept and reproduce unequal structures has been a core question for emancipatory theory, and has been a core aspect of concepts such as false consciousness and hegemony (Langman, 2015: 467). As the review of social movement theory showed, not enough is known about how egalitarian-led change takes place, and what forms of resistance to inequality exists outside of organised movements. Not enough focus in research has been placed on how poor people find the will to struggle and fight outside of the paid labour context when they face forces more powerful than themselves. How do they fight when their social identity is not easily framed or supported by their labour market status but is more meaningfully and intrinsically linked to those for whom they care and love? In actual fact, many struggle and survive poverty and inequality without direct links to the kinds of organisations described by Marxist (Dworkin, 2007) or Social Movement Theorists (Kaufman, 2003). Their survival is not individual, as interdependent beings, their survival is relational and connected to the significant others that make-up their love and care relations. Yet this relationality and other-centredness that dictates a sizeable amount of actions and concerns at a subaltern level is not integrated into theories for understanding the reproduction of unequal societies or the challenge to such unequal societies. When affective dispositions and people’s relational lives, at a love and care level, are peripheralised in ideas about social change or by organisers for social change, we fail to capture the ways in which love labour can impede or support egalitarian social change.
The autoethnographic data and the wider findings in this research, by focusing on people’s relational lives and affective dispositions, have sought to address this gap in ideas about social change. Because, the narratives that tell us about hidden injustices also tell us about the ways in which people negotiate unequal structures in their lives, this has salience for understanding social class inequality and egalitarian social change. Hochschild also pointed to the potential of private, emotional experiences. In *The Outsourced Self* (2012), Hochschild describes a large and well-occupied space for resistance. Adapting Freud’s notion of “mechanisms of defense” she describes the various semiconscious means through which individuals work to keep personal life personal. People, at all times, are conscious of love and care work and this consciousness must be integrated into ideas and actions for social change. This thesis has named this awareness and action on love and care work in people’s lives as care consciousness. It is also showing how people’s positioning as carers and dispositions when that care is in unequal conditions combine to inform people’s care consciousness.

### 10.3 Making the practical political

But how can we bring care consciousness from a practical awareness of the demands and doing of love and care work to a political awareness of the need for equal conditions to provide and sustain this labour? That task is not just a consciousness-raising exercise as people are acutely aware of the inequalities associated with loving and caring in unequal conditions and the contradictions that arise. Instead the task of making care consciousness more political is also a very practical task. The everyday practice of love and care work, the imminence, the unavoidable necessity and the dependency that define that work, pose serious challenges for mobilisation and organisation against the hidden injustices of love and care work in unequal conditions.

Bringing awareness on a personal level to consciousness and action at a collective level is a process that requires energy, time, availability and interest. The activists that participated in this research spoke about activism in the context of challenging inequality. Their narratives also included stories of love and care, and in most cases their activism was narrated in tandem with stories of love and care injustices. Yet the
response of activists in the learning circles to the researcher’s suggestion about relational justice and the need to demand economic inequality in the name of love and care equality, reflected a deep ambivalence about talking about love and care at that public level and in a way that highlighted these hidden injustices. This raises issues for bringing care consciousness from a personal to a political level as there is a sense, from the research, that people prefer some injustices to remain hidden from the class gaze. As much as people were forthright in the research about the ills of living with economic inequality, there was a sense that the relational hurt, imposed on themselves and others they love and care about, were not for public knowledge. Love politics were not defined as public politics. They were hidden and endured, silenced not only through exhaustion but also as they were defined as private matters, too personal to be political.

What presented as a seemingly straight-forward task from the autoethnographic material around trying to tease out the awareness of love and care inequality from economic inequality and make this awareness more political so that people could act on it, has become a more nuanced challenge as the other research participants presented more obstacles than aids for this task. The concept of care consciousness has come to represent both what could be the very thing that mobilises people for egalitarian change but also the very thing that holds them back. It has a dual purpose of explaining the reproduction of unequal societies whilst also offering insight into why people mobilise for certain forms of equality and not others.

10.4 Consciousness and everyday survival

The learning from this thesis is that care consciousness is part of everyday survival for people and the significant others that they care for daily. The planning and management of care, through care maps in our minds, and the doing of care in the form of self-care for oneself and love labour for children and other family members is a daily, unavoidable part of people’s lives. Some aspects of this work are inherent, like the need to feed small children or feelings of protection towards infants, and our bodies and minds are hard wired for this care and other aspects are learned and structured by the societies in which we live. Affective dispositions, in unequal societies, mean that people experience and come to know the world through feelings that are engendered in class structures of love and care. Part of that knowing, from
this research, is just getting on with living and getting the job of love labour done. The demands of love labour on time; on emotional, physical and cognitive capacities; and on presence, means that care consciousness dominates much of the daily work of those tasked with the production, maintenance, development and repair of other people in society. This work is completed mainly by women. In unequal societies, when this is done in unequal conditions, it is mainly poor women and they learn to do this work even if the conditions in which they do so impact adversely on the goals of that labour.

10.4.1 The process – problems of contradiction

So the learning from this thesis has reinforced the idea that moving from practical to political care consciousness is a process. It is not something that can be taught or learned. As much as the participants in the interviews drew on their life experiences to show an acute awareness of the difficulties of love labour in unequal conditions, the task of connecting this to a wider analysis of how the economic system undermines love labour required more discussion. The words and the stories existed in the life narratives of the interview participants in terms of how they found the lack of money, housing and other resources impact negatively on their capacity to do love labour. Yet they were less inclined to claim these as injustices or inequalities when speaking in a group. Instead, they could name the lack of housing as an inequality rather than the emotional damage living with insecurity has done to oneself or children. The learning circles allowed this discussion to happen as participants were asked to think about their own personal situations in a wider social context. This time, the words and stories were not as forthcoming, because people in the learning circle found it difficult to talk confidently on love and care inequalities. Instead, they could talk of personal situations but applying this within a wider social analysis took time and discussion back and forth between participants and the researcher who was also a learning circle participant.

The women in research for this thesis, therefore, have pinpointed one of the key contradictions of trying to politicise love labour. Their refusal or inability to name the relational impact as the injustice rather than the resource inequality, showed how personalised the impact on love labour is for them. The guilt, shame and judgement
that the participants spoke of when narrating their experiences of inequality seem to impress on them that love labour is an individual responsibility even if they are aware of the unequal conditions provided to do this labour. The ability to frame the injustices as political issues is less forthcoming because naming the hidden injustices in public brings the same emotions of shame, guilt and judgement that speaking about material inequalities like housing do not.

To challenge rather than manage the unequal conditions that adversely impact on love labour demands politicising care consciousness. By politicising consciousness of the practical doing of love labour in unequal conditions, it is envisaged that we move to a consciousness of the contradictions of this situation that instils us to act to change the conditions. But making care consciousness political hinges on the ability to politicise or mobilise the shared emotional habitus and affective dispositions that unequal economic conditions structure and engender. To do this, as stated above, is a practical task of bringing carers together in a way that allows consciousness to be politicised. As we know from emancipatory theory, feminists and Marxists have produced much work on consciousness-raising and the tools to do that work. Yet the process of politicising consciousness, as we see from the context of care consciousness, is not just an emotional and cognitive process, it is a practical process. It is a process dependent upon three key tenets, which will be explored throughout the rest of this chapter. These include a shared emotional habitus, individual desire and capacity to be involved, and the generation of knowledge for action. These will be discussed further as this chapter progresses.

10.4.2 Shared emotional habitus

Hochschild (1983) uses research on emotional labour in a private and public capacity to illustrate what her term ‘emotional labour’ entails (ibid: 7), which for her is about the management of feeling or emotion. The emotional habitus and affective dispositions revealed in this thesis were very much about the management of love labour in people’s lives. There was a practical as well as emotional aspect to this habitus. People readily shared their stories in the interviews and learning circles and the narratives shared similar dimensions. They all spoke of similar emotions such as loss, guilt, shame and judgment. Their narratives also all conveyed an acute
awareness of the hidden injustices of classed care as shown in chapter 9. The learning circle discussions illustrated, when given the space to reflect more on lived experiences that participants might not necessarily want to be political about what matters to them on such an emotional level. What they were willing to do on a one-to-one level did not translate, for them, easily into something that they could talk about politically. This was evidenced in how they offered caution in talking about the love and care injustices instead of the material resources yet their own privately-related narratives mainly talked about these love and care injustices. How they lived the injustice of housing insecurity emotionally was not necessarily how they interpreted their activism on inequality although they were articulate about how the two were interconnected.

So politicising the love and care dimension of people’s lives so that awareness of loving and caring in unequal conditions becomes a political consciousness was not easily identified from the learning circle discussions. There was no clear consensus on how to politicise the contradictions between unequal economic conditions and trying to self-care and love and care for others. The shared emotional habitus evident from the narratives was not considered a serious source of political action for the learning circle participants. For them, raising this contradiction was an important part of trying to figure out how to make what matters most in their lives to do this love labour also matter politically for the same reason.

Sara Ahmed’s work (2004), *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, provides a close reading of the everyday, lived emotions that are part of larger material and discursive structures of the nation-state. Her work proposes emotion as political activity, not simply an excess or inconvenient distraction from the real work of political organisation. Hidalgo (2014), drawing on the work of Ahmed, presents a main hypothesis that class consciousness is an emotional construction, following the so-called "affective turn" within the social sciences. In her work, she shows that emotion can be a useful category for the study of how class consciousness is formed. Both Ahmed’s works, and Hidalgo’s work are highlighting the hidden role of emotions in political analysis of societies stratified by class. This thesis has also found people to make sense of and narrate class inequality through emotions, connected with
oneself and others, and yet, at an activist level, to reinterpret that emotional experience materially.

In order that carers, in unequal societies, recognise the power and possibility that their shared emotional experiences give to them, there is a need to provide spaces and tools to allow people to develop a discourse and way of discussing why they redefine their emotional experiences of injustice into material injustices. This seems like an important first step in building a language and an activism around relational injustices.

10.4.3 Individual damage, development and repair

One of the most important findings from the hidden injustices of classed care was the negative impact on the self that love labour in unequal conditions imposes. The participants in this research spoke of depression, post-natal depression, loss, shame, tiredness; they experienced hurt and daily anxieties of living with scarce resources to provide and sustain love labour. The emotional way in which they spoke, and the stories that they told, captured the individual ways in which inequality had impacted on them personally. The autoethnographic material, in particular, spoke vividly of anxiety linked to childhood development in unequal economic conditions. The intersection between personal well-being, and the institutions and wider relations that shape people as they grow and develop, is evident in the hurt that individuals spoke of related to themselves, outside of children or others they provide care for.

Unlike reading or writing, consciousness cannot be done for a person; if a person to engage in consciousness-raising about this aspect of their lives, they must be present and able emotionally and physically. When love labour still needs to happen, and when unequal conditions persist, both of these demands may be too much on an individual. Being part of a collective discussion is demanding and demands a public part of you that, as we have seen from the findings, a person may prefer to keep hidden. The emotional damage arising from economic inequality (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010), and the impact on mental health and people’s sense of self and confidence cannot be underestimated when trying to engage people in discussions beyond one-to-one conversations. This is a critical finding for this study as it shows
how emotional damage can limit people’s ability to speak of their love-related injustices.

Bourdieu’s (1999) notion of social suffering would help explain the depoliticising of care consciousness. Frost and Hoggett (2008) explore the notion of Bourdieu’s concept of ‘social suffering’ within a psychosocial paradigm. They argue that it is possible to place emotional life at the heart of social policy and welfare practice whilst retaining a critical perspective on issues of power. They show how:

Pierre Bourdieu’s conceptualization of social suffering draws attention to social misery: not just the unequal distribution of material goods in society but also people’s lived experience of domination and repression, including feelings – humiliation, anger, despair, resentment – that may accompany, for example poverty, class or race (ibid: 440).

For Frost and Hoggett (ibid) the notion of suffering denotes the intermeshed components of thinking, feeling, responding, and acting. Their work exposes suffering as both a reflexive and non-reflexive phenomenon: as something which at times can be thought about, critically and creatively, and at times is embodied, enacted or projected precisely because it cannot be thought about (ibid: 440).

Bourdieu’s (1999) concept of social suffering lies at the heart of the subjective experience of inequality, the lived experience of the social damage inflicted in late capitalist societies on the least powerful and the intra-psychic and relational wounds that result (Frost and Hoggett, 2008: 440). For Frost and Hoggett (ibid) this means that people’s capacity for agency, and the forms of agency that are possible, are influenced by both inner worlds of psychic suffering and outer worlds of social structural oppression.

The literature review on consciousness-raising in the women’s movement also highlighted the role of personal development in political consciousness-raising (Bartky, 1990:11). Before women could take on the structures that had them oppressed, they needed to do work on themselves. The same is clear from this thesis; for carers to take on the structures that oppress love labour, they need to tend to the hurt and damage that their own mental and physical health has undergone. They are also still living with inequality, as they continue to self-care and
care for others so the damage has not gone away; instead it can grow even as carers engage in a process of becoming political about love and care in their lives. This is a very real challenge for realising the potential that care consciousness offers for mobilising people around egalitarian social change. It implies that a political process about making care consciousness a political tool to mobilise people must have the care of people as a core philosophy. In this regard, there is an active dimension to making care consciousness political and that is the care of people engaged in the process. We know from social movement literature (see chapter 4) that managing emotions and care for each other is part of what holds movements together but naming that care work as a goal means that even the negative emotions that can arise for people, and that can sometimes destroy movements, needs to be addressed if a political process mobilising people develops around affective injustices.

10.4.4 Beyond the individual: power and vulnerability

Bourdieu uses the term habitus to describe the unconscious aspects or, more specifically, the internalisation of societal structures (Wagner and McLaughlin, 2015). Habitus therefore embodies the “indirect causal link between position in social space and practices” (Weininger, 2005, p. 90). It therefore not only refers to attitudes, beliefs, and concepts of self and the world, but also to individual and collective action and for Bourdieu these two spheres are closely linked. Affective dispositions, underpinning the hidden injustices of classed care, denote the way in which individuals are shaped by social structures framing love and care work. What is interesting about the process of moving from individual stories of love and care inequalities to a political discourse for the hidden injustices of classed care is the shift in focus from the individual, although central, to other structures. Whereas the individual stories illustrate how institutions and regulations impose inequality in love labouring, the political discourse starts to name the role of these institutions, regulations and the State in providing resources for equality in love labour.

Talking about inequality through care consciousness in this research has illuminated the contradictions between what is expected of people in terms of the love labour they are required to do and the conditions in which they are expected to do that
labour. The learning circle participants, and in particular the activists that participated in the interviews and learning circles, discussed power and the wider social systems that shape how we love and care. Some of them remarked on how their children are just ‘numbers’ to those in power and how society does not care about poorer people, or the people they have to love and care for. Care consciousness, therefore, also involves knowledge of power and powerlessness. The vulnerability that comes with providing care to people you love, that are dependent on you for that care, is a vulnerability connected to the knowing that this work has to be done regardless of how little one has at their disposal to do it. Someone or something, be it the State or an institution, has control over the conditions in which a person does love labour and no matter how much a person loves or hates or manages, or does not manage, in these conditions, they cannot change how these conditions are framed on their own. Vulnerability and powerlessness can be a forceful combination in holding people back from challenging unequal structures especially when that vulnerability and powerlessness is deeply integrated into the way people learn to know the world in which they live. Erich Fromm (1941) argued that fear, anxiety and powerlessness disposed obedience, and consent to superior authority whether God, the autocratic state, or the authoritarian leader or some combination thereof. Exploring how people live with inequality and the central role of care consciousness in their narratives somewhat shows how learning to live with inequality can be the best way of managing the vulnerability and powerlessness that comes with the inequality especially if people are dependent upon you at all times.

10.4.5 Everyday knowledge and tools for analysis

Feminist standpoint epistemology understands knowledge as created through struggle between dominant and marginal voices and perspectives (Sandra Harding, 1991, 1993). The production of knowledge is central to how we think about our lives as it gives us the tools and the language to name and know what matters. Mindful of the contradictions of challenging the hidden injustices of care, whilst still conscious of our relational lives and affective dispositions, the knowledge generated by this positioning cannot be underestimated for political activism.
Awareness of the actual workings of care consciousness in our lives as caring beings can help to shed light on alternative, more egalitarian, ways of organising the world. Westwood (1985) spent a year living and working with the women of a British hosiery factory. Her analysis illustrates the subordination women face as workers, wives, and mothers under conditions set by patriarchal capitalism. In it, she reveals the inseparable worlds of work and family. Westwood points out the poverty of a conceptual framework which separates home and work as distinct spheres and she attacks the "male" notion that the two worlds are neatly divided. The conclusion to her research, offers a critical perspective on the impact of patriarchy and capitalism on women in both the factory and home.

What is most interesting about Westwood’s research for this thesis is the realisation that the women learn from their own lives and the lives of others, reinterpreting experience in ways which cut through common sense to uncover the real conditions that constrain them (ibid). For Westwood, the women use the workplace to develop a knowledge base about the inequalities they face and the shop floor becomes a socio-political process where she claims that women learn to cope all day by demystifying the system and recognizing the power structure. Of interest to this thesis, is how the participants in this research navigated an alternative workplace to the market work place. The workplace for love labour is the home and the community. The participants in this thesis showed that they had considerable insight into how the care system operates in their lives as they spoke about the impact of inequality on trying to do love labour. Their connection between the lack of resources at their disposal and the limits to their love labour showed a high level of understanding in terms of the barriers and power structures they face daily. Their survival and the survival of their families were perceived as a success in the face of adverse conditions. This was a socio-political process similar to what Westwood found on the shop floor (Ibid), yet this time the workplace was the home and community and fellow colleagues were other carers.

For Marx, in order that class consciousness be successful as a force for social change, the proletariat must develop an understanding of the dialectical contradiction between immediate interests and long-term objectives, and between the discrete factors and the whole. For care consciousness to have a similar role in mobilising
people for relational justice, knowledge must be generated from lived experiences that gives legitimacy to love and care work, while acknowledging the contradictions. This is the process of moving from practical to political consciousness.

10.5 Getting on with life

In the Hidden Injuries of Class (1972: 191), Sennett and Cobb hold on to the fact that consciousness plays a role in how people get on with life in unequal societies. For them, ‘people never lose consciousness of society’ (ibid: 192) and, instead, adopt a coping mechanism which Sennett and Cobb term ‘protective alienation’ (ibid: 196). They assert:

Dignity is as compelling a human need as food or sex, and yet here is a society which casts the mass of its people into limbo, never satisfying their hunger for dignity, nor yet so explicitly depriving them that the task of proving dignity seems an unreasonable burden, and revolt against the society the only reasonable alternative. However, most of the people who appear in the pages of this book are not on the edge of nervous collapse, nor at the point of despair where revolt is kindled. On the contrary, they get by from day to day with a sense of balance, with a certain distance from the problems of class and class conscience.

In Sennett and Cobb’s research, the experience of social subordination leaves its mark upon the self-confidence, assertiveness and identity of the worker. They utilise Gramsci’s theory of cultural hegemony to suggest that the internalisation of subordination by working people represents a key element within the domination exercised by ruling elites. Care consciousness offers another way of understanding how people accept the ideology of a ruling structure that operates to their disadvantage. Confined by place, time and the imminence of care work, especially love labour, people spend a large portion of their lives involved in this work either by choice or necessity or both. There is no definition of good or bad love labour, and politically, we have not defined a way of measuring inequality in love labour. This has real consequence for ideology. When people do love labour in unequal conditions, although they are aware of the inequalities in the doing of that work and the hidden injustices, they are still doing that work. The production and sustenance of human beings will happen regardless of inequality and people have learned to get on with
this work as it is expected to happen, one way or the other. The role this care consciousness then plays in how people navigate unequal societies must be included in any analysis of activism or consciousness-raising for activism. People will find the means to provide and sustain love and care in any conditions that are constructed for them, indeed it is sometimes the only sense of living that people can do when in extreme poverty. As Robin West put it:

Caregiving labour (and its fruits) is the central adventure of a lifetime; it is what gives life its point, provides it with meaning, and returns to those who give it some measure of security and emotional sustenance. For even more of us, whether or not we like it and regardless of how we regard it, caregiving labour, for children and the aged, is the work we will do that creates the relationships, families, and communities within which our lives are made pleasurable and connected to something larger than ourselves (2002: 89).

10.5.1 False consciousness

Engels (in Pines, 1993: 1) is shown to refer to ideology as a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously but with a false consciousness. Engels maintains that the real motive forces impelling him remain unknown to him and that this is what makes it an ideological process (Engels, ibid). The idea of false consciousness, used to explain why people accept unequal structures that contradict their needs in society, does not take account of the dimensions of care consciousness that has been developed throughout this chapter. The concept of false consciousness ignores the conscious decisions that people make based around their relational realities of caring for themselves and others. In doing so, it neglects to consider the individual damage from inequality and the impact on confidence and emotional well-being. The false consciousness thesis also neglects the urgency need to provide love and care to those who are vulnerable, and the time and emotional, physical and corporeal aspects to this labour that take energy and investment from individuals; and it fails to appreciate that people have dispositions and concerns outside of the economic frame of analysis that underpins false consciousness. People can be aware of the inequalities imposed by a system and yet, at the same time, accept that inequality as a means of survival for themselves
and others even if that survival is marked with injustices. The conscious decision to get on with life in the face of injustice is a very genuine reality for those tasked with the production, maintenance, development and repair of people in society. This work has to happen regardless of equal or unequal social structures and so the doing of this work becomes as much a priority in how we come to know what the world is about and what we are here to do. Knowing the world through this reality of producing human beings brings a consciousness and habitus that plays a unique role in how people engage with each other and with social systems in constructing society. For those with less power and more vulnerability in society, who also often play a lesser role in dictating how society is constructed, their care consciousness can dictate how they accept inequality.

10.5.2 The counter narrative of relational (affective) control

If care consciousness offers an alternative way to make sense of why people accept unequal structures then the role of power and ideology must be incorporated into this understanding. The hidden injustices of classed care that people endure in unequal economic societies exerts a control over their relational lives in a way that controls the resources they have for love labour and the conditions in which they do that love labour. As this research has shown, when a person’s capacity to, and need for, love and care is controlled by unequal access to resources then that person experiences emotional and material inequalities that limits their freedom in society and capacity to live equally, and in solidarity, with those who have more resources.

In *Caring Democracies*, Tronto puts forward the idea that seeing production and economic life as the most important political and human concerns ignores the reality that caring, for ourselves and others, should be the highest value that shapes how we view the economy, politics, and institutions such as schools and the family. Care, which is at the centre of our human lives, Tronto argues, is currently too far removed from the concerns of politics. She argues that we need to make care, not economics, the central concern of democratic political life. To do this, we would need to acknowledge the ways in which inequality controls caring in society. Developing the idea of care consciousness allows us to give primacy on the role of care in our lives.
whilst at the same time highlighting how this work can limit our capacity to engage in political work for egalitarian change at both a practical and ideological level.

10.6 Conclusion

As the centre of all theories of consciousness is the idea of an alternative ideology. Silvia Federici (2012) claims that reproductive labour is a hidden continent of work and struggle that the working class movement must recognise in its political work, if it is to address the key questions we face in organising for an alternative to capitalist society. The ideology underpinning care consciousness is not a cultural or material one but a relational one based on the fact that people are relational beings, interdependent upon one another for development and survival. People share ideas and consciousness around the necessity and doing of care work. As this research has shown, people narrate their experiences of inequality through the emotional and physical impact inequality has on themselves and those they love and care for. Overall, the injustices that presented in love labour for the participants in this study in the form of personal ill-health or emotional damage to family members from classed care, gave them a desire to want a different society.

Yet this understanding of people as relational, and the love and care work that operationalises this, is not treated as a legitimate or public concern when making sense of how society is produced or reproduced. People know that care work must happen and this idea shapes their actions daily. When this core idea is outside of legitimate political concerns then people will get on with life once this core role is fulfilled, even if that happens in unequal conditions and damages their own health in so doing. What matters most to them, then, is remote from what is presented as political. As long as people are care conscious, and they have no way of avoiding this, as others demand care by virtue of being human, and as long as this biopolitics remains remote from wider politics, then the daily love and care struggles generated by the unequal resources are hidden from theories of ideology.

This understanding of care consciousness offers an alternative to false consciousness as ways of understanding how people partake in the acceptance and reproduction of unequal societies. It is not a false consciousness or false ideology that holds people back challenging injustice but possibly care consciousness, an
ideology that revolves around love and care in human survival. The urgency and immanence of loving and caring creates its own struggle. Thus, care consciousness challenges false consciousness as a way of making sense of the production, reproduction, repairing and maintaining of people as relational beings. It is a way of naming and claiming work that is not organised around social class positioning. Care consciousness offers an alternative way of knowing the world, for making sense of how and why people survive outside of organised economic resistance.

There is also a practical element to care consciousness. People must invest time, energy and emotional and physical effort into care work. They are aware of this demand daily and this practicality can dictate what a person can and cannot do. For those that want to be active politically, finding time away from caring for others, especially in the case of love labour, can be difficult.

However, care consciousness also offers possibilities for mobilisation for change and the counter-narratives of love and care can be central to this mobilisation. For the participants in this research, there is a real shared emotional habitus that could be harnessed for political activism based on a collective consciousness. But this must be incorporated into a campaign or movement that sees care of people as central to the movement as well as the wider objective for a caring society. It also needs to be mindful of the vulnerability and powerlessness that comes with trying to mobilise people when they are providing and sustaining love labour at the same time. Glenn (2000: 84) draws attention to the emancipatory social change potential that comes with a focus on care as a political issue:

To the extent that caring is devalued, invisible, underpaid, and penalized, it is relegated to those who lack economic, political, and social power and status. And to the extent that those who engage in caring are drawn disproportionately from among disadvantaged groups (women, people of color, and immigrants), their activity -that of caring- is further degraded. In short, the devaluing of caring contributes to the marginalization, exploitation, and dependency of care givers. Conversely, valuing and recognizing caring would raise the status and rewards of those who engage in it and also increase the incentives for other groups to engage in caring. Thus, a society
that values care and caring relationships would be not only nicer and kinder, but also more egalitarian and just.

All participants in the research spoke about the need for social change to make society a better place for their children and significant others they were caring for. For all these reasons, care consciousness is fundamental to theorising change through consciousness-raising, by making the practical dimensions of love labour political, and thereby creating a counter-narrative. Yet, as shown in the discussion, one of the key challenges presented by care consciousness is that it operates both as a possibility for resistance and as a constraint on action. How can people organise for relational justice in response to the hidden injustices of classed care if the very thing that could motivate them for change could propose the greatest barriers to engagement for them? This is a key question for organising for relational justice, not least because of the urgency of making love and care political issues.
Chapter 11 Classed care and relational justice

11.1 Introduction

Because this research is concerned with social class inequality and egalitarian social change, it has attempted to create a discourse and intellectual space across egalitarian, feminist and social class theory that incorporates human relationality as a central organising principle for challenging poverty and social class inequality. To do so, the thesis was premised on the need to analyse the affective institutions, relations and practices as a discrete system of care that is highly classed through its under-resourcing.

A central question for this research was whether love and care inequalities and relationality were central to the experiences of social class injustices and how they could play a critical role in an egalitarian narrative for challenging social class inequality. It was building on the egalitarian theory work of Baker and Lynch et al. (2004; 2nd ed) and Lynch et al. (2009), which challenges the contemporary sociological and egalitarian focus on the political, economic and social systems as the principal sites of social organisation. Instead, their framework highlights the importance and interrelatedness of a fourth system, the affective system. It also builds on the work of Lynch (2007) and Lynch, et al. (2009) showing how and why affective systems of love, care and solidarity have salience for understanding working class resistance and realising social change.

The empirical research answered both parts of the central question for this thesis and showed that injustices around love and care in people’s lives were central to both how they experienced and challenged inequality in class-divided societies. These findings generated the core concepts of ‘hidden injustices of classed care’ and ‘care consciousness’. Chapter 9 developed the concept of the hidden injustices of classed care, which captured the primacy of relational justice in the lives of people living on low incomes in unequal societies. Chapter 10 suggested that people’s awareness of the sphere of love and care and related injustices when doing that work in unequal societies, was a care consciousness; it proposed that care consciousness can be brought to a political level of understanding for people, even though it faces many challenges. It suggested that this offers potential and possibility
for egalitarian social change thereby addressing the second part of the central research question for this thesis that of the role of relational injustice in a narrative for social change.

This concluding chapter, therefore, further builds on these findings and discusses the significance for social justice of viewing love and care as part of a discrete but intersecting system in people’s experiences of class inequality. It explores the significance of the affective system as a site of action for egalitarian change. It focuses especially on identifying the key aspects that underpin organising for relational justice in class-divided societies. This chapter highlights the link between organising for relational justice and the previously discussed concepts of hidden injustices of classed care and care consciousness. It will also link these ideas to the original conceptual framework on which the thesis was premised, which included emancipatory social change theory, feminist ethics of care theory and the egalitarian framework for affective equality developed by Baker et al. (2004) and Lynch et al. (2009). It will conclude by highlighting the four key operational considerations when organising for relational justice in unequal class conditions and linking these to the literature and empirical findings. Finally, this chapter will include some recommendations for further developing and testing the concepts of hidden injustices of classed care; care consciousness; and relational justice.

### 11.2 Hidden injustices and care consciousness

The hidden injustices of classed care formed a substantial part of the findings for this thesis. The participants spoke about damage to them and to others in their lives from living on low incomes. They narrated their experiences through the way in which they know the world, and through what matters most to them when reflecting on how they live with inequality and this was through their relationships with themselves and others they provide love and care for in their lives. Care consciousness was proposed as a concept to capture people’s awareness of the presence and necessity of love and care relations, institutions and practices in their lives. Care consciousness was further presented as people’s practical understanding and shared ideas of what needs to be done to produce, reproduce, maintain, and repair affective relations. In this way, it is a relational ideology directly connected with love and care in society.
11.2.1 Consciousness of practice and ideas

The role of care consciousness, then, in terms of practice (the knowing and doing of love and care work) and providing a counter-narrative (shared ideas and norms about equal conditions for love and care work), was theorised in chapter 10 as playing a role in how people engage with inequality in society and how they accept or challenge unequal social systems. A key aspect of the ideology was the concept of relational control through ideology around love and care as people learn to persevere and provide love and care regardless of whether conditions are equal or unequal. A key aspect of the practice dimension of care consciousness was the time, energy, presence and emotional and physical work that love labour demands and how this can limit people’s capacity to organise for social change.

11.2.2 Relational justice and classed care

While the data shows that care consciousness exists around affective inequalities, it also shows that low-income working class women do not know how (and lack the resources in a classed society) to translate this consciousness into collective consciousness oriented to anything other than individualised resistances to injustice. This thesis is proposing that relational justice is what is required if there is to be a political response to the challenges posed by inequalities in love labour from unequal conditions.

If care consciousness can find political expression then the point at which people organise around injustices in a class-divided society is a key development for relational justice. Concluding this thesis with the idea of organising for relational justice, through institutions and relations in the affective system, when care is classed is appropriate as it draws together the counter-narrative and practice challenges proposed by making care consciousness political to address the hidden injustices of classed care. Figure 3 shows how relational justice at the level of primary care in the affective system is the intersecting point at which people organise around the hidden injustices of classed care based on a politicised care consciousness.
Figure 3: Relational justice, at a primary⁹⁰ care level in the affective system, as the intersecting point between care consciousness and the hidden injustices of classed care.

What Figure 3 shows is that it is necessary to interrogate the love labouring world of primary caring to frame a new politics of relational justice. There is a need to recognise the way the complexities of this world and its potential as well as its constraints on political action.

11.2.3 Building on egalitarian and feminist theory

The literature reviews in chapter 2 and 3 took the positions respectively that love and care inequalities need to be analysed structurally and relationally. It was argued in chapter 2, based on work by Baker et al. (2004) and Lynch et al. (2009) that love and care work in people’s lives is part of the affective system. Chapter 3 then maintained

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⁹⁰ Primary care is the inner care world of intimate love labouring that exists in a wider world of secondary and tertiary care relations (Lynch, 2007)
that this love and care work can only be understood when the framework for analysis is extended beyond redistribution, recognition and representation to include a focus on relational justice. Love, care and solidarity work cannot be simply treated as a derivative of economic, political and/or cultural relations; it is a discrete generative site of social relations, albeit intersectionally connected to all other systems and institutions.

As a starting point, relational justice places equality in the doing and receiving of love and care at central goals for political activism and egalitarian social change around social class inequalities. The idea of classed care and relational justice is significant because the inequalities usually associated with the affective system are normally defined in terms of gender inequality, while the inequalities usually associated with the economic system are framed as being primarily class based. By introducing the concept of hidden injustices of classed care, this study has attempted to show how the economic system can generate relational injustices and how affective injustices are classed and gendered. It has illustrated the way resources, usually viewed as issues for economic justice, are as critical for the production and sustenance of people as loving and caring beings as much as other goods or services in society. The findings show how the affective aspect of the generative basis of the injustices associated with classed care are hidden when analysed using a redistribution, recognition or representation frame of analysis. Therefore, the most significant point about relational justice and the intersection of the affective and economic system in generating such injustices presents in terms of organising for egalitarian change as this thesis has shown how care consciousness can play a pivotal role in how people challenge class inequality. The lack of equal resources and equal conditions to do love labour are issues of relational justice and, as issues of relational justice, they can only be addressed when the affective system is integrated into the analytical framework.

So at the outset the concept of relational justice places centre-stage what people cannot avoid on a daily basis, the doing and receiving of care work, thereby opening up people’s everyday lived experiences to political discourse and political legitimacy. Relational justice would mean that people can rightly claim that it is unjust to provide and sustain love or care in unequal conditions; they can challenge the ideology of
patriarchy and capitalism that expects them to do so. Of course, in practical terms, they must still do the love and care work even in unequal conditions, or people could become neglected or ill or die, but the love and care work they do would have a political legitimacy that it does not have now. A more difficult task than establishing relational justice as a legitimate goal in egalitarian theory, is achieving relational justice in practice in classed societies as that involves mobilising people and bringing care consciousness from a practical and ideological level to people being organised on a political level.

11.3 Organising for relational justice

The literature reviews in chapter 2 and 3 have highlighted a gap in feminist and egalitarian literature around providing a structural analysis of love and care injustices or an analytical framework for understanding inequality, which includes relational justice. A similar gap was highlighted in chapter 4 when social movement theory and theories of emancipatory social change were found to also fail to incorporate a structural analysis of how the ideas and practice of love and care work feature in theories of social change. Emancipatory theory was explored from the perspective of the role of consciousness and alternative ideologies for changing the world. Yet class consciousness and feminist consciousness lacked consideration of the alternative disposition and ideology that love and care work offers. Instead, when considered, especially in feminist consciousness-raising, love and care work was treated as problematic from a gender equality perspective rather than a site for action and alternative ideas that is not only or always gendered. The work here builds on that of feminists like Held, hooks, Kittay and Tronto who have acknowledged the potential of care in offering an alternative way of thinking about justice. Organising for relational justice means extending emancipatory theory to include the emancipatory potential of organising around love and care and the conditions needed to ensure that this work can be done equally.

From the research findings, and from the discussion on hidden injustices and care consciousness, four key operational considerations seem to present when trying to organise around relational justice. These were developed from the concepts generated by empirical data analysis when combined with the theoretical memos drafted throughout the analysis process. These include positionality, people, place
and power. Positionality refers to how people are positioned as carers in a class divided society; this matters because it influences people's disposition to love and do care work. People are the cornerstones of the affective system and relations between people are part of both the injustices and solutions generated by the affective system. Place matters because love labour means that people, positioned as carers in unequal societies, are bound by place and time to do love and care work; moving or staying in love and care spaces matters when trying to organise against injustices. Power is central to organising for justice because power relations are interconnected with love and care relations and a lack of power in the public sphere can impact on organising for social change. These considerations, central to organising, will be outlined and discussed in more detail in this chapter and the conclusion will point out recommendations as to how relational justice and care consciousness can present a counter-narrative to challenge the hidden injustices of classed care.

11.3.1 Positioning

Loving and caring in a class-divided society generates systems of classed care: one loves and cares from within classed (and raced and gendered) positionings. Positionality, therefore, is central to organising around the hidden injustices of classed care. The participants in this research did not present their narratives of inequality in terms of being members of class, but rather identified as mothers, grandmothers, neighbours and friends. The relational lives that they lived, even though most were employed and so had other identity options, formed the basis through which they told stories about inequality.

Yet, the injustices they described were directly related to living on a low income in unequal economic conditions so their class position was a major generative factor in their experiences of inequality. However, it was their relational positioning that triggered their awareness of the impact of economic inequality as it impacted negatively on their own well-being and the well-being of those they provided love labour for. Lacking housing and money or other resources needed to undertake love labour mattered to the women because the lack of these resources impacted on their capacity to provide and sustain care work for family members. So this would imply that organising around the hidden injustices of classed care matters most when care
is classed, such that love labour has to be conducted in unequal conditions. Yet, the participants in the learning circles, when discussing what politics around care would look like, were cautious about the danger of misrepresenting love and care and reducing the importance of material inequalities in their lives.

The research participants were also aware of how positionings other than social class impacted on love and care work. They raised the point about people with disabilities and people from ethnic minorities experiencing even greater inequality in loving and caring than what they were describing. The empirical research for this thesis did not include a large enough sample to explore how other positions that present in how people are positioned across ethnic, racial, age and disability differences. As we know from the literature review on love and care inequalities, care work in unequal societies is not only gendered and classed but also raced.

Different positionings lead to different priority issues for people in relational terms. For some, as we learned from the literature review, relational justice could be about having a secure income so one can do love labouring well. However, hooks argues that getting paid for something should not be the only way that we value work in society. hooks (2014) maintains that there has been little written about the value of housework in particular in generating well-being and responsibility for others and your environment. Arguing for rethinking the value of work, hooks suggests that feminists have failed to see the power and resistance in women valuing the work they do (ibid: 105). She links this to the way in which people value work in terms of exchange value and so if you get no wages then the work is of less value. Lynch (1989) and Himmelweit (2007) have illustrated how some forms of love labour cannot be bought or paid for so this supports the argument by hooks around the need to value and rethink certain types of care work. The challenge is how can love work be engaged for its use value rather than its exchange value. Use values matter even if in the era of capitalism the focus is on measuring worth through exchange values. So it is clear that relational justice can be about resources but also values, and this is where the importance of recognising positionality matters because economic security (payment), more than recognition of love and care work per se, will matter more to those caring on low incomes.
Although, like Lynch and Himmelweit, Folbre also claims care can never be reduced to purely economic value, nonetheless, it has important economic dimensions (Folbre, 2014: 3). Specialisation in care provision is costly. Time devoted to the care of family members lowers lifetime earnings and reduces economic security (ibid: 22). Employed workers in caring occupations generally pay a penalty, earning less than workers with similar qualifications in occupations that are otherwise relatively equivalent (ibid: 23). Men, as well as women, are forced to pay a care penalty. In general, however, women are expected to take on greater care responsibilities than men and often meet social disapproval if they fail to do so (ibid: 6). All of these issues matter in relational justice but no one question has priority. What matters is placing these issues as legitimate questions of equality and justice. Value for love labouring, or the economic sacrifices made by women who do the majority of love labouring in unequal economic conditions are all equal questions along a continuum of relational justice.

The bio-political dimension of relational justice is also captured in the centrality of positionality to the organisation for relational justice. The need for care and love will generate political questions whether we name them as justice concerns around love and care or not. Children's need to have love labour invested in them, and the nurturing that it involves so they can develop as functioning people, will happen regardless of organising for relational justice. The classed care that imposes inequality on children and results in unequal life chances and life experiences intersects with the bio-politics of care in a way that illuminates how biopolitics is structurally framed.

Positioning in classed societies needs to be factored into organising for relational justice as other age, race, disability positionings, in addition to gender and class, bring additional issues and constraints. This raises questions around the resources needed to facilitate people, positioned in different ways, to engage in political organising as resources are not just material but emotional. Speaking of positioning also raises questions as to which aspects of relational justice people wish to organise for as different positionings can lead to different priorities. It also raises questions for bridging the different priorities of different groups and developing ways...
that different questions around love and care work can be united under a common political goal of relational justice. People are central to this wider political goal but so too is place and power, which are discussed below.

11.3.2 People

This research has taught us that the production, reproduction, maintenance and repair of people matters most to the working class women interviewed when asked about living with inequality. People-making, is central to organising for relational justice because the well-being of people as relational beings is central to the goals of relational justice. The emotional, physical and cognitive development of people is both a resource in love and care work and a goal of the organising of this work.

The capacity to give and receive love and care is embodied within people, and people, therefore are a key resource in relational justice. If people are damaged biologically-emotionally-physically then their capacity to love and care is damaged. This was a core theme in the research as people spoke about mental well-being and their own self-care as part of the injustices they experienced living with classed care.

Although access to secure and safe housing is a resource needed to provide love labour with shelter and security, the relational justice is about equality in the provision and receipt of love and care labour. So, although the goal of relational justice also means achieving economic justice, the organising and call for action is around relational justice. People are being asked to organise to ensure love and care can be provided and received equally by all people in society.

Another key point about people is the gendered aspect of relational justice. Unless men are engaged in the process of care consciousness, it is unlikely that they will engage in organising for relational justice. Organising for justice around love and care issues will become dominated by women. As we saw from the literature review on social movements, women and not ‘people’ become associated with affective-based analyses of social movements. Kuumba (2001) writes of how women-related aspects of social movements become associated with the feminine and are less valued than the ‘masculine forms of resistance’. This is significant in organising for relational justice as it raises an important point about engaging men in any developments. This was also raised by one of the learning circles for this research in
which a participant spoke about the power that men bring to a campaign. However, participants also spoke at length of women as leaders in communities. This gender dynamic of organising for relational justice is a serious issue that needs to be to the fore of organising.

11.3.3 Place

If change occurs it happens on the ground, between people speaking out of inner need, rather than through mass uprisings. What political programs follow from those inner needs, I simply don’t know. But I do know a regime which provides human beings no deep reasons to care about each other, cannot long preserve its legitimacy.’ (Sennett, 1998, p.148).

This quote by Sennett when looking at resistance to the inequalities people endure as a result of economic inequality draws attention to people organising at a level that works for them. The research participants were sceptical of organising for relational justice as they could not understand how and where people could be organised around love and care injustices. They raised issues about time, energy, confidence, lack of resources and other practical concerns in organising people who are the main providers of love labour living in unequal conditions. Green (2013), in her research with low-income families, highlights how time is a scarce resource when reliant on the State for an income. Green explains:

What this has meant is that as low-income mothers struggle to meet the intense demands of balancing work and family, they also have to continue the time-intensive task of piecing together in-kind and cash benefits to pad their low wages. Doing so involves traveling from one office to another; repeatedly disclosing intimate and personal information; and documenting, in a detailed paper trail, the legitimacy of one’s story, all in a context in which those with minimal resources are expected to perform at optimal efficiency. Although there is little time to spare in this world, each office treats clients as if they have endless time to waste. Furthermore, poor families are often at the mercy of buses that are late, babysitters who do not show up, overworked caseworkers who misplace documents, and other similar barriers to the successful performance of the role of “good client” (ibid:59).
The limits of time and other practical concerns was discussed in chapter 10 in the context of how people are aware of the inequalities generated by unequal systems but how they can be caught practically and ideologically in the doing of love labour such that they do not engage in challenging the unequal structures that shape their lives.

Yet the findings show that, once a space is provided, people are willing to talk about this and there is the potential for the practical and ideological thinking that comes with care consciousness to become political. Bringing this to the next level of organising presents more barriers. Positionality has addressed the issue of what relational justice can be about, and the discussion of people has also addressed the ‘what and the who’ of relational justice. But the question of where and when is critical to political organising.

So even if people know what they need to organise about and have the people resources to do so, finding a space to do that organising can be the greatest challenge especially when the hidden injustices that you are organising about are just that, hidden. The hidden injustices take place in people’s homes, hearts and minds so they are not part of a workplace or shop floor. The individuality of the hidden injustices can make the collective organising around relational justice a serious challenge. Space and place confine people and limit how people engage in organising for justice. As people are material, living and feeling beings, they are persons living in bodies, that have to be minded in their physicality and emotionality and often they cannot mind themselves. Those who mind others in a hands-on way have to be physically close to do so. The vulnerability and insecurity that came up in the discussion chapter on care consciousness presents here too as we cannot get away from the imminence of love labour even when trying to organise around it.

Knowing this too well, the participants in this research had ideas around virtual organising and connecting people through social media. But they did not seem to view the community infrastructure around them as open to the type of organising needed. Notably, they also spoke about organising on an individual level and spoke about resisting through not having more children or through making sure their children were educated. Using their own bodies and love labour as a source of
resistance is significant as it highlights how place, where one organises for social change, can be within a person in their thoughts and individual actions. This type of discussion about resistance shows how care consciousness features in the lives of people doing love labour on low incomes but the question remains for the discussion in this chapter as to how to find alternative places for this resistance to take place and for political action around care consciousness to be collective.

Kuumba maintains that the networks and structures that draw people into social movements tend to follow the paths of the social relations that define their lives (2001: 84). In other words, movement participation is structured along the locations in which people find themselves: the workplace, the community and the family. The challenge, then, if people did use community centres and resource centres to meet and organise around the hidden injustices of classed care in their lives, is to bring this organisation into a more public political arena. None of the participants spoke about party politics and even one of the strongest activists mentioned not having an interest in party politics. Yet party politics is central to how issues of inequality are addressed in democratic societies. Outside of union organising, there are not many well-developed advocacy or lobby groups on class politics. The community, as an organising space, does not have the same leverage power as trade union politics. More discussion and research is needed to identify how organising around relational justice at a community level can be translated into a public and powerful space. How to do this can only be realised in planning and discussing with people living with the hidden injustices of classed care.

11.3.4 Power

The discussion on care consciousness in chapter 10 raised an interesting point about power and vulnerability. It is clear that there is not enough focus in research on how poor people find the will to struggle and fight outside of the paid labour context when they face forces more powerful than them. If organising at a community level, as discussed above, is less powerful than party political or union organising, then power must be a critical consideration when organising around relational justice.
Power was a common theme in the findings, as participants raised it in many different ways such as the idea of lacking power to control resources and a lack of power compared to those in decision-making positions in society. The affective dispositions, engendered by unequal structures, in the lives of participants brought a sense of vulnerability and powerlessness to the systems shaping the conditions they love and care within. Enabling people to empower themselves to overcome emotions such as shame, guilt and judgement would be a significant part of making care consciousness political but also important to get people to a point where they can organise without feeling unconfident or vulnerable in doing so.

But discussions of power in organising for relational justice must take cognisance of the power imbalances between those who are most in need of caring and those who are, at a given time, doing the primary caring. This has been a key issue for disability scholars (Shakespeare, 2006) who suggest that we are all vulnerable and in need of care at some point in life and suggest that the organisation of care for disabled people has traditionally been both disempowering and oppressive. It has provided the rationale for the institutionalised dependency of many disabled people, and thereby compromised both their quality of life and life chances (Oliver, 1990). Morris (1991, 1993) has also critiqued feminist work on care for being insufficiently attentive to the oppressive ways in which care operates from a disabled person’s perspective.

The biopolitics of care has also shown how those in need of care can exercise a power and this is also engendered in the reciprocity and mutuality that is endemic to primary care relations in particular (Strazdins and Broom, 2004). Love labour between parents and children, including children with disabilities or ageing family members needs to be cognate of different power relationships (see also Lynch et al., 2009). The rights of children were raised in an interview with one of the activists in the field research and also came up in the learning circles. Ensuring that discussions of care are nuanced with discussions of power within care-based relationships is a fundamental for addressing these concerns in how care work is presented.

So, power, in organising for relational justice, is compromised by the other key dimensions of organising around love and care injustices such as positionality, place and people. To overcome this, power, as a goal, must be placed at a central concern for organising, with multiple positioning’s including class, race, disability, age and
gender, at the level of the individual, the level of the community and wider political spaces.

11.4 Conclusion

This chapter has been concerned with how the findings and discussions in this thesis have helped to highlight ways to organise around hidden injustices of classed care. The hidden injustices of care, it is concluded, can only be addressed when relational justice has the same legitimacy as economic or redistributive justice. This way, the contradictory dimensions of care consciousness can be overcome and care consciousness can become a force for social change rather than a hidden constraint.

Good care, Himmelweit (2007) claims, demands presence and the development of a relationship. Relational justice, as we see from this chapter, is about the creation of people, and the politics is driven by people and is interconnected with their positionality. For poorer people, this means that relational justice is interconnected with economic equality but also disability, family status, ethnicity and race.

Organising for relational justice is also dependent on place as people need to source a space that allows them to connect at a collective level and to share the more political care consciousness that arises when people realise the disconnect between the expectation to love and care and yet the unequal conditions provided to do such work.

Power is also a serious consideration when organising for relational justice. This is power between poorer people and those with decision-making power in society, and between carers and those they care for, as well as between carers who have different positionings in society. Power is needed to make relational injustices matter so generating power from where and how people organise around love and care injustices must be considered when organising for egalitarian change.

Overall, to organise for relational justice, account must be taken of people, power, positionality and place. These four operational considerations of organising around love and care injustices are central to addressing the hidden injustices of classed care and using care consciousness to initiate action on egalitarian social change.
Concluding with this understanding of some of the key considerations for organising against injustice is a welcome finding for trying to put the theory here into practice beyond the life of this thesis process. But the findings in this thesis have raised questions beyond just the practicalities of organising for love and care.

This thesis started with a desire to understand how the intersection between the care and social class system in people’s lives structures their experience of living with, and challenging, the unequal conditions in which they are expected to produce and sustain people. So alongside a greater understanding of how people challenge injustices and organise, the other most striking finding is the realisation of the difficulties that present in getting to that organising stage in the first place. The hidden injustices of classed care are very real in the lives of poorer people.

The hidden element of this injustice presents difficulties for organising for change because the findings show that people’s private language for talking about love and care injustices does not easily translate into a political discourse around affective injustices. One of the most striking conclusions from the empirical research is this resistance of the women in the learning circles particularly to make love and care politics a keystone of their own politics. What they lived emotionally and relationally was articulated in resource terms. Overall, the participants did not know how to do politics around classed love and care injustices. Not only did people not feel they had the power, time and place to act, they also felt that they did not know how to operationalise politics around love and care injustices.

The discussion chapter on care consciousness further illuminated this dilemma of bringing the ‘back story’ of love and care injustices to being a front story in political terms. Here, the contradictory aspects of care consciousness showed how affective dispositions frame people’s lives but also limit their capacity to engage in movements for change. What is so clear, at this concluding point, is that alongside these real tangible issues like a lack of time or resources or the inalienability of care work when one has no supports or resources, is the lack of a language to talk about these injustices, which is why they are hidden. There is no political discourse for the politicising of love and care concerns. What does exist is a private language where poor people have to disclose their own vulnerability in a public way which is a further way of demeaning them. This contradictory position disables people politically. Even
the autoethnographic material presented in the thesis opens the researcher up to a vulnerability that she would have preferred to avoid. How then can people do this type of ‘outing’ of classed care injustices in public if they are to bring the affective beyond the subaltern political level of the family and community? How can care consciousness, which this thesis claims is central to challenging care injustices, operate given its own contradictory aspect of empowering and disempowering people simultaneously? The question is how can the (frequently demeaned and silenced) private angst about love and care, be raised from a practical to a political level? This thesis has come to these questions from building on the premise that the class and care system intersect to generate injustices for people. The hidden injustices of classed care, care consciousness and the affective system which intersects with the class system to generate these realities, are core concepts to discuss when talking about how social class inequality is lived and challenged. The thoughts and experiences of the participants in this thesis have helped to formulate these crucial concepts, and questions, through their willingness to talk about living with class inequality. Their contributions have shed light on how class and care intersect for lived experiences of classed care injustices. What the participants have also shown is the contradiction between how the classed-care intersection is lived mostly in an emotional, cerebral and relational way and yet is framed politically as simply an economic issue. The challenge now is finding answers for these questions; findings ways to make the hidden injustices of classed care, and the care consciousness that comes with doing love and care in unequal conditions, part of a public and political campaign for economic and affective equality.
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Appendices

Appendix A One-to-one interview questions

Possible questions to open conversations:

1. What do you consider the hardest parts of living with a low income in Ireland?
2. Can you give me an example or tell a story of how you have first-hand witnessed the negative impact of a low income on your family or friends or even yourself?
3. Do you think that is fair?
4. How do people fight the situations they find themselves in?
5. Do you think the Government cares about poorer people?
6. Who cares about you or your family and friends?
7. Do you ever think about how wrong inequality?
Appendix B One-to-one activist questions

Interview Schedule - Community Activist

a. Warm up & reassure about confidentiality
b. Explain tape recorder
c. Consent form

Entry into community activism: from private to public role in community:

1. Can you tell me how long you have been involved in community work?

2. Can you tell me a little about your work? Who you work with, what you work on...?

3. Can you tell me a little about what inspired you to get involved in community work?

4. Was it difficult as a woman to be involved in community work?
   Traditional roles for women? Private self into public? Do private skills translate into useful public skills?

5. Do you describe your work as feminist?

6. Do you describe your work as political?
   a. Prompt: does social class mean anything to you...

Opinions of inequality and challenging inequality:
7. What do you see as the main inequalities facing people on low incomes today?
   a. Prompts: economic, cultural, social, affective

8. Can people living with these inequalities challenge them?
   a. What do you think motivates people to get involved in community activism?
   b. What do you think holds people back from engaging in community activism?
   c. Prompts: structures, care, time etc., do people engage in left-wing groups...Particular barriers for women?

9. What is your understanding of how these inequalities are generated in society?
   Do you think society cares about the people you work with? Is community important in challenging inequality?

Closing Questions

Well, I think that is it, is there anything you want to add?

Conclusion

I want to thank you for providing me with this interview. I enjoyed talking with you. If I need to clarify anything with you would it be alright to contact you.

Turn off tape.

How did you feel about the interview?
Appendix C Learning Circle schedules

Session 1

Aim of session: participants and researcher leave with understanding of ways of thinking about inequality

Open general discussion about the research

Ask for opinions about how inequality is presented by the media and by people in power to make decisions [ask about housing for example]

Session 2

Aim of session: to link ways of thinking about inequality to practical examples of living with inequality

Open general discussion about previous session: say what was interesting about discussion (use this to generate more discussion)

Ask for opinions about how inequality is experienced on the ground: discuss whether this matches what was discussed in previous session in terms of how inequality is understood by wider society [do people understand what it is like?]

Session 3

Aim of session: to leave with an understanding of how people resist inequality

Open general discussion about previous session: note interesting points

Ask for opinions about how inequality is resisted by people [prompt about unions, community activism, political parties]

Note: remind participants each time that you have asked them to participate in a learning circle to help inform research about living with inequality in Ireland; remind them that you asked them because they are involved in their community and have lived with inequality; but stress that you are interested in their ideas and thoughts and not just their experiences; remind them that they are experts about inequality and that is why you are engaging them in this process.
Appendix D Interview and Learning circle consent form

Affective inequality and the politics of relationality: Research Participants

Dear Participant,
I am a PhD student from the Equality Studies Centre in University College Dublin. I am conducting interviews as part of my field research. The study is about inequality and the politics of social change. Please find enclosed (attached) an information leaflet which gives more detail.

During this interview or learning circle, you will be asked to discuss your experiences of community activism and/or inequality. This interview / learning circle was designed to be approximately forty minutes. However, please feel free to expand on the topic or talk about related ideas. Also, if there are any questions you would rather not answer or that you do not feel comfortable answering, please say so and we will stop the discussion or move on to the another topic, whichever you prefer.

All the information will be kept confidential. I will keep the data in a secure place. Upon completion of this research, all data will be destroyed.

Participant's Agreement:
I am aware that my participation in this research is voluntary. I understand the intent and purpose of this research. If, for any reason, at any time, I wish to stop the discussion, I may do so without having to give an explanation.

The researcher has reviewed the individual and social benefits of this project with me. I am aware the data will be used in a PhD study and will be published in academic journals. The data gathered in this study are confidential with respect to my personal identity unless I specify otherwise. If I have any questions about this study, I am free to contact the researcher. If I have any questions about my rights as a research participant, I can also contact the researcher. I have been offered a copy of this consent form that I may keep for my own reference. I have read the above form and, with the understanding that I can withdraw at any time and for whatever reason, I consent to participate in today's interview.

_______________________  __________________
Participant's signature   Date

_______________________
Interviewer's signature
Appendix E Overview of ground theory approach to analysis

Writing autoethnographic accounts

One-to-one interviews

Learning circle 1

Learning Circle 2

One to one interviews

Open coding
Line by line reading and coding
Write memos

Focused coding using relevant codes
Determine when data saturated

- Refine core concepts
- Write theoretical memos
- Define relationships and from substantive codes

Theory construction using substantive codes and memos

Influence from literature
Appendix F Information Sheet

Why talk to community activists?

This research is concerned with understanding social class inequality and challenges to social class inequality. People active in the community are positioned such that they have front-line knowledge and experience of social class inequality and challenging the impact of these inequalities as part of community involvement. I am specifically interested in talking to women because the area of inequality I am most interested in exploring is affective inequality and research shows that women disproportionately do the care work in society and research also shows that women carry the burden in terms of managing poverty and social class inequality.

If you are available and interested in talking with me – participation would take about forty to fifty minutes and involve a discussion with me about inequality – I would be very appreciative of your time.

Contact Details

Should you have any questions which you would like to clarify before making a decision to take part, I will be very happy to answer them.

Mags Crean
PhD student
UCD School of Social Justice
Belfield
Dublin 4
E-mail margaret.crean@ucdconnect.ie

Prof Kathleen Lynch
Head of School

UCD School of Social Justice
Belfield
Dublin 4
Phone (01) 7167623

Research Information Sheet
Affective inequality and the politics of relationality

Background

Understandings of how social class inequality is experienced usually focus on the economic, cultural and political inequalities in a person’s life. My research is concerned with a fourth area – affective inequalities. These are inequalities specifically associated with the provision and sustaining of love and care work.

Affective Inequality and the politics of relationality

The purpose of this research is to

Aim 1: To examine experiences of social class inequality in Ireland with respect to economic, cultural, political and affective social systems.

Aim 2: To examine the dynamics of political organisation (and the relevance of relationality to this organisation) at a subaltern level (that is within community politics, personal and family life) in response to poverty and social class inequality in Ireland.

Aim 3: To explore the central organising principles of political activity at a subaltern level and compare these principles with the core principles such as competition, self-interest and power.
that currently define the public or ‘strong politics’ that exist nationally and internationally.

Aim 4: To develop an affective egalitarian narrative for challenging poverty and social class inequality.

Methodology

Individual, once-off interviews will be conducted with community activists and people involved in their community from urban areas around Dublin and Wicklow, Ireland. Interviews will take place at a time and in a location convenient to participants.

I anticipate that each interview will last between forty five to fifty minutes in which you will be asked for your views and experiences in relation to your community involvement, social class inequality, and political organising for social change. To ensure that I have an accurate account of the information given, a tape recorder will be used to record the interview.

Once the interview is complete, the information on the tape will be transcribed onto paper so that I can read it and begin the process of looking at the data for common meanings across interviews. Once the tape has been transcribed, it will be destroyed.

The study will initially be disseminated as a PhD study, and later in academic journals.

The study will also be used to inform my work as a community activist in terms of developing a strategy to engage people in political activism for egalitarian social change.

Confidentiality

“All participants’ right to confidentiality will be completely respected at all times and in compliance with law”

Your name and your organisation (if any) where you work will not appear on the transcript instead a code will be used for each person which will subsequently be transferred to a pseudonym name. Each tape recording, tape covers and written transcript will be given a number for identification purposes and stored separately in UCD. The researcher will be the only person who will know what number corresponds to your interview this will not be divulged to anyone.

All those who express an interest in taking part in the study are invited by the researcher to sign a consent form.