Introduction

The social fabric relies on our ability to sustain life, nurture the weak, and respond to the needs of intimates.

—Abel and Nelson (1990, p. 4)

We take care of people. We take care of our partners, parents, friends, children, relatives, or even, sometimes, people we don’t know. Ranging from physical activities such as cooking, feeding, cleaning, supervising, taking from one place to another, and so on, to activities concerning the emotional requirements of others like making them feel valued and loved, care work is a combination of many tasks. Similar to all domestic work, it is perceived as a natural extension of womanhood (Hochschild, 2000, 2002). Yet the emotional component embedded in care work is a unique aspect distinguishing it from other domestic works that cannot be relieved by means of technological developments (Ecevit, 2012).

In most parts of the world, women are the unpaid care workers of our families. Especially in societies like Turkey, where family ideology is very powerful, in addition to the nuclear family, extended family network is a significant supporter, particularly for working mothers. According to Aycan and Eskin’s (2005) research, in dual earner families both men and women experience work family conflict (WFC) with the former having a much more negative influence on the latter (W-to-FC), rather than vice versa (F-to-WC). Furthermore, W-to-FC is experienced more harshly by women than men. Thus, in Turkey, “extended family is a major source of support for childcare, which helps families to cope with WFC” (p. 467). Yet in cases where no female member of extended family is available, or mothers would like to have more control in child rearing, they employ child minders (Soyseçkin, 2014).

In Turkey, paid child care work has been established as an informal employment because of lack of institutionalized early child care and education services and of insufficiency of arrangements regarding reconciliation of work and family life. This situation, then, causes working women to require the help of other women’s labor, especially when there is no

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exploring how race/ethnicity differences find their reflection on women. There are a significant number of studies that have considered and defined the relationship through kinship terms is very common. This is not only a result of the work but as entrusted to my safekeeping,” display this complex relationship. Considering child care as work and motherhood together complicates how the labor is perceived. In the accounts of child minders, the emphasis is on “this is not just a job.”

However, it is not possible to speak of a basic employer–employee relationship between mothers and child minders; considering and defining the relationship through kinship terms is very common. This is not only a result of the work itself and the workplace, but also the family discourse that enfolds us: “We are a big family.” This viewpoint is not only applied as a state policy, but also embraced by sport communities, and thus does not require any specific skills, training, or education, its position in the secondary labor market brings low status (Anderson, 1990; Cleveland & Hyatt, 2002; Schmid & Hasenfeld, 1993). “When women’s labor is treated as a commodity, the women who perform it are degraded” (Anderson, 1990, p. 75). Tuominen (2003) indicates the opposition between family as a place of love, cooperation, and personal relations and market as a place of laws, competition, and contracts. The contrast between “rational economic man” and “emotional relational woman” leads care to be understood as “gendered and racialized “natural” feminine activity,” and not as work (p. 45). The disparity between family as a place of love and market as a place of laws causes child care to be perceived as non-work. The entrance of care work into the market fractures our understanding of work (Tuominen, 2000). However, there are studies placing money and love against one another, claiming difficulty or impossibility of commodification (Folbre, 1995; Held, 2002; Himmelweit, 2000; Lynch, 2007; Pellegrino, 1999). Furthermore, J. A. Nelson (1999) states the fear of commodification due to the idea of relating market with “individualism and self-interest,” whereas care work is thought of within the frame of generosity and attentiveness to others (p. 56). Conflict between commodification and personal relations causes care workers to experience significant problems. Emotional tie established between care workers and care receivers does not change the reality that care work is a job and it will end sooner or later. Himmelweit (1999) names this situation as transitory nature of the work (p. 35). Therefore, workers have to develop some strategies for escaping heavy emotional consequences of leaving the child cared for. One of these strategies is detached attachment (M. Nelson, 1990, p. 604).

**Literature**

Although domestic labor literature is broad enough, to a large extent, the research analyzes the issue through the immigration of women. There are a significant number of studies exploring how race/ethnicity differences find their reflection in existing hierarchies in societies and thus in the working conditions of immigrant women, especially the ones with live-in jobs (Browne & Misra, 2003; Cheng, 2003; Mandell, 2003; Tuominen, 2000; Uttal, 1994; Uttal & Tuominen, 1999; Williams, 2005). Yet the relationship between employers and workers is described only from the side of the laborer. Furthermore, I think some of them produce an image of poor victims (Cheever, 2002; Zarembka, 2002). That is to say, the picture drawn about working conditions and experiences of workers is incomplete; every domestic worker has some amount of negotiation power depending on age, ethnicity/race, experience, and legal situation. Furthermore, in many of these studies, the full dimension of the employers is missing. They are pictured as having an absolute power. Tensions and cooperation rising from changing negotiation powers of different sides of the working relationship as a key point of the domestic work are ignored.

In the literature, commodification of care work is considered within the frame of two points: effect of commodification on the value of the work and on the relationship between care providers and care/service receivers. Due to the understanding that child care is a natural extension of motherhood and thus does not require any specific skills, training, or education, its position in the secondary labor market brings low status (Anderson, 1990; Cleveland & Hyatt, 2002; Schmid & Hasenfeld, 1993). “When women’s labor is treated as a commodity, the women who perform it are degraded” (Anderson, 1990, p. 75). Tuominen (2003) indicates the opposition between family as a place of love, cooperation, and personal relations and market as a place of laws, competition, and contracts. The contrast between “rational economic man” and “emotional relational woman” leads care to be understood as “gendered and racialized “natural” feminine activity,” and not as work (p. 45). The disparity between family as a place of love and market as a place of laws causes child care to be perceived as non-work. The entrance of care work into the market fractures our understanding of work (Tuominen, 2000). However, there are studies placing money and love against one another, claiming difficulty or impossibility of commodification (Folbre, 1995; Held, 2002; Himmelweit, 2000; Lynch, 2007; Pellegrino, 1999). Furthermore, J. A. Nelson (1999) states the fear of commodification due to the idea of relating market with “individualism and self-interest,” whereas care work is thought of within the frame of generosity and attentiveness to others (p. 56). Conflict between commodification and personal relations causes care workers to experience significant problems. Emotional tie established between care workers and care receivers does not change the reality that care work is a job and it will end sooner or later. Himmelweit (1999) names this situation as transitory nature of the work (p. 35). Therefore, workers have to develop some strategies for escaping heavy emotional consequences of leaving the child cared for. One of these strategies is detached attachment (M. Nelson, 1990, p. 604).
In the literature, emotional labor is mostly discussed through jobs performed in the public sphere (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Hochschild, 1983; Pugliesi, 1995). Despite the fact that emotional labor debates enable us to understand the significance of emotions and how they are constructed, jobs in private areas are not taken into consideration. From another point of view, care work literature does not discuss the issues within emotional labor. O’Connell (2010), however, focuses on the dynamics of family-like relationships in child minding. She emphasizes the significance of eating together as a sign of fictive kinship relation. Yet, her ethnographic study is based on child minding at care workers’ homes and the subject of analysis is consumption and taste orientations.

In Turkey, as well, there is domestic work literature, and recent studies could be categorized under two subjects: research studying domestic labor through immigrant women and local women. Although there are differences regarding research subject, most of them examine the working conditions and exploitative aspects of the job. The first group of studies addresses the intensified exploitation of labor of immigrant women working in live-in jobs (Akalm, 2007, 2009; Çelik, 2005; Ege, 2002; Erdem & Şahin, 2009). Mentioned studies draw a picture showing the weak sides of domestic laborers. Yet, there is other research putting the negotiation of the immigrant workers forward (Demirdirek, 2007; Eder, 2007; Kaşka, 2006; Kerough, 2003). Research in the second cluster brings local women into focus and analyzes relationships between employers and domestic worker on the crossing of class, gender, and rural/urban origin, regressive/modern, and uneducated/educated differentiation while displaying working conditions, as well (Bora, 2005; Kalaycıoğlu & Rittersberger-Tılıç, 2001; Özyeğin, 2004; Suğur, Suğur, & Gönç-Savran, 2008). Yet, all the aspects refer to cleaning workers. Although they provide a profound insight into the private sphere, cleaning work relations are central to the studies. However, child care, elder care, and cleaning are different from each other with respect to organization of work, how employers and employees associate with each other, and working conditions. That is to say, analyzing local women performing paid child care work is one of the significant contributions to the literature.

Therefore, this study contributes to existing literature by means of shifting the central point of child care work from immigrant women to local ones, displaying the negotiation power of the workers, presenting the effect of the structure of the labor market on the dynamics and commodification of child care in the private sphere in Turkey.

**Method**

This study is based on fieldwork research realized within the scope of PhD dissertation. In total, 41 in-depth interviews were conducted between February 2013 and January 2014 in the capital city of Turkey, Ankara, of which 19 were with child minders and 19 were with urban middle-class working mothers with at least one child between the ages of 0 and 6 years cared for by a child minder. Furthermore, three interviews were conducted with women managers working in agencies matching families and child minders. However, this article’s main focus is child care workers and, thus, only their accounts were given a place throughout the study.

In Turkey, child minding is performed in children’s parents’ houses. Due to a lack of a formal arrangement and a control mechanism, parents prefer that their child be cared for in their own home because of questions about their child’s safety and class differences with respect to opportunities offered. Thus, most of the child minders were interviewed outside of working hours and of workplace due to the problem of receiving permission from employers. For my field research, I think in-depth interview was the best method for collecting data regarding my questions about the private life of respondents. The structure of informal child care work in Turkey was not suitable for an ethnographic study. I decided to finish my fieldwork after reaching 19 child minders as I had enough detailed information and the data had started to repeat itself.

At the beginning, I planned to conduct interviews with both the mother and the child minder, yet after some meetings, I realized that—as I had to contact the workers through their employers—child minders avoided answering my questions on negative aspects of their working relationship. Furthermore, because of the fact that I was identified as a friend of the mothers, power inequality between the respondents and me deepened. This is why I decided to break off the link between the mothers and child minders.

Throughout my fieldwork, I used snowball sampling. Because of the fact that I am a middle-class woman, accessing contact information of middle-class mothers was easier, thanks to my social network. However, as I had to find child minders and mothers separately, organizing meetings with care workers had been very hard at first. Subsequent to my travel with the workers in their shuttle buses, this procedure accelerated.

Child minders interviewed were between 38 and 57 years old. Eleven women out of 19 were primary school graduates while two were secondary school graduates and five had high school diplomas. One of the women was a college graduate. Duration of time working in the child care sector varied from 4 months to 15 years. The wage range for full-time, 5 days a week, child minding was between 800 and 1.300 TL.

Due to the fact that the study was based on small scale research, it could only give a detailed idea on the dynamics of informal child care work in Ankara. To be able to have a more representative picture, there is a need for similar studies in different regions of Turkey.

**Results**

In Turkey, as mentioned before, child care is considered the main responsibility of women. Furthermore, there has been
very little, if any, institutionalization of early child care and education. Therefore, women either temporarily or permanently withdraw from the labor market, benefit from the female members of their family or hire child minders from the informal labor market. Hiring child minders is an option possible only for middle- and upper-class women. The main aim of this study is to reveal the dynamics of paid child care in the informal sector in Turkey. Within this frame, the data of the study are discussed under two main subjects: commodification and informal labor market. The private sphere as the workplace is another point where these two subjects intersect.

**Commodification**

All activities performed by women in households are naturalized and this naturalization affects their value when they become involved in the market. Their labor is degraded. Although it takes place in the labor market, it is been still considered as non-work. There is disparity between family and market. This disparity causes care to be perceived as non-work due to the fact that it is performed by women in families with the motivation of love, not of money. The contrast between “rational economic man” and “emotional relational woman” leads care to be understood as “gendered and racialized ‘natural’ feminine activity,” and not as work. Therefore, after care work enters into the market, it challenges our understanding of work, which is performed for money, not for emotions. Furthermore, what market brings to care work is the tension between working for money and altruistic feelings, which is a sign of good care. Fear about money harming true feelings is mentioned widely. The main concern is the penetration of market logic into an activity based on personal relationship.

This tension between feelings and money causes child care work relationships to be experienced in a “family-like” frame. The next section discusses what family-like means for care workers and the results of doing child care work as a waged job.

**To Be “Like One of the Family”**

Child minders desire to establish a family-like relationship with their employers. For the workers, love for the child and feeling like one of the family are even more significant than wages or working conditions.

Eating together, chatting accompanied by a cup of coffee, spending time with the mother as if she is a friend, mainly “to be treated as a human being” are prioritized above an “as a worker, nothing more” attitude. Below, Naime (51) compares her previous and present employers and her comparison gives an idea about what a child minder expects from her employers and from the work. In some situations, receiving money seems to function as a barrier in establishing an equal relationship with the mothers.

Let alone sitting together, eating something . . . It’s like, you know, you tell a person something, you tell something . . . I mean she’s direct like that, a worker will do her work, will do whatever I say because I pay her. But you become family there, you live in their house. . . . For instance, her friends as well. She has only one friend; she didn’t have anyone else visiting, so this friend was coming. So I went, made and brought them Nescafe. They did not say, “Pick a Nescafe for yourself if you like and sit with us.” All right, perhaps they chat between the two, whatever, but “if you like pick a Nescafe for yourself or like chocolate. I put them there, you can also pick one.” I mean, she doesn’t say that. These are [recent employers] closer to me, I suppose. More like my house . . . I open the fridge if there is something I eat, if not I munch. (Primary school graduate, working for 4 months)

To be able to eat in the employer’s house is the best example of the closeness of the relationship between the mother and child minder. Furthermore, not refraining from opening the refrigerator door is one of the signs of how much the child minder adapts to home and family. Similarly, Halime (38) cites what she heard about “bad families,” giving clues regarding a good employee–employer relationship:

. . . the things I heard were so heavy that it is said there are families giving no breakfast or they ask the workers to have their breakfast before coming to work. It is rumored that they don’t buy anything for breakfast on weekdays, only on weekends just for themselves. . . . I know friends of mine carrying their own bread for lunch. This is why I find myself lucky. (Primary school graduate, working for 8 years)

Here, Halime highlights a family concept, instead of that of employer. Not being provided with food is perceived as negative, the opposite of being part of the family, but not related to working conditions. As it will be clear in the next sections, everything is discussed and interpreted within a familial concept by care workers.

Another indicator of “being one of the family” is whether pictures of the child minder are in the family’s album, or not. This is interpreted as proof of the level of appreciation/love felt by the family and child for the minder. The concept of pictures is noteworthy because almost all of the workers I interviewed showed photographs of the child they care for, as if they are their (grand)children. In addition to keeping the child’s pictures via mobile phone, some informants said they place them and their own children’s side by side at their home. Similarly, it is not unusual for a child minder to carry the child’s picture in her wallet, together with her family members’. There are even those who say that this is how they satisfy their desire for a daughter/son. Selda (40), saying that her picture was put into family album seemed very pleased about the situation.

They placed mine and my family pictures in their private album . . . I’m not from the family but . . . she [mother] shows care. I love her so much. No different from my sister. Her husband is like my brother, I feel like bundling him up. Meeting in the
summer-house, my god, a hug, such a hug in that heat, all sticky and gooey. . . . I am not care giving [to the kid] but it’s like my brother left me his kid and I am dealing with her. . . . Every year in [the kid’s] birthday album they put my picture like a gesture, I get very happy. (High school graduate, working for 3.5 years)

As is clear here, child minders consider not only children but also mothers and fathers as members of their own family. This understanding appears to lessen the impact of receiving money, which explains why the workers are eager to establish a kinship relationship. However, almost all accounts reveal that class difference reflects on how the workers position their employers. None of the child minders think of themselves as belonging to the mothers’ family, but of the mother as a part of their own. This is why they place their employers as if they are *their* daughter/son, sister/brother, or a close relative. The same is true for the mothers. When they speak of familial concepts, they mean their own families, not the child minders’. In other words, despite the fact that the aim is emphasizing closeness of the relationship, distinction and distance have been always there.

Furthermore, although parents/mothers would like to consider the child minder as a part of their families, this cannot be total integration. There has always been a line defining the difference between family and work relations, despite the fact that these two cannot easily be separated from each other. Apparently, compared with child minders, mothers are less eager to establish a family-like relationship. The reason for this reservation is mentioned as risk of exploitation and of crossing the line. However, despite mentioning the significance of forming a boundary, most middle-class women do not want to be perceived as “employer,” which is a result of tension between the market relation and the nature of the work.

Giving and receiving presents is another measure of “family-like” relations, but it is beyond buying materials, and/or extra payments. Finding solutions for any kind of problems—ranging from familial to public issues—supporting women economically and/or psychologically might be perceived as more valuable. Furthermore, these presents and/or supports are regarded as compensation for low wages or in place of a pay rise. In Kerime’s account, how her current employer behaved when she was in a hard situation demonstrates both her kindness and Kerime’s trustfulness.

. . . .Something happened between us; my husband kicked us out of the car. When it happened I said [to the employer] we have a money issue. When I arrived crying . . . Also I didn’t have money for the taxi. [But] I had to take a taxi. I got the money for it from Ms. Melek. When I came back and returned the money, she didn’t take it back. She said, “It is from me” and she paid two-month salary earlier since I needed money. When I told her, she brought it in the same evening. She was such an understanding person. But in the first workplace, if I had told such a problem, she might not have behaved in the same way, I mean. But this one [the employer] trusted and gave the money that she didn’t think I would run away. (Primary school graduate, working for 2 years)

In some situations, not only mothers but also other family members may provide help depending on their profession. For instance, Nimet (47) told of her employer’s husband, who is a physician, making services in the hospital easier in case of illness.

. . . .I don’t talk with men, if he [the employer’s husband] talks, it is because he helps with things such as illness. Thanks to him. But I don’t talk about everyday matters for no reason I mean . . . I had an illness, he guided me through it. We went to hospital together; he took me to the hospital. There was also [my] child’s control. He helped my blood to be taken. And he himself brought all results, my values and so on. He helped with all of them, thanks to him. (Secondary school graduate, working for 2 years)

The amount and form of presents/support change according to the economic condition of the child minder. These vary from giving extra money and/or foods to buying clothes for the child minder and her child(ren). In most situations, child minders expect to receive presents or other kinds of support, which are considered within the scope of child care work. Yet there should be an acceptable framework for giving presents and money, and this depends on how well the employer and the employee know each other. While some child minders may find it offensive if used clothes or money are offered to them, others might easily ask for these things. That is to say, strategies developed are “relation sensitive.” The main aim is to not give offense. For instance, Kevser (46) appreciates the way her employer offers extra money.

. . . .Sometimes, for example, she overpays my salary. For example, I mean without hurting or humiliating me. For example, since I have a son about to start school, [she said] “Ms. Kevser it is from me.” It was the same when my son was about to go into military service. She pays attention to such details as Ramadan and on similar days. She does very well I mean. But she tries to do it without hurting, humiliating me. (High school graduate, working for 4 years)

Exchanging gifts enables the workers to feel like one of the family, and employers to guarantee better care for their children. However, this practice does not take place between equals. As is clear from Zehra receiving “pocket money” from her employer, the employers are the ones with more economic and social power. The child minders are conscious of the unequal positions and expect them to be brought into play; they are not unhappy about it as long as the employers do not behave in an authoritarian manner. In other words, the employer should not remind the child minder of the inequality between them because this jeopardizes the “one of the family” feeling.

That is to say, the exchange of gifts has its own rules. While the workers expect their employers to do/give something in
addition to wages as a sign of trust and appreciation for the quality of work they perform, and as a natural consequence of unequal class position, to ask for these things is not welcomed. The employers behave according to this expectation as a result of the social, cultural, and economic difference between them and their employees, and as a way of showing their appreciation for their children's care. Wage, in return for child care work, has never been perceived as enough by either side.

A family-like relationship starts from the very beginning and continues until and even after the employer–employee relationship ends. While child minders try to be considerate, they expect a similar attitude in case the family terminates the work relationship. Informing “with a thud” is considered unacceptable, mostly because of not having sufficient time to be prepared for a last goodbye. How the relationship is ended very much affects ongoing communication. It is especially important for child minders to stay in contact with the child. Immediate announcement of termination is considered intolerable as it erases the “we are a family” sentiment, as is clear in Aylin’s account.

. . . I feel like something was unfair, I mean they told me all of a sudden, “It is over, and you will resign.” I mean, this could be told beforehand. I attached to the kid. I loved him very much. This was overlooked. The family behaved selfishly, and broke my heart indeed. . . . Employee will see home as her family, but employer will also perceive her employee as a family. I mean this is reciprocal. They will see you as one of the family. I thought of them as part of my family, yet they had not felt the same way. They had always considered me as a worker, which is the key point of working in a house. You will be like a family. (College graduate, working for 2.5 years)

Both sides of the working relationship develop some strategies to forget children are cared for in return for money. Furthermore, warmth between the workers and the employers enable the former to escape from the feeling of being a stranger in somebody else’s house, while for the latter this sympathy ensures good care and lightens the feeling of guilt for leaving her child in the care of another woman. However, by giving presents, extra money, and/or supporting the workers in various ways, middle-class families try to emphasize that they are the employers.

Management of Emotions

Care work consists not only of meeting the physical needs of children but also of giving affection. Neither child minders nor mothers can think of this kind of caring as separate from emotions. Child minders and children develop a strong connection. One of the marks of this connection is how the child refers to the care worker. In most cases, especially during the initial stages of speaking, children call their minder “mother.” This becomes very problematic both for mothers and child minders. From the one side, it is a clear sign that the child loves the care worker. Yet, on the other side, it reveals the mothers’ guilt at preferring to work rather than caring for their own children. Despite the fact that mothers try to rationalize the situation through an explanation that it is natural because the child spends the whole day with the child minder, still they state that it is important for the child to know who is who.

As deduced from the narratives, not only mothers but also child minders are faced with ambiguous feelings. They move between the happiness of being loved by the child and the unease brought on by the mother’s jealousy. They are annoyed, also, because it carries a potential of damaging their relationship with the mothers, despite the fact that they like to be called “mother.” Kevser (46) emphasizes this kind of risk.

Once or twice [the kid] said mom, but we [the family and child minder] did not make it public. We tried not to let [the kid] [say mom]. . . . I don’t think it is right because I feel sorry for the mother. At least she should know motherhood. I mean, at all events, however [the child minder] is pure minded, she [mother] might get sad in case the child calls his/her minder as mom. (High school graduate, working for 4 years)

Similarly, Halime told how her employer tried to get her son to call Halime “aunt.” Despite the fact that she experienced hard times, she said she understood the reasons of mothers. Zehra (38), also, encountered a similar situation. And in spite of the fact that she mentioned her disturbance, it seemed she liked to be called “mother.”

As a matter of fact when the child spoke for the first time, he called me mama before calling his mother mama. . . . [His mother] was upset. She was the one who taught him my name. Everyday, when she comes home from work, she says, “My son, her name is Zehra, Zehra.” She was upset. How could she not be? Even now although the child knows my name, he looks at me right in the eyes like this and says, “Zehra, you’re mama, right? You’re mama.” He calls me mama. I say, “I’m not your mama,” he says, “You are mama.” (Primary school graduate, working for 3 years)

Moreover, child minders, too, might be jealous of some moments that they cannot share with the child. Aylin (38) talked about how she would like to be with the child she cared for when she took a bath.

In fact I don’t give a bath to Eylem at all, because according to the mother the happiest moment for the baby is the moment of bathing. And the mother and father always give a bath together . . . I told them like “let me also give a bath, let me do it, and so on.” Well I made a joke like that, saying “let me taste that pleasure as well, always you are enjoying it.” (High school graduate, working for 2.5 years)

Despite her claim that she made a joke, her wish to “taste that pleasure” indicates the bond established between her and the child she cared for, and the reality that the kid is not her own. These kinds of moments may make them remember
that what they do is a job. Furthermore, it reveals the nature of paid child care.

No matter how strong the relationship between child minder and child, it will end sooner or later because it is a job. This comes from the transitory nature of the work. The child minders in my study prefer to ignore the transitory nature instead of developing strategies to protect themselves. The child minders in my study plan to preserve the relationship with the child and his or her family, instead of developing a detached attachment. Mothers, also, think in the same way and propose it as a solution in case the child minder states her worry. For instance, Nilgün (43) spoke of how much she loved the child she cared for and the difficulty of leaving him.

I was so attached to him... In my mobile phone, there are more pictures of him than of my children. My phone is full of his pictures. ... I think something might happen and I must leave him. Nothing is endless. ... I am a little bit emotional, as you see. (But) I think even if we are separated, I know that I can go and see him. (Primary school graduate, working for 2.5 years)

This attachment prohibits child minders from resigning from the work even in the case of insults. It is not an easy decision because leaving the job means leaving the child behind. This is why many child minders can’t find it in their hearts to go. Three ideas/feelings appear to be important regarding keeping the workers from giving up: love felt for the child, a desire to not let him or her down, and questions about the structure of a new family. What Diler and Seyide mention displays how significant the child’s feelings are. Seyide (57) illuminates the situation as “failing the child,” as “infidelity.”

... During child minding, resisting a little bit is necessary. Since at this time you become attached not only to the parents but also to the child. Considering the child’s feelings is a must. Yet you are in a condition to straddle both yourself and the parents, because when you let the child down, you are betraying him/her. ... Well if you are not in an unbearable situation, you have to consider the child. Because it is a different thing. (Primary school graduate, working for 7 years)

Performing care work as a paid job does not prevent motherhood ideology from coming into play. In all jobs, there are times that workers would like to terminate the employment relationship because of bad working conditions. They might not be able to do so owing to financial difficulties and/or the difficulty of finding another job. Yet in child care, the main motivation is feelings for the children. Equating good motherhood with faithfulness and patience requires child minders to think they will disappoint children if they quit work. This is not only about how they internalize this idea, but also how it is perceived by others. Women leaving their babies are demonized easily. These same issues do not seem to apply to the father’s role. This view is reflected in the way that child minders push themselves to stay as long as possible. Otherwise their womanhood and motherhood might be doubted.

From another perspective, the situation of mothers is also taken into account by the workers. Diler (45), in her account, told how she could not put her employer on the spot despite the fact that she would like to do so.

... I was so attached that I didn’t want to abandon the child. Her mom was a teacher. You know I swallowed the poison to not to abandon the child. The schools were off, I left the job at the end of July. ... She said, “See you, again,” I said “I will think on it and let you know.” In fact I had decided not to call till the last day. I would like to leave her in a difficult situation. I swore that she would not find a child minder and be left destitute. I hold a grudge against her but could not do it, you know? I called after 15 days and told her to find another woman. Since I thought it would be more human. (High school graduate, working for 7 years)

This account also brings forth the conflictual nature of the relationship between child minders and mothers. As the workers cannot do anything about problematic situations and “prefer” to conceal real feelings, job burnout increases. Diler (45) mentioned that she lost weight because of the way the mother behaved.

Not this, but my previous job was so offensive. I mean, can you believe it? I was going to the job with tears in my eyes. Going from the 100. Yıl to the Çukurambar was making me to feel homesick. It was so repressive that I lost weight at that time... She [the employer] was asking, “Did you clean?” Ah, I was swearing. I was saying, “Don’t you believe it... Cross my heart, I cleaned.” ... I was touching to the door and she was cleaning the door. I was holding the cupboard and she was cleaning it. ... (After a dispute) “Enough is enough,” I said, “Ain’t I slave here?!” (High school graduate, working for 7 years)

As a sign of good performance and reliability, having control at work maximizes job satisfaction for the child minders. The less they have control, the more emotional burnout they will experience. Autonomy is essential and includes determining speed, standard, and frame of the tasks. For the workers to be able to behave of their own accord is dependent on how closely they represent the middle-class values of family. Furthermore, educational level and/or child minding experience may also provide autonomy. In addition to importance of control, the way employers interfere with the work of the child minder is significant. Nilgün (43):

... If they interfere with everything, I certainly don’t work. Yet if they tell me in a very good manner, like if they say “we understand that you are used to this way but we don’t like it in this way. If you do it like this, it will be better,” then there will be no problem. (Primary school graduate, working for 2.5 years)

From a similar point of view, for mothers, as well, raising children in their own way is significant. This is why they would like to employ child minders even if they have close
relatives ready to take on child care responsibility, and/or prefer to work with women who are in a similar age group. Mothers do not want their motherhood to be “questioned,” as child minders do not want their experience in child care to be doubted. Thus, seeking autonomy is true for both sides of the working relationship.

Emotion management and burnout have been widely experienced by mothers and child minders. A working relationship formed in a private sphere contributes to the difficulties and the ways developed for solving them. Moreover, facilities provided by the state, division of labor at home, and other family members influence mothers’ negotiation power and thus the workers’.

**Informal Labor Market**

Care work as extended from private to public sphere as a result of industrialization has become a low prestige and low waged job. Due to understanding that child care is a natural extension of motherhood and thus does not require any specific skills, training, or education, its position in the secondary labor market brings low status.

In Turkey, most child minding has taken place in the informal labor market and thus it is out of formal regulation. This causes undefined limits of the task and increases the possibility of exploitation, while the absence of any arrangements regarding occupational safety and health cause many work accidents and occupational illnesses. A lack of social security is closely related with the domestic work area ignored by the government. In all labor laws in Turkey, domestic workers have been ignored as workers. Therefore, they have been experiencing serious problems regarding social security. As a result of the Labor Law No. 4857, providing insurance for all domestic workers had become a matter of law, even if they worked on a temporary basis. Yet, as result of the Law No. 6552, differentiation among domestic workers has resulted. According to the Law, those who employ domestic worker less than 10 days are not counted as employers anymore. Through a coupon system, they only have to pay for occupation illness. Only those employing a worker more than 10 days have to pay insurance toward retirement. Furthermore, there is no strict monitoring. Because of the fact that the procedure is so difficult and liabilities are heavy, many domestic workers work without social insurance and the employers try to find ways of escaping from the responsibility. Within the framework of the social security system in Turkey, insurance payments are so high that they make up almost one third of the gross minimum wage. If we take into account the payments ranging from 900 TL to 1,200 TL without insurance, for care workers to not to have or receive social insurance will not be surprising. Similarly, in case an employee would like to keep all her money, making overpayment for insurance is not desirable to many of the mothers, as they have been already paying about half their income for child care. Moreover, according to the Law 5510, to be qualified for a pension, for women having insurance after 2008, 5400 premiums day-payment is obligatory, while retirement age increased to 61 for the ones to be able to fulfill these requirements till 2035.

**Working Without Social Insurance**

The fact that child care is thought of as a natural extension of womanhood underlies its low status as work and the resistance of authorities to make any arrangements about the area. The lack of any formal standardization and the fact that child care is traditionally performed unpaid in the home cause the evaluation of child care as non-work not only by the employers but also the employees. Aylin (38) stated, “I already have performed this job to add value to my leisure time.” Even Aylin as a high school graduate has the perception of child care as a spare time activity, and money earned is underestimated.

In cases where the employers would like to provide insurance, other problems emerge. One of them is age limit. According to Turkish Law, for women to retire they need 5400 days premium payment, which is unattainable. Child minders usually start working when they are around 40 years old and to be entitled to a pension they have to work approximately 30 years consecutively. Therefore, it is not surprising that they think asking for insurance is unreasonable unless they begin working at a younger age.

Arife said, “I had not worked till this time. What is the point of having insurance?” The employers also commented that their child minders did not want to be insured, despite the fact that they offered. In addition to age limit, premium payments are high. While the mothers do not want to pay extra money, the workers do not accept a cut from their wage because, in most situations, the cost of insurance is shared by both sides. Zehra (38) spoke of how she tried to convince her employers to cut less from her wage, after she got insurance.

In the first year they increased my salary just 60 TL more. And I did not like the amount. So I asked them to make my salary 1,000 TL. Then, in the second year after they got my insurance Mrs. Sinem tried to decrease my salary to 800 TL. I did not accept this and said to them “make it 900 TL, at least.” You could not convince her. . . . I had that 100 TL with difficulty, by telling them three times. What they gave is very little in return for my effort. They cannot find a worker like me. (Primary school graduate, working for 3 years)

From another perspective, in the case of child minders who benefit from health insurance through their husbands or sons, they perceive demanding insurance as unnecessary. Furthermore, after they become insured, it causes a decrease in their salary and they have to make a greater contribution to the health system. In this case, it functions to their detriment. Another noteworthy attitude about providing insurance is considering it as an extra or as a kind of reward given as a result of the kindness of an employer, not as a part of employment. The workers, as well, adopt a similar perspective that
in this case their employers are “good people.” Thus, they consider asking for insurance as impolite. For instance, Selda (40) appreciates her employers because they asked, after some time, if she preferred to have insurance.

As time passes and as they know me, they (employers) asked me if I would like to get insured. They are very kind. I contribute to the family economy. I can meet my daughter’s needs, easily. How can I ask these kinds of people to provide insurance? (High school graduate, working for 3.5 years)

Kerime (41), however, did not insist on her employers providing insurance owing to the fact that she did not want to cause any trouble at home.

. . . I also once asked them if they were going to provide my insurance but they didn’t. She was going to talk to her husband, you know, he works in a hospital. I was wondering if he was going to make it as if I work in the hospital. I don’t know how he would provide my insurance. I didn’t ask for it again. I’ve let it drop because I don’t want to disturb their family setting. I mean, I was saying that if it happens, it happens but unless it happens, what can I do. It is up to fate. Frankly, I didn’t care so much because of my husband’s insurance. (Primary school graduate, works as a child minder for 2 years)

Paid child care performed in the private sphere transforms social insurance from being part of a worker’s right to a sign of kindness. Because child care is considered non-work, insistence on insurance might be unwelcome. Here, Kerime’s account addresses both this kind of perception and a feeling of easiness owing to the fact that she already benefits from the insurance of a male member of her family. Age criterion in the social security system also underlies the reluctance of women to ask their employers to provide insurance. To know that entitlement to a pension is almost impossible causes child minders to stay under the limited social protection supplied by their husbands/sons.

As the narratives display, social insurance is not considered a part of working rights. The most significant reason is confusion regarding the nature of care work, which prevents the employers from providing insurance and the employees from demanding it as their right. The expectation that child care should be handled at home by unpaid female members of the family underlies this ignorance. However, the complexity of the procedure, the amount of premiums, and the structure of the social security system in Turkey contribute to the isolation of child care work in the informal labor market.

It has become clear that the social welfare regime neglects the domestic work area. Though there are some provisions, this field is still far from taking place in the formal labor market. Therefore, women have to develop their own strategies to deal with the difficulties they encounter. That is to say, the government in Turkey seems willing to continue to keep domestic work within the broader home setting, as a private issue where both actors are women.

Home as a Workplace

In Turkey, most of child minders are expected to do some cleaning and sometimes it may not be agreed on at the beginning. This is a consequence of working relationships established in the informal labor market. The presence of a contract is significant, yet it does not prevent exploitation in the Turkish case. In spite of the fact that a contract defines the responsibilities of both sides, bending of pre-agreed rules has always been possible owing to the absence of formal regulation. However, the sector has its own code of practices formed over the course of time through fast circulation of information among workers’ and employers’ networks. With regard to the range of wages, features of workers/employers, and tasks to be performed with or without being placed in the frame of exploitation, there is an agreement in the field. Yet, this is not the kind of consensus in which the participants in the working relationships have come together and agreed on. The lack of a state presence causes private interests, obligations, and inequality between sources to overshadow work interactions. Therefore, a continuous tension between the workers and employers occurs.

However, as a consequence of insufficient institutionalized care facilities, home as workplace makes state intervention difficult. Behind closed doors, every relationship has its own dynamics and balances. Yet, home as a workplace also underlies unarticulated tasks to be done.

The most common problem defined by child minders is to be left no choice but to shoulder domestic works—from cleaning to ironing, to cooking—despite the fact that they are not defined within the scope of the service. Gül’s (46) account presents how the beginning of a job might be different from what was experienced.

In the beginning they said “just cook for us.” I accepted. Then they asked me to do vacuum cleaning sometimes. I said okay. But they started to ask me to sweep every day. They told me to clean the toilet, bathroom, to do ironing. It turned into a heavy job for me. (Primary school graduate, working for 4 years)

However, even in the case that it is agreed on by both sides that the only task is to care “thoroughly,” child minders do some other domestic chores willingly. It seems this is a “natural” consequence of working at home as a woman as home refers to some familial responsibilities that a woman has to manage. Doing extra work is explained in these ways: “in the interest of humanity,” “cannot spend time doing nothing,” “giving a hand.” Zeynep, child minder, says that sometimes she prepares sandwiches at her own home, brings them with her and puts them into the employers’ bag as she “feels pity for” them because they leave the house without having breakfast. She adds, “I am like their mother.” Kerime (41) says that she asked for permission to clean her employer’s house.

She had a cleaning lady, but I did it by myself. I did not want to spend my time doing nothing . . . I asked to use her vacuum cleaner. I asked her consent, “May I clean your house?” And she
agreed with me. She must have liked the situation enough that sometimes she asked me to cook. (Primary school graduate, working for 2 years)

Lack of formal regulation and thus limit of tasks and attachment between child minder and family based on love and respect make it easy to shoulder many pre-agreed responsibilities. Child minder Kevser said she did not understand the workers declaring, “Am I obliged to do?” some cleaning.

However, due to this ambiguity about tasks, there is still differentiation between cleaning ladies and child care workers. This differentiation is similar to distinction between nurturant and non-nurturant works, or between women’s work and women’s role.

Most of the child minders identify themselves more closely with the employers than with cleaning workers, despite coming from a similar social, cultural, and economic background. This could be associated with occupational hierarchy in society and the fact that cleaning work is considered at the bottom level. However, doing cleaning in the private sphere results in an additional devaluation of the job.

Although cleaning is performed in the home, most employers do not want to come face-to-face or spend much time with cleaning workers. They desire things to be done by means of magical hands. Therefore, the presence of a child minder enables mothers to have minimum contact with cleaning workers. Furthermore, asking care workers to monitor/relate to cleaning ladies enables mothers to control their homes indirectly, which allows them to stay close to the women’s role.

Diler (45), child minder, emphasizes her difference from a cleaning worker by mentioning how she feels sorry for her and supports the idea of her “superiority” via gifts that employers give her on special days or bring from abroad.

. . . I feel pity for and sad about [the cleaning lady] . . . She says she cannot care for a child, puts it bluntly. . . . “I cannot take responsibility [for the child]. The responsibility is too heavy” she says. . . . They, as a family, think of me as superior to the cleaning lady. . . . They voice and also express it with their behaviors. They value me because I care for their children. For instance, they give me presents other than my wage, in the New Year, on [religious] feasts. . . . They bring presents from the places they visit. (High school graduate, working for 7 years)

A domestic work relationship that is instituted in the informal labor market with the private sphere as the workplace establishes a fictive kinship that determines the nature of interactions. It creates exploitation and a support mechanism at the same time.

Discussion

In Turkey, familialism is a very strong idea(l). Paid child care work is underlined by a “we are a big family” understanding. Thus, commodification of child care brings its own dynamics into Turkish families. In general, it has been perceived as non-work because it is considered a natural extension of womanhood. In countries like Turkey, where traditional gender roles are very widespread, this perception determines the working relationships and conditions. Moreover, the nature of the work also makes complete commodification impossible. Both child minders and employers find it difficult to think of love and work together, and this generates a never-ending tension. They refrain from considering their connection with each other as employee and employer. Hence, they are inclined to think and behave via family terms. Mothers benefit from thinking this way by being freed from feelings of guilt over leaving their child’s care to another women in return for money; child minders can ignore the fact that they care for children for money.

Love felt for the child and the difficulty of adjusting herself to new family keep the child minder from raising objections or terminating work relations in spite of many problems. That is to say, both mothers and the workers make an effort to manage their emotions to avoid any undesirable situation.

However, care work in the informal labor market is characterized by a lack of formal regulations, ambiguity surrounding the frame of the work, and the devaluation of the job. This causes a formless area. Furthermore, private sphere as workplace increases devaluation and prevents market relations to be applied appropriately.

It is certain that mothers are employers and child minders are workers, and child minding is a job. However, it is different from most work in a classical sense. First of all, money is not the primary and only point of relationship between the employers and the employees. They behave and think within the frame of fictive kinship relationships. Money, alone, cannot guarantee satisfaction from the job or better care for children. The employers support their workers in various ways, and this is the expectation of the child minders. Exchanging presents allows the workers to feel like one of the family and the mothers to escape from the alienation of being an employer in their own house. Furthermore, thinking of child minding in kinship terms causes the social insurance issue to be perceived as one of kindness or an extra burden rather than a worker’s right.

However, there has always been the risk of exploitation due to fictive kinship relationships and the emotional component of the work as it is not a measurable entity. In the child care sector, bending the pre-agreed framework is common. Yet, the conclusion drawn from the narratives is that willingly and unwillingly performed tasks should be distinguished from each other. Home as the workplace results in child minders performing some cleaning although it is not required.

In Turkey, as mentioned many times, insufficiency of care facilities causes some women to employ other women as child minders. Working relationships established in the informal labor market influence the negotiation power of both sides. Yet, there are many child minders who have been working in the sector for 15 to 20 years without any social
protection. And there are more women entering the market. Therefore, not only for child care but also for all domestic work areas, the state should establish formal arrangements to correct this unfair situation.

As domestic workers’ organizations emphasize, International Labour Organization (ILO) Contract No. 189, “Decent Work for Domestic Workers,” should be signed immediately. And domestic workers should be covered by the labor law. However, owing to the fact that the workplace is home, there will be a need for a special regulation considering the privacy of the private sphere.

As stated before, the social insurance process is difficult and liabilities are heavy. Besides, most domestic workers work on an irregular basis. Thus, women require a simple and applicable insurance system. Furthermore, insurance premium support for workplaces employing women should extend to houses.

As a result of lack of specific definitions of tasks, domestic work is very much open to exploitation. Thus, services should be classified and clearly defined.

Domestic workers have been frequently subjected to occupational illnesses and work accidents. Therefore, regulations for employers to take necessary measures in households should be required.

These are minimum requirements for a decent work and life. However, formal employment will never bring a total professionalization. The main component of care work is emotional labor and there is no way to completely regulate or cut it off. When women engage in child care as formal employment, strong attachments are formed with the child and continue to exist when the work is terminated. This can generate serious emotional difficulties. However, formal regulations will smooth the path for necessary measures to lessen negative effects. For example, workers could be entitled to weeks of paid severance leave depending on the number of years they worked in that family after termination of the working relationship. During this period, a psychological consultancy might be provided as well.

It should not be forgotten that, although this working relationship is established between two women, the whole of society benefits from well-raised children.

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