

“Under my own care”: Motherhood and Poverty in
New South Wales and Gloucestershire 1820–1834

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Abstract

Since the 1960s, scholars have passionately debated whether mothers from the middle ages to the nineteenth century loved their children. Yet historians have only superficially examined the emotional relationships between women and their offspring. Building on this debate, this thesis aims to contribute to our understanding of motherhood and poverty in three ways. First, it probes the complexities of poor mothers' emotional interactions with their children. Second, it examines some of the different ways that women expressed their moral and financial connections with their offspring. Finally, it brings a new lens to the study of motherhood and poverty by comparing mother-child relationships in Gloucestershire and New South Wales. Taking letters that mothers wrote to the parish in Gloucestershire, and petitions to admit children to, and withdraw children from, the Sydney Orphan Schools, this thesis compares how women's relationships with their children are revealed in these different contexts between 1820 and 1834. It argues that poor mothers expressed or described instances of care for children in order to claim authority over them. In doing so, this research advances the work of historians who have revealed the agency of the poor, by suggesting that in this process, poor mothers also claimed authority.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'A' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

15 October 2018

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This thesis was initially inspired by the work of my supervisor, Tanya Evans. I picked up her books after I had decided the history of the family must be “boring and unimportant.” She proved me wrong, and I cannot now imagine anything more arresting than pouring over fragments of poor women’s lives written in illegible hands. I have appreciated her thoughtful guidance and all the ways in which she challenged me to be a more careful and critical scholar.

This thesis is, in a sense, the product of many years and I owe a lot to the wonderful teaching of the Modern History Department at Macquarie University. It has been a privilege to have such dedicated lecturers and tutors who fostered a collegial culture, continued to read my work and invested in my research even after I left their respective classrooms. Particular thanks go to Kate Fullagar, Leigh Boucher and Isobelle Barrett Meyering who read parts of the thesis and offered feedback. The department also provided much-appreciated funds that enabled me to access archives in England.

I am thankful for the assistance of staff at NSW State Archives and the Cheltenham Local Studies Library. I also had a particularly wonderful experience at Gloucestershire Archives. Staff, including Jenny Rutland, John Putley, Andrew Parry and Paul Evans, were generous with their time and knowledge, accommodating and welcoming. Special thanks to John for a fascinating tour of the strongroom, I truly fell in love with county archives.

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Finally, I could not have imagined this thesis without the work of several generations of feminist and socialist historians. I hope that my research contributes a small part to their project of creating a more just and compassionate society.

Note on Transcription

Throughout this thesis I quote pauper letters, petitions to the Sydney Orphan Schools and case notes from Gloucester Lunatic Asylum. As these documents are handwritten, often by members of the labouring poor, they do not conform to standardised spelling and punctuation rules. As a key purpose of this thesis is to encounter the perspectives of poor mothers through their own voices, it is important to read their letters on their own terms. Historian Thomas Sokoll argues that these unconventional literacy practices give scholars almost direct access to the voices of the poor. He claims that in England in the early nineteenth century, prior to compulsory elementary schooling and universal literacy, paupers wrote “just as they spoke.”¹ Perhaps it was this factor that led some correspondents of the parish in Gloucestershire to drop the letter *h* at the beginning of some words (*‘as*, *‘ear*, *‘add* [*had*]) and add them to other words beginning with vowels (*hill*, *ham*, *Hann* [*Ann*]). In transcribing these records, I have therefore attempted to maintain a sense of the literacy practices of the poor without being overly disruptive to the reading experience. I have maintained original spelling, punctuation and capitalisation, except to change double quotation marks to single quotation marks. In cases where spelling, punctuation or capitalisation were ambiguous due to faded ink or indistinct handwriting my interpretation has lent towards standardised practice. As the writing of the poor regularly deviated from convention, I have not included [*sic*] to highlight these deviations, unless necessary for comprehension, as this would inordinately obstruct the flow of their text. I have also not sought to replicate original formatting, with the exception of characters written in subscript and superscript. The desire to create a clear and easy reading experience also informed my citation practice. For evidence or anecdotes that I discuss over multiple sentences, but which come from

¹ Thomas Sokoll, *Essex Pauper Letters 1731–1837* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 5.

the same primary document, I have placed the footnote reference at the end of the final sentence in which the example is discussed.

Introduction

In June 1832 Sarah West wrote to the Sydney Orphan Schools, petitioning them to admit her children:

The Humbl^e Petition of Sarah J West ... Most Humbly Craves & Beseeches Y^r humane Reverence will take Into Consideration to send some order for taking them Into whatever asylum Y^r Reverence may think proper as It is not in My Power to get them to go If there is not Some Remedy or steps taken to Compell them As the[y] are Unwilling & I am not able to Maintain them I must Inform Y^r Reverence that They are maeby Destroyed for want of not going.

For women like Sarah in nineteenth-century New South Wales (NSW), having dependent children could mean the difference between subsistence and starvation. In such impoverished circumstances, mothers were faced with the constant threat of destitution, and possible separation from their offspring.

Yet the most striking aspect of Sarah's letter was not its expression of desperation, but rather the object of this desperation: her children. Struggling to manage her offspring, Sarah tricked her son into delivering himself into the Reverend Cooper's custody. She explained this plan in a note that accompanied her petition:

please to be so kind as to keep the bearer [of this message,] my Son as
i cannot get him to go with me or his little brother i Shall take the small
boy down after him so as that you keep him.¹

¹ Application of Sarah Jane West, 23 June 1832, NRS 782 [4/330–32] microfilm reel 2776, Applications for Admission into the Orphan Schools, New South Wales State Archives (hereafter NSWSA), Sydney.

In Stroud, Gloucestershire, Sarah Edwards explained her own struggles to the overseers of Tetbury parish. She objected to their threat to stop assisting her, detailing her lack of support, particularly from the father of her illegitimate child:

I ... was very much surprised at your threatening to Stop my pay, — as it is I have more than I can do to support myself and child— I have not seen nor heard from the fellow that brought me into this trouble these 2 months ... I have not seen nor heard from my friends and I am left entirely to my own exertions.

She finished with a threat, underlined for emphasis:

I hope you will directly send wether you intend to stop the Money, if you do I must directly give my Child up to you.²

Although both women responded to their poverty by proposing to give up their children, there are important differences between the two letters. First in their tone—one desperate, one defiant—and second, in their descriptions of their interactions with their offspring—one helpless, the other seemingly callous.

This thesis examines how different contexts of poverty and welfare shaped the ways that poor mothers articulated their relationships with their children. Using petitions to the Sydney Orphan Schools and letters to the parish in Gloucestershire, England, sent between 1820 and 1834, I compare mother-child relationships in these imperial contexts. In both locations, women described their connections with their children through a

² S. Edwards to Tetbury Parish, 12 February 1833, P328a/OV/7/15, Overseers' Correspondence, Tetbury St Mary Parish, Gloucestershire Archives (hereafter GA), Gloucester; Bastardy Examination Sarah Edwards, 8 February 1832, P328a/OV/5/2, Bastardy Examinations, Typescript, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester; Filiation Order Sarah Edwards, 23 July 1835, P328a/OV/5/5, Filiation Orders, Typescript, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester.

shifting dynamic between care and authority. Historians have shown that poor women exercised agency in their interactions with welfare institutions but have not yet explored their expressions of authority. By comparing mothers' descriptions of their relationships with their children I reveal that despite their poverty and dependence on charitable assistance, these women articulated power and authority.

Approach and Sources

In 1807, Fosbrooke's history of Gloucestershire described the county in glowing terms: "A finer county for the study of the picturesque cannot well, in my opinion, exist. It has every conceivable variety of scenery."³ Gloucestershire seems to have maintained this scenic beauty into the 1820s, as this description was repeated almost verbatim in 1825 in *Bettison's Guide to Cheltenham*.⁴ Yet the overseers of the poor, who would have witnessed this natural beauty, were also constantly faced with the poverty and suffering of families within their parishes. This picturesque county provides a regional case study for comparison with NSW. As few historians have studied Gloucestershire, this thesis contributes to our understanding of how women experienced poverty in that region.

My data for Gloucestershire comes from mothers' correspondence with the parish. In England under the Old Poor Law, people were entitled to aid from the parish where they had settlement, that is, a legally established right to relief.⁵ The means for gaining settlement could be somewhat fluid. Children gained their father's parish, or, if they were illegitimate, the parish of their birth.⁶ Adults living in a parish where they did not have a

³ Thomas Dudley Fosbrooke, *Abstracts of Records and Manuscripts Respecting the County of Gloucester Formed into a History* (London: Jos. Harris, 1807), 1.

⁴ S. Bettison, *Bettison's History of Cheltenham, or Visitor's Guide* (London: Baldwin, Craddock and Joy, 1825), 124.

⁵ For a summary and chronology of the legislation that made up the Old Poor Law, see Steven King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700–1850: A Regional Perspective* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 272–74.

⁶ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, 22.

right to relief could gain settlement there by working in that place for a year, renting a property for 10 pounds or more per year, or serving a full apprenticeship.⁷ Those who were old, sick, overburdened with large families, widows or orphans were eligible for relief, which could be administered as material goods, monetary payments or admission to the workhouse.⁸ Mothers of illegitimate children also received support from the parish, or assistance compelling the father to provide maintenance payments.⁹ Throughout England, many paupers living outside their parish of settlement wrote ‘home’ to the overseers at that parish requesting relief, insisting that money owed to them be paid, or contesting a change in their allowances. Gloucestershire Archives holds the overseers’ correspondence for the parishes of Kingswood, Tetbury St Mary and Stonehouse, including 33 pauper letters sent between 1820 and 1834 that were discernibly written by mothers.¹⁰ Tables 1 and 2 give details about the number of women represented in this collection, and in petitions to the Orphan Schools.

Table 1 Letters to the Parish in Gloucestershire

Parish	Kingswood	Tetbury Mary	St Stonehouse	Total
Total Letters	6	26	1	33

⁷ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, 22.

⁸ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, 23.

⁹ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, 272–73; Patricia Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England 1580–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 33, Oxford Scholarship Online.

¹⁰ As most letters to the parish were addressed from outside the county, they speak to women’s experiences both in Gloucestershire and more broadly within southern England. Paupers claiming settlement from these parishes were likely to have lived or been born in Gloucestershire, and mothers claiming relief would have been subject to the local practices of parishes in that county. The majority of letters were addressed from adjoining counties—Oxfordshire, Wiltshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire—with a few coming from further afield, including London, Devon, Surrey and Wales. This geographic spread provides a picture of motherhood in Gloucestershire, but also suggests that the ways that mothers articulated their relationships with their children may be indicative of a broader trend in southern England at the time. Overseers’ General Correspondence, 1820–1841, P193/OV/7/1, Kingswood Parish, GA, Gloucester; Overseers’ Correspondence, 1816–1835, P328a/OV/7/5–17, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester; Correspondence Relating to Relief for the Poor, 1726–1830, P316/OV/7/1, Stonehouse Parish, GA, Gloucester.

Number of mothers	5	14	1	20
Mothers who wrote more than one letter	1	4	0	5
Signed by the mother and her partner	2	3	0	5
Signed by the mother and daughter	0	1	0	0

During the same period, NSW was still very much a British penal colony.¹¹ Transportation did not cease until 1840, and as it disrupted working-class family ties and support networks, the colony's poor were often dependent on state assistance and private charity.¹² Yet this need was met by limited resources. Australian welfare historians, particularly Brian Dickey, examine how, from the end of the eighteenth century, British anxiety around the poor laws motivated colonists to avoid this system, as they believed it would encourage laziness and a dependent underclass.¹³ Instead, the colony developed a patchy network of private philanthropic and government relief characterised by religious sectarianism.¹⁴ Yet despite this overt rejection of the poor laws, charities in the new colony were modelled on English philanthropy and welfare practices, and poor families

¹¹ Stuart Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, 3rd ed. (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 69–76.

¹² Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, 76; Tanya Evans, *Fractured Families: Life on the Margins in Colonial New South Wales* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2015), 5, 98; Brian Dickey, “Why Were There No Poor Laws in Australia?,” *Journal of Policy History* 4, no. 2 (1992): 130, 114–17, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0898030600006916>.

¹³ John Murphy, “The Other Welfare State: Non-Government Agencies and the Mixed Economy of Welfare in Australia,” *History Australia* 3, no. 2 (2006): 44.3, <https://doi.org/10.2104/ha060044>; Stephen Garton, *Out of Luck: Poor Australians and Social Welfare, 1788–1988* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990), 4, 43; Anne O’Brien, *Philanthropy and Settler Colonialism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 2, ProQuest Ebook Central; Dickey, “Why Were There No Poor Laws in Australia?,” 118, 130; Anne O’Brien, “Kitchen Fragments and Garden Stuff,” *Australian Historical Studies* 39, no. 2 (2008): 154, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1031461080203314>.

¹⁴ Garton, *Out of Luck*, 4; Anne O’Brien, “Charity and Philanthropy,” *Sydney Journal* 1, no. 3 (2008): 20, http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/ojs/index.php/sydney_journal/index; Evans, *Fractured Families*, 89; Barry Bridges, “The Sydney Orphan Schools” (Masters of Education thesis, University of Sydney, 1973), 616–18, <http://hdl.handle.net/2123/7358>; Murphy, “The Other Welfare State,” 44.10.

seeking aid drew on English customs.¹⁵ The cultural inheritance of the poor laws is evident in Orphan School applications through the practice of petition writing and women who referred to themselves as paupers, or listed parishes of settlement.¹⁶ Without recourse to parochial relief, it was to these developing charities that poor mothers turned for aid.

The Female and Male Orphan Schools were established in NSW in 1801 and 1818 respectively.¹⁷ Between 1825 and 1832 the Clergy and School Lands Corporation (hereafter the Corporation) managed the Schools and instituted application forms through which parents, relatives, acquaintances, and, in some cases, parents' employers could petition to have children admitted.¹⁸ The Corporation accepted children who lacked one or both parents, whose parents were considered to be a corruptive influence, or who had too many children to support.¹⁹ Under the colonial state, convict women arriving in NSW had their children taken from them and placed in the Schools, and those detained in the Female Factory also had their offspring admitted to the Schools from the age of three.²⁰ My data for NSW comes from petitions to admit children to or withdraw children from the Schools. NSW State Archives holds these applications, including 149 petitions written by mothers between 1825 and 1833.²¹

¹⁵ Shurlee Swain, "Women and Philanthropy in Colonial and Post-Colonial Australia," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 7, no. 4 (1996): 428–29, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27927538>; Christina Twomey, "Courting Men: Mothers, Magistrates and Welfare in the Australian Colonies," *Women's History Review* 8, no. 2 (1999): 233, <http://doi.org/10.1080/09612029900200200>; Evans, *Fractured Families*, 4.

¹⁶ Thomas Sokoll, *Essex Pauper Letters 1731–1837* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 57–59; Applications of Elizabeth Mc Grounder, 22 July 1828 and Elizabeth Creamer, 30 November 1830, NRS 782, NSWSA.

¹⁷ John Ramsland, *Children of the Back Lanes: Destitute and Neglected Children in Colonial New South Wales* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1986), 3.

¹⁸ Beryl M. Bubacz, "The Female and Male Orphan Schools in New South Wales, 1801–1850" (PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2007), 3, <https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/handle/2123/2474>.

¹⁹ Bubacz, "The Female and Male Orphan Schools in New South Wales," 194; Application of Ann Whittaker written on the Rules and Regulations, 28 February 1829, NRS 782, NSWSA.

²⁰ Applications of Mary Condon, 7 November 1827, Christopher and Mary Ann Clark, 5 November 1832 and Matthew and Mary Kirby, 20 July 1833, NRS 783 [4/333–35] microfilm reel 2776–77, Applications for Children out of the Orphan Schools, NSWSA, Sydney; Evans, *Fractured Families*, 85.

²¹ Where multiple letters from the same applicant have been grouped together in the collection and addressed around the same date, I have considered them to be parts of the same application. As for pauper letters, petitions to the Orphan School also represent mothers' experiences from a range of locations within NSW. Of petitions with discernible origins, 55 came from locations within Sydney and 43 came

Table 2 Petitions to the Male and Female Orphan Schools

	Admissions	Withdrawals	Total
Number of Petitions	64	85	149
Number of mothers	54	72	114 ¹
Mothers who wrote admissions and withdrawals			12
Women who wrote more than one petition	18	8	26
Pro forma used	50	NA	50
Signed by the mother and her partner	0	10	10

¹ This number accounts for 12 women represented in both categories.

Pauper letters and petitions to the Schools cannot be compared like with like. These documents have distinct features, served different purposes and were created within separate welfare systems. My choice to compare them was shaped by the limited number of documents that both contain the voices of poor mothers and record women discussing their children. These factors are the most significant similarities between these records, although the collections also represent a comparable sample of women, including a mix

from the surrounding region, most commonly from Parramatta and Liverpool, but also from Baulkham Hills, Cabramatta, Campbelltown, Cowpasture Road, Field of Mars, Greendale, Kissing Point, Lane Cove, Pennant Hills, Pitt Town, Rooty Hill, West Bango, Wilberforce and Windsor. Three were addressed from other parts of NSW, Argyle, Bathurst and Newcastle. As such, petitions do not merely reflect the perspectives of mothers in Sydney, but speak to a general experience in NSW at the time. John Septimus Roe, cartographer, *Plan of the Town and Suburbs of Sydney, August, 1822*, 45 x 30 cm, Sydney, 1822, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, https://search.slnsw.gov.au/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=SLNSW_ALMA21128804170002626&context=L&vid=SLNSW&tab=default_tab&lang=en_US; *Sketch Shewing the Road Now Used by the Inhabitants Beyond Cooks River*, 44 x 33.5 cm, 1831, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, https://search.slnsw.gov.au/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=SLNSW_ALMA21104593510002626&context=L&vid=SLNSW&tab=default_tab&lang=en_US; William Henry Wells, cartographer, *Map of the City of Sydney*, 45 x 51 cm, Sydney: James Tegg, Bookseller & Stationer, 1843, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, https://search.slnsw.gov.au/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=SLNSW_ALMA21126502500002626&context=L&vid=SLNSW&tab=default_tab&lang=en_US.

of unmarried mothers, women whose partners had died or abandoned them, and mothers supported by male breadwinners. As these collections are not equivalent, I have not treated them as such. Rather, I have sought to tease out their similarities and differences with close reference to their respective social and institutional contexts. Despite these differences, petitions and pauper letters came from the same welfare and letter-writing traditions.²² According to Thomas Sokoll, the genre of the petition lay at the heart of the pauper letter, as both were used to frame requests.²³ Careful consideration of such similarities and differences, under the umbrella of the British world, allows for meaningful comparison across these locations and collections.

To compensate for the unequal sample sizes between these locations, I also use case notes from Gloucester Lunatic Asylum.²⁴ Forty-eight case files show that between July 1823 and August 1834, 46 working-class mothers were confined after episodes of ‘insanity’ that were attributed to the birth, death, illness or poverty of their children.²⁵ Although case notes provide evidence of women’s relationships with their children, they are not easily comparable with pauper letters and petitions, having strikingly different conventions, context of creation and purpose. I therefore only use these sources for supplementary analysis in Chapter Three, and critically analyse them within the setting of the Asylum. This aggregate sample of 66 English women is still considerably smaller than for NSW, nevertheless, Asylum case notes help to build a more representative picture of poor mothers in Gloucestershire.

²² Sokoll, *Essex Pauper Letters*, 57.

²³ Sokoll, *Essex Pauper Letters*, 59.

²⁴ Although bastardy examinations might have included information about women’s relationships with their children, in Gloucestershire during this period they were recorded using pro forma documents and include few details from mothers themselves.

²⁵ Jemima Hayes was readmitted twice; Case Books, 1823–1837, HO22/70/1–2, Horton Road Hospital (First County Lunatic Asylum), GA, Gloucester.

Taking these collections, this thesis examines poverty and motherhood between January 1820 and August 1834. This period coincided with both the availability of petitions to the Orphan Schools under the Corporation, which survive for 1825 to 1833, and the end of the Old Poor Law in August 1834.²⁶ The implementation of the New Poor Law and its administrative bodies is outside the scope of this thesis.²⁷ Although Orphan School petitions date from 1825, in order to maximise my data from Gloucestershire I examine pauper letters from 1820 to 1834.

In trying to analyse women's personal relationships in petitions and pauper letters, I have wrestled with questions that have driven social histories of poverty for decades. Since the 1960s, historians adopting a history from below approach have sought to, and disagreed on the extent to which scholars can, gain insight into the perspectives and relationships of the poor.²⁸ Recent attempts to answer this question include historian Tim Hitchcock's 2004 essay proposing a "new history from below" and an online symposium on the future of history from below convened and edited by historians Mark Hailwood

²⁶ Samantha Williams, *Poverty, Gender and Life-Cycle Under the English Poor Law, 1760–1834* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), 1.

²⁷ Sokoll, *Essex Pauper Letters*, 24.

²⁸ Some historians employ quantitative analysis and demographic evidence to probe of the lives of England's paupers and labourers in order to avoid overextending their claims. See King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, 4; Steven King, "The Bastardy Prone Sub-society Again: Bastards and Their Fathers and Mothers in Lancashire, Wiltshire and Somerset, 1800–1840," in *Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700–1920*, ed. Alysa Levene, Thomas Nutt and Samantha Williams (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 68–71; and Williams, *Poverty, Gender and Life-Cycle Under the English Poor Law*, 16–19. Nevertheless, whether historians can draw conclusions about the thoughts and feelings of the poor remains an issue for both quantitative and qualitative research, as both methods are used to ask questions about the supposed inner lives of historical subjects. For instance, Tanya Evans notes the limits to what historians can discover about London's plebeians in the eighteenth century in Tanya Evans, 'Unfortunate Objects': *Lone Mothers in Eighteenth-Century London* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 126. Also see Tim Hitchcock, "'Unlawfully Begotten on her Body': Illegitimacy and the Parish Poor in St Luke's Chelsea," in *Chronicling Poverty: The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640–1840*, ed. Tim Hitchcock, Peter King and Pamela Sharpe (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1997), 76–77, 80–81. For an explanation on the roots, origins and aims of history from below and its related approaches see Raphael Samuel, "People's History," in *People's History and Socialist Theory*, ed. Raphael Samuel (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), xi–lii; Jim Obelkevich, "New Developments in History in the 1950s and 1960s," *Contemporary British History* 14, no. 4 (2000): 125–42, <http://doi.org/10.1080/13619460008581606>.

and Brodie Waddell in 2013.²⁹ While careful not to claim unmediated access to the minds of historical subjects, participants in these discussions argue that by using sources that capture the words and voices of the poor, historians can provide insight into the perspectives and agency of the labouring classes.³⁰ My project employs this approach by examining documents authored by poor mothers. Using these collections allows me to draw conclusions about how these women described their interactions with their children. By focussing on what women communicated, I analyse their personal relationships while remaining realistic about my inability to reveal the inner thoughts of historical subjects.

History from below does not, however, offer explicit tools for examining emotion.³¹ In order to further probe how poor women described their affective relationships, I combine a history from below approach with history of emotions methodology. Emerging in the 1980s, histories of emotion both consider the extent to which historians can access

²⁹ Tim Hitchcock, "A New History From Below," review of *Essex Pauper Letters 1731–1837*, edited by Thomas Sokoll, *History Workshop Journal*, no. 57 (2004): 294–98, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25472745>; Mark Hailwood and Brodie Waddell, "The Future of History from Below: An Online Symposium," in *The Future of History from Below: An Online Symposium*, ed. Mark Hailwood and Brodie Waddell (2013), <https://manyheadedmonster.wordpress.com/history-from-below/>.

³⁰ Hitchcock, "A New History From Below," 295–97; Emma Griffin, "Working Class Autobiography in the Industrial Revolution," in *The Future of History from Below: An Online Symposium*, ed. Mark Hailwood and Brodie Waddell (2013), <https://manyheadedmonster.wordpress.com/2013/08/22/emma-griffin-working-class-autobiography-in-the-industrial-revolution/>; David Hitchcock, "Why History From Below Matters More than Ever," in *The Future of History from Below: An Online Symposium*, ed. Mark Hailwood and Brodie Waddell (2013), <https://manyheadedmonster.wordpress.com/2013/07/22/david-hitchcock-why-history-from-below-matters-more-than-ever/>; Ruth Mather, "The Home-Making of the English Working Class," in *The Future of History from Below: An Online Symposium*, ed. Mark Hailwood and Brodie Waddell (2013), <https://manyheadedmonster.wordpress.com/2013/07/10/ruth-mather-the-home-making-of-the-english-working-class/>; Selina Todd, "History From Below: Modern British Scholarship," in *The Future of History from Below: An Online Symposium*, ed. Mark Hailwood and Brodie Waddell (2013), https://manyheadedmonster.wordpress.com/2013/08/23/selina-todd-history-from-below-modern-british-scholarship/#_ftn19; Andy Wood, "History From Below and Early Modern Social History," in *The Future of History from Below: An Online Symposium*, ed. Mark Hailwood and Brodie Waddell (2013), <https://manyheadedmonster.wordpress.com/2013/08/21/andy-wood-history-from-below-and-early-modern-social-history/>.

³¹ Those who seek to write emotional histories from below tend to discuss their methods in terms of two intersecting approaches. See Claire Langhamer's discussion of what it means to write a history of feeling 'from below'; Claire Langhamer, "Everyday Love and Emotions in the 20th Century," in *The Future of History from Below: An Online Symposium*, ed. Mark Hailwood and Brodie Waddell (2013), <https://manyheadedmonster.wordpress.com/2013/08/28/claire-langhamer-everyday-love-and-emotions-in-the-20th-century/>. Although Julie-Marie Strange arguably writes an emotional history 'from below,' she does not situate her approach within history of emotions literature; Julie-Marie Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), ProQuest Ebook Central.

the personal worlds of people in the past and provide tools for examining how women cared for their children emotionally.³² While practitioners generally agree that emotions are shaped by their specific social, cultural and political contexts, current scholarship includes a range of diverse analytical frames and methodologies.³³ Many of the classic studies in the history of emotions propose methods that seek to understand how emotional standards form and change.³⁴ The search for this emotional grammar arguably lies at the heart of Peter Stearns' and Carol Stearns' idea of "emotionology," Barbara Rosenwein's "emotional communities" and William Reddy's "emotional regimes."³⁵ Recently, historians of emotion have devoted less focus to methodological concerns, and the field has diversified and become integrated with other subfields.³⁶

My research employs the approach promoted by historical and cultural anthropologist Monique Scheer. Drawing on Extended Mind Theory, the works of William Reddy and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, Scheer proposes that emotions can be considered practices, that is, ways that people practically engage with the world.³⁷ These practices occur in both the mind and body, and are shaped by specific social interactions

³² Susan J. Matt, "Current Emotion Research in History: Or, Doing History from the Inside Out," *Emotion Review* 3, no. 1 (2011): 118, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073910384416>.

³³ Matt, "Current Emotion Research in History," 118; Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Worrying About Emotions in History," *American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 836–37; Monique Scheer, "Are Emotions A Kind of Practice (And is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion," *History and Theory* 51, no. 2 (2012): 201; Erin Sullivan, "The History of the Emotions: Past, Present, Future," *Cultural History* 2, no. 1 (2013): 100–101, <https://doi.org/10.3366/cult.2013.0034>.

³⁴ Matt, "Current Emotion Research in History," 118–19.

³⁵ Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns, "Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards," *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (1985): 813, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1858841>; Rosenwein, "Worrying About Emotions in History," 842; William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 55, 61–62, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511512001>.

³⁶ Sullivan, "The History of the Emotions," 96; See for instance Katie Barclay, who takes a cultural studies approach to consider an emotional question; Katie Barclay, "Natural Affection, the Patriarchal Family and the 'Strict Settlement' Debate: A Response from the History of Emotions," *The Eighteenth Century* 58, no. 3 (2017): 337–53, <https://doi.org/10.1353/ecy.2017.0027>. Integration is particularly pronounced in Australian history, which has approached questions of emotion from other subfields, such as gender and cultural history, and war and memory studies, as noted in Sarah Pinto, "The History of Emotions in Australia," *Australian Historical Studies* 48, no. 1 (2017): 103–14, [10.1080/1031461X.2017.1267551](https://doi.org/10.1080/1031461X.2017.1267551).

³⁷ Scheer, "Are Emotions A Kind of Practice," 193, 196–98.

and environments.³⁸ Using Bourdieu's conceptualisation of habitus, Scheer argues that as social contexts shape people's minds and bodies they produce embodied emotional dispositions.³⁹ This interaction between habituated mind and body and context thus results in historically specific emotional practices.⁴⁰

This approach usefully remains cautious of the extent to which historical actors' internal experiences are accessible. By regarding emotions as practiced, Scheer contends that historians can overcome what she terms the "dichotomy of 'inner' feeling and 'outer' manifestation"—which regards affect as largely beyond the scope of historical analysis—and renders emotions observable.⁴¹ Using this approach I analyse women's expressions of feeling as evidence of their emotional practices, without claiming to have access to their internal states. Examining emotional practices as grounded in social contexts also recognises that the parish, Orphan Schools and Lunatic Asylum would have shaped what emotions women communicated, and how they did so.⁴² According to this frame, these institutions do not mask women's 'true' feelings, but rather provide the settings within which women expressed their feelings.⁴³ Employing this methodology allows me to explore how mothers described their emotions within institutional records that might otherwise be regarded as prohibitively mediated.

Historiography

A Mother's Love or Maternal Indifference

Taking this approach, I apply a history of emotions methodology to a field in which historians have only studied mothers' relationships with their children superficially.

³⁸ Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice," 196–99.

³⁹ Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice," 202.

⁴⁰ Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice," 201.

⁴¹ Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice," 209, 218.

⁴² Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice," 214.

⁴³ Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice," 215.

Although scholars have long debated whether parents felt affection for their offspring, their analysis has focussed on contesting that either ‘yes’ parents did, or ‘no’ they did not, love their children. As chief instigators in this debate, historians Phillipe Ariés and Lawrence Stone argue that parents in medieval and early-modern Europe did not become emotionally invested in young children because of high infant mortality rates.⁴⁴ Developing Ariés’ claim, historian Edward Shorter contends that prior to the nineteenth century many mothers were relieved or even glad when their children died. Shorter even goes so far as to assert that women did not see their children as fellow human beings.⁴⁵ Agreeing that maternal love in the past was a myth, French sociologist Elisabeth Badinter further asserts that indifferent and negligent mothers actually caused high rates of infant death.⁴⁶ These provocative claims have aroused fierce debate and continue to dominate the questions that scholars ask about mothers’ relationships with their children.

Historians have widely refuted these claims of maternal indifference since the 1980s.⁴⁷ One of the most sustained critiques comes from Linda Pollock. Using diaries and autobiographies, Pollock demonstrates that upper- and middle-class parents expressed affection for their children in England and America between 1500 and 1900.⁴⁸ Building from Pollock’s work, other historians have continued to demonstrate that women loved their offspring at different times and in different locations, whether single, married, wealthy, or poor. In Australia, Pat Jalland argues that married, middle-class

⁴⁴ Philippe Ariés, *Centuries of Childhood*, trans. Robert Baldick (London: Cape, 1973), 36–37, 81; Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500–1800* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1977), 81.

⁴⁵ Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 169, 173.

⁴⁶ Elisabeth Badinter, *The Myth of Motherhood: An Historical View of the Maternal Instinct*, trans. R. DeGaris (London: Souvenir Press, 1981), 60.

⁴⁷ Stephen Wilson, “The Myth of Motherhood a Myth: The Historical View of European Child-Rearing,” *Social History* 9, no. 2 (1984): 181–98, <http://doi.org/10.1080/03071028408567590>; Robert Woods, “Did Montaigne Love His Children? Demography and the Hypothesis of Parental Indifference,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 33, no. 3 (2003): 421–42, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3656538>.

⁴⁸ Linda A. Pollock, *A Lasting Relationship: Parents and Children Over Three Centuries* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1987), 13, 53; Linda A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 87, 141, 268.

mothers demonstrated their love for children by expressing grief when their offspring died.⁴⁹ Valerie Fildes, Shurlee Swain and Lynette Finch have all extended this argument to include poor and unmarried mothers. Taking admission statistics from the London Foundling Hospital, Fildes asserts that even mothers who abandoned their infants would have had time to become attached to them.⁵⁰ Similarly, Swain and Finch employ coroner's inquests to show that poor parents in Australia were concerned about the wellbeing and deaths of their children.⁵¹ Although these responses firmly establish that women in the past loved their children, they do little to explore, in depth, the nature of this affective relationship, or the range of emotions that mothers expressed. My research seeks to develop this field by examining some of the terms through which women described their emotional relationships with children, for instance grief, anxiety and distress, as well as how mothers' contexts shaped their articulation of these emotions.

I not only probe women's emotional relationships in more depth, but also examine the breadth of registers through which mothers expressed their connections with children. If historians understand little about maternal affect, they know even less about other aspects of mother-child relations. British and Australian histories of motherhood often hint that women's relationships with children were not only emotional but economic, social and physical. For instance, historians of poverty and the family acknowledge that during the nineteenth century working-class children in England and the Australian

⁴⁹ Pat Jalland, *Australian Ways of Death: A Social and Cultural History 1840–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 73.

⁵⁰ Valerie Fildes, "Maternal Feelings Re-assessed: Child Abandonment and Neglect in London and Westminster, 1550–1800," in *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England: Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren*, ed. Valerie Fildes (London: Routledge, 1989), 153. See also Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England*, 70–71; Evans, 'Unfortunate Objects,' 133.

⁵¹ Lynette Finch, "Caring for Colonial Infants: Parenting on the Frontiers," *Australian Historical Studies* 29, no. 110 (1998): 112, 126, <http://dio.org/10.1080/10314619808596063>; Shurlee Swain, "Birth and Death in a New Land Attitudes to Infant Death in Colonial Australia," *The History of the Family* 15, no. 1 (2010): 32, <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.hisfam.2009.09.003>.

colonies were wage-earning members of the family.⁵² Ellen Ross explores children's contribution to the family economy in London between 1870 and 1918.⁵³ Yet, using autobiographies and oral histories, her research relies on evidence from children's perspectives, leaving mothers' attitudes towards their children as workers largely unexamined. Likewise, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall contend that women's relationships with their children were social, arguing that full-time care of children became a "central part of middle-class gentility" in nineteenth-century England.⁵⁴ Lisa Featherstone also suggests that there was a biological, embodied connection between women and their infants in her research into childbirth in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Australia.⁵⁵ Despite these hints, historians have not closely analysed mothers' economic, social or physical relationships with their children. By examining women's moral and economic interactions with their offspring, my analysis seeks to develop our understanding of how women described these diverse connections.

Poverty and Motherhood

While a close analysis of women's relationships with their children is also absent from histories of poverty and motherhood, these works form the foundation for my analysis. In Britain, historians have explored poor mothers' experiences of courtship, birth, child-

⁵² Anna Davin, "Child Labour, the Working-Class Family, and Domestic Ideology in 19th Century Britain," *Development and Change* 13, no. 4 (1982): 638, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.1982.tb00141.x>; Anne O'Brien, *Poverty's Prison: The Poor in New South Wales, 1880–1918* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1988), 172–82; Christina Twomey, *Deserted and Destitute: Motherhood, Wife Desertion, and Colonial Welfare* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2002), 35–36.

⁵³ Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870–1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 150–54, ACLS Humanities E-Book.

⁵⁴ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes* (London: Century Hutchinson, 1987), 338. Crawford similarly argued that being a mother could bring women social status in early-modern Britain; Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England*, 248.

⁵⁵ Lisa Featherstone, "Becoming a Baby?," *Australian Feminist Studies* 23, no. 58 (2008), 459, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08164640802433340>. Also see Patricia Crawford, "'The Sucking Child': Adult Attitudes to Child Care in the First Year of Life in Seventeenth-Century England," *Continuity and Change* 1, no. 1 (1986): 31, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416000000060>.

care and abandonment, and recent research has emphasised poor women's agency in their interactions with state and charitable institutions.⁵⁶ The widespread availability of parish records has helped to shape this focus, although scholars have also used petitions to charities such as the London Foundling Hospital and legal proceedings.⁵⁷ Using these sources, contributors to the edited collections *Chronicling Poverty* (1997), by Tim Hitchcock, Peter King and Pamela Sharp, and *Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700–1920* (2005), by Alyssa Levene, Thomas Nutt and Samantha Williams, explore how poverty and illegitimacy shaped women's experiences of motherhood.⁵⁸ Tanya Evans also uses parish records alongside petitions to the London Foundling Hospital to examine the challenges faced by lone mothers, as well as their attitudes and emotions.⁵⁹ These works examine unmarried mothers' experiences, prospects and motivations in London, Bedfordshire, Lancashire, Wiltshire and Somerset.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ In England, this is part of a broader trend in which historians emphasise the agency of the poor; Alannah Tomkins and Steven King, "Introduction," in *The Poor in England, 1700–1850: An Economy of Makeshifts*, ed. Steven King and Alannah Tomkins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 7; Tim Hitchcock, Peter King and Pamela Sharpe, "Introduction: Chronicling Poverty – The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640–1840," in *Chronicling Poverty: The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640–1840*, ed. Tim Hitchcock, Peter King and Pamela Sharpe (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1997), 5; Steven King, "Friendship, Kinship and Belonging in the Letters of Urban Paupers 1800–1840," *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 33, no. 3 (2008): 270, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20762309>; For the agency of poor mothers see Evans, 'Unfortunate Objects,' 98–126; Alysa Levene, Thomas Nutt and Samantha Williams, "Introduction," in *Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700–1920*, ed. Alysa Levene, Thomas Nutt and Samantha Williams (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 16; Ellen Ross, "Hungry Children: Housewives and London Charity, 1870–1918," in *The Uses of Charity: The Poor on Relief in The Nineteenth-Century Metropolis*, ed. Peter Mandler, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 161; Hitchcock, "Unlawfully Begotten on her Body," 70–82. For France see Rachel G. Fuchs, *Poor and Pregnant in Paris: Strategies for Survival in the Nineteenth Century* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 1–3, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heh.02497.0001.00>.

⁵⁷ Fildes, "Maternal Feelings Re-assessed," 139–78; Samantha Williams, "The Experience of Pregnancy and Childbirth for Unmarried Mothers in London, 1760–1866," *Women's History Review* 20, no. 1 (2011): 67–86, <http://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2011.536386>.

⁵⁸ Tim Hitchcock, Peter King and Pamela Sharpe, eds., *Chronicling Poverty: The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640–1840* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1997); Alysa Levene, Thomas Nutt and Samantha Williams, eds., *Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700–1920* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

⁵⁹ Evans, 'Unfortunate Objects,' 6–7, 14.

⁶⁰ Hitchcock, "Unlawfully Begotten on her Body," 70–82; King, "The Bastardy Prone Sub-society Again," 80–84.

In Australia, research into women's experiences of motherhood and poverty has also examined poor mothers' agency. Many historians in this subfield focus on mothers in the colony and later state of Victoria.⁶¹ In their classic study on illegitimacy, Shurlee Swain and Renate Howe map lone mothers' experiences between 1850 and 1975. Yet while they speak to a national experience, much of their evidence comes from Victoria.⁶² Similarly, Christina Twomey explores the challenges faced by deserted mothers in gold-rush Victoria.⁶³ Anne O'Brien and Tanya Evans have contributed similar findings on NSW. O'Brien explores the challenges faced by poor mothers in Sydney during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, while Evans examines the lives of mothers who accessed aid from the Benevolent Society of NSW and several of Sydney's other charities throughout the nineteenth century.⁶⁴ Evans also closely analyses applications to the Orphan Schools, revealing poor mothers' experiences, survival strategies and social networks.⁶⁵ This British and Australian scholarship provides my research with a contextual foundation from which to interpret mothers' letters to the parish and petitions to the Schools. In examining mothers' practices and expressions, my analysis contributes to this literature by comparing how women articulated their relationships in different parts of the British Empire.

⁶¹ Shurlee Swain, "Negotiating Poverty: Women and Charity in Nineteenth-century Melbourne," *Women's History Review* 16, no. 1 (2007): 102, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612020601049744>; Janet McCalman, *Sex and Suffering: Women's Health and a Women's Hospital* (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 1998); Janet McCalman, Ruth Morley, and Gita Mishra, "A Health Transition: Birth Weights, Households and Survival in an Australian Working-Class Population Sample Born 1857–1900," *Social Science & Medicine* 66, no. 5 (2008): 1070–83, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2007.11.04>. Patricia Grimshaw and Elizabeth Nelson also examine Koorie women's poverty and agency within the frame of colonisation and the 'civilising mission' in Victoria; Patricia Grimshaw and Elizabeth Nelson, "Empire, 'the Civilising Mission' and Indigenous Christian Women in Colonial Victoria," *Australian Feminist Studies* 16, no. 36 (2001): 295–309, [10.1080/08164640120097534](https://doi.org/10.1080/08164640120097534).

⁶² Shurlee Swain and Renate Howe, *Single Mothers and Their Children: Disposal, Punishment and Survival in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 4.

⁶³ Twomey, *Deserted and Destitute*.

⁶⁴ O'Brien, *Poverty's Prison*; Evans, *Fractured Families*.

⁶⁵ Evans, *Fractured Families*, 85–91.

Unlike Evans, few historians have used Orphan School petitions to closely question women's perspectives. Scholarship on the Schools has primarily focused on their administration. John Ramsland examines applications for admission into the Schools, discussing the circumstances under which children were admitted, yet his focus on the governance of the Schools does not meaningfully address the perspective of the parents who wrote these applications.⁶⁶ Several doctoral theses concerning the Orphan Schools share a similar focus.⁶⁷ For instance, Barry Bridges and Beryl Bubacz briefly analyse petitions as evidence of parental affection, and in some cases, a desire for cheap labour.⁶⁸ Yet like Ramsland, they question the circumstances under which parents petitioned the Schools, and neither study mother-child relationships in any depth.⁶⁹ Others, including Joy Damousi and Dianne Snow, use evidence from the Orphan Schools to reveal colonists' attitudes and anxieties around the meanings of motherhood, the vulnerability of children, and whether convict women could be appropriate parents.⁷⁰ While Orphan School petitions have been widely examined, historians have not used them to consider mothers' own understanding of their relationships with their children.

This thesis therefore aims to contribute to scholarship on poverty and motherhood in three ways. First, it probes the complexities of poor mothers' emotional interactions with their children. Second, it examines some of the different ways that women described their

⁶⁶ Ramsland, *Children of the Back Lanes*, 17–19, 38, 39, 43.

⁶⁷ Elizabeth Windschuttle, "Women of the Upper Classes & Middle Classes in Eastern Australia 1800–1850: Aspects of their Family & Social Lives, Their Intellectual Spheres & Their Involvement in Movements for Social Reform" (PhD thesis, University of New South Wales, 1990), <http://handle.unsw.edu.au/1959.4/58281>.

⁶⁸ Bubacz, "The Female and Male Orphan Schools in New South Wales," 218, 223–28, 231–32; Bridges, "The Sydney Orphan Schools," 612–13.

⁶⁹ Bubacz, "The Female and Male Orphan Schools in New South Wales," 195–98; Bridges, "The Sydney Orphan Schools," 422–30.

⁷⁰ Joy Damousi, *Depraved and Disorderly: Female Convicts, Sexuality and Gender in Colonial Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 128–68, Cambridge Books Online; Dianne Snow, "Gender Relations and the Female Orphan School in Early Nineteenth Century New South Wales," in *Battlers and Bluestockings: Woman's Place in Australian Education*, ed. Sandra Taylor and Miriam Henry (Canberra: Australian College of Education, 1989), 4–9.

connections with their children, for instance as moral and financial. Finally, it brings a new lens to the study of motherhood and poverty by comparing mother-child relationships in NSW and Gloucestershire.

Methods

Comparative Analysis

The imperial connection between NSW and England forms the basis for my comparison between these locations. Scholars in the field of new imperial history, many of whom have employed comparative methodology, have demonstrated that Britain and its Australian colonies are well suited to this approach.⁷¹ Historian Katherine Ellinghaus argues that in order to compare ideas or phenomena, such as motherhood, across different contexts, locations must have a level of similarity and difference.⁷² NSW and Gloucestershire fulfil this requirement. Both sites shared a common cultural heritage and their philanthropic and welfare practices were shaped with reference to each other.⁷³ There were also significant differences between these locations, not least of which included the role of the state and the availability of welfare networks.⁷⁴ According to Ellinghaus, and historian Philippa Levine, comparative analysis can illuminate the

⁷¹ Philippa Levine, "Is Comparative History Possible?," *History and Theory* 53, no. 3 (2014): 338, <https://doi.org/10.1111/hith.10716>; Elizabeth Harvey, "Philanthropy in Birmingham and Sydney, 1860–1914: Class, Gender and Race" (PhD thesis, University College London, 2011), 35, <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1148213>.

⁷² Katherine Ellinghaus, *Taking Assimilation to Heart: Marriages of White Women and Indigenous Men in the United States and Australia, 1887–1937* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), xv, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1djmhpv.5>; Ian Tyrrell also promotes this methodology; Ian Tyrrell, "Comparing Comparative Histories: Australian And American Modes Of Comparative Analysis," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 9, no. 2 (1990): 7–9, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41053570>.

⁷³ James Thompson, "Modern Britain and the New Imperial History," *History Compass* 5, no. 2 (2007): 456, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2007.00391.x>; Alan Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth-Century South Africa and Britain* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2001), 6, ProQuest Ebook Central; Alan Lester, "Imperial Circuits and Networks: Geographies of the British Empire," *History Compass* 4, no. 1 (2006): 130, [10.1111/j.1478-0542.2005.00189.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2005.00189.x); Harvey, "Philanthropy in Birmingham and Sydney, 1860–1914," 10–11.

⁷⁴ Harvey, "Philanthropy in Birmingham and Sydney, 1860–1914," 35.

complex and diverse factors that shape historical phenomena.⁷⁵ Using this approach, my research reveals how different welfare regimes shaped the ways women articulated relationships with their children throughout the British Empire.⁷⁶

Institutional Contexts

In seeking to reconstruct the lives of the poor, the availability of sources authored by mothers living in poverty and the nature of these records has driven my methodology. Petitions to the Orphan Schools and pauper letters provide rich information about poor women's perspectives. As institutional records, they also present several challenges. The most significant of these is that institutional records often contain brief or fragmentary evidence. To overcome this limitation for records that, in some instances, only amounted to twelve words or so, I have examined every available source that mothers created and that survive in the archival collections.⁷⁷ Examining multiple documents allowed me to trace patterns across different records and follow ideas that were expressed in sparse detail in some sources and elaborated in others. To reveal whether themes were typical or representative, I also include some quantitative analysis of the frequency with which mothers explored these ideas. This seeks to balance a study of individual perspectives against a general picture of mothers' attitudes.

⁷⁵ Ellinghaus, *Taking Assimilation to Heart*, xiv–xv; Levine, “Is Comparative History Possible?,” 338–39.

⁷⁶ Although I employ comparative, rather than transnational, methodology, this thesis may be considered a contribution to the recent wave of transnational analyses of poverty and welfare, particularly those that explore links between Australia and Britain. See Shurlee Swain, “Florence and Rosamond Davenport Hill and the Development of Boarding Out in England and Australia: A Study in Cultural Transmission,” *Women's History Review* 23, no. 5 (2014): 744–59, <http://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2014.906833>; Tanya Evans, “Working towards the ‘Welfare of the World’: British Imperial Networks of Philanthropy in the Nineteenth Century,” *History Australia* 13, no. 1 (2016): 109–23, <http://doi.org/10.1080/14490854.2016.1156210>; Elizabeth A. Harvey, “‘Layered Networks’: Imperial Philanthropy in Birmingham and Sydney, 1860–1914,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41, no. 1 (2013): 120–42, <http://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2013.762164>; Harvey, “Philanthropy in Birmingham and Sydney, 1860–1914.”

⁷⁷ This description discounts the text that made up the pro forma.

Yet similarities between documents are not always indicative of a general attitude or experience, and institutional records can be formulaic.⁷⁸ Analysing a number of documents together also allowed me to distinguish content that was significant from content that could be considered conventional. Petitions to the Orphan Schools, for instance, followed a similar structure and contained stereotypical language, salutations and valedictions. There were also conventions around what details were included, such as the names and ages of children, and what change in circumstance prompted petitioners to make their applications. Reading collections together allowed me to determine which aspects of these records were formulaic, and which represented the expressions of mothers themselves.

This does not mean that there was a simple dichotomy between what some might see as mothers' generic and true expressions. Petitions, pauper letters and Asylum case notes were all mediated. Many applications for admission to the Orphan Schools were shaped by a printed pro forma. Even petitions or pauper letters that did not use a pro forma were often penned by a literate acquaintance or a professional scribe.⁷⁹ This is particularly apparent in case notes for Gloucester Lunatic Asylum. Uniform handwriting throughout the case books suggests that the same member of staff compiled each file. Nevertheless, mothers' authorship is evident in the varied ways that they narrated their lives.⁸⁰ Women differently characterised their need for support, describing a range of circumstances that rendered them unable to provide for their children. They also related aspects of their lives that would support their requests, including details of their employment, migration, social networks, places of residence, deaths of their partners, ages and number of their children

⁷⁸ Samantha Williams, "'A Good Character for Virtue, Sobriety, and Honesty': Unmarried Mothers' Petitions to the London Foundling Hospital and the Rhetoric of Need in the Early Nineteenth Century," in *Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700–1920*, ed. Alys Levene, Thomas Nutt and Samantha Williams (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 92.

⁷⁹ Ramsland, *Children of the Back Lanes*, 45–46; Sokoll, *Essex Pauper Letters*, 4–5.

⁸⁰ Evans, 'Unfortunate Objects,' 9.

and their strategies for survival.⁸¹ Mothers' voices are even faintly present in Asylum records. Although these collections must be critically interrogated as mediated texts, by recording the words of poor women they give us greater insight into mothers' personal relationships than can be obtained through records written by others about these women.

These collections were also shaped by the establishments in which they were created. In both NSW and England, concepts of charity and benevolence were intertwined with notions of morality and justice, and historians have shown that the rules or expectations of these institutions influenced the ways that the poor applied for aid.⁸² As a result, historians of poverty have regarded institutional sources as part of a process of negotiation—albeit an unequal one—between those who relied on aid and those who provided this support.⁸³ Taking this approach, historians have also revealed that the poor exercised agency by working within welfare systems to acquire assistance and had powerful strategies for doing so.⁸⁴ To examine pauper letters and Orphan School petitions as part of a discussion, these collections must be read within the context of their specific institutions, and the wider charitable cultures within NSW and Gloucestershire.⁸⁵ To do so, I use a combination of secondary literature and administrative documents such as annual reports, rules and regulations, vestry minutes and other correspondence. These highlight the practices, policies, and attitudes of institutions, even if these were not always followed.⁸⁶ Using this evidence helps to indicate when women may have crafted their accounts to appeal to the parish or the Schools. Contextualising documents in this way

⁸¹ Evans, *Fractured Families*, 82.

⁸² Williams, "'A Good Character for Virtue, Sobriety, and Honesty,'" 90, 97; Evans, *Fractured Families*, 95; Evans, 'Unfortunate Objects,' 100.

⁸³ Hitchcock, King and Sharpe, "Introduction," 5; Evans, 'Unfortunate Objects,' 8; Twomey, *Deserted and Destitute*, xxxi; Williams, "'A Good Character for Virtue, Sobriety, and Honesty,'" 86–101; Swain and Howe, *Single Mothers and Their Children*, 8.

⁸⁴ Hitchcock, King and Sharpe, "Introduction," 5; Sokoll, *Essex Pauper Letters*, 3.

⁸⁵ Hitchcock, King and Sharpe, "Introduction," 5.

⁸⁶ Evans shows that there was a disconnect between public discussion around the policies, and the actual practices, of the Benevolent Society of New South Wales; Evans, *Fractured Families*, 167–69.

allows historians to recognise the complex interplay between women's own attitudes and an institution's values.

By selecting poor mothers as my historical subjects, I have employed the contemporary concept of the labouring poor.⁸⁷ This label, used in Gloucestershire during the first half of the nineteenth century, was defined in 1797 by F. M. Eden as those “whose daily subsistence absolutely depends on the daily unrelenting exertion of manual labour.”⁸⁸ This definition therefore takes into account the shifting fortunes of the poor, who throughout their lifetimes might move from periods of stability into indigence, but for whom the struggle to survive was a daily experience.⁸⁹ Institutional records indicate that these women were, at some point, in considerable economic need. They also suggest that mothers who requested aid from the Orphan Schools had a level of shared experience, as would pauper mothers in Gloucestershire. In both contexts I focus on the perspectives of white, European women. As far as I could ascertain, Aboriginal women did not feature in my primary sources but there is still important work to be done on the emotional relationships between Aboriginal mothers and their children in this period.

Chapter Outlines

In both petitions to the Orphan Schools and letters to the parish, mothers conveyed that care was central to their relationships with their children. Using these sources, I compare

⁸⁷ Sokoll and Williams also use this term; Sokoll, *Essex Pauper Letters*, 4; Williams, *Poverty, Gender and Life-Cycle Under the English Poor Law*, 8.

⁸⁸ “The Labouring Poor,” *Gloucester Herald*, May 26, 1828, 4, microfilm reel, GA, Gloucester; “The Labouring Poor,” *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette*, November 30, 1830, 2, microfilm reel, GA, Gloucester; F. M. Eden quoted in Sokoll, *Essex Pauper Letters*, 4. The issue of how to measure and define poverty is a substantial debate, particularly in British historiography. For examples of further discussion see King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, 79–105, 134–36; Williams, *Poverty, Gender and Life-Cycle Under the English Poor Law*, 1, 12–16; Lynn MacKay “A Culture of Poverty? The St. Martin in the Fields Workhouse, 1817,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 26, no. 2 (1995): 209–31, 10.2307/206606. For Australian scholarship see Brian Dickey, *No Charity There: A Short History of Social Welfare in Australia* (Sydney Allen & Unwin, 1987), xi–xii, xvi–xvii; Garton, *Out of Luck*, 3–5.

⁸⁹ Sokoll, *Essex Pauper Letters*, 4; Williams, *Poverty, Gender and Life-Cycle Under the English Poor Law*, 115; Evans, *Fractured Families*, 82, 85.

the ways that women articulated care in NSW and Gloucestershire, and argue that poor mothers expressed or described instances of care for their children in order to exercise or claim authority over them.

John Walker's *Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language* of 1826 defined care as "charge, heed in order to preservation."⁹⁰ The *Oxford English Dictionary* also notes that during the early nineteenth century *care* signified "oversight with a view to protection, preservation, or guidance," and "to look after."⁹¹ According to these definitions *care* acts as an umbrella term for the different caring actions that mothers described. Each chapter focuses on one form of care: examining first moral training, then financial support and finally emotional attachment or concern. Of course, mothers did not always discuss different forms of care in isolation, and there is some crossover of these throughout the chapters.

In focussing on care, my work is distinct from that of historians who have studied maternal duty—the idea that mothers were obliged to perform a specific role in children's upbringing—particularly within the context of middle-class domestic ideology.⁹² It is important to explain why I chose to focus on care as a collection of actions, rather than duty as a form of social obligation. This is particularly necessary as my argument that mothers described care for children as the basis for their authority over them, may initially

⁹⁰ John Walker, *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language*, 4th ed. (London: Ernest Fleischer, 1826), 66, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100783400>.

⁹¹ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "care, (*n.*1)," July 2018, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/27899?rskey=6pZedW&result=1&isAdvanced=false>.

⁹² See for instance Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 175, 335–43; Davin, "Child Labour, the Working-Class Family, and Domestic Ideology in 19th Century Britain," 639; Ross, *Love and Toil*, 166–94; Patricia Grimshaw et al., *Creating A Nation* (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1994), 202, 117–21. For maternal duty in France see Jennifer J. Popiel, "Making Mothers: The Advice Genre and the Domestic Ideal, 1760–1830," *Journal of Family History* 29, no. 4 (2004): 339–50, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0363199004268520>; for maternal duty in the early twentieth century see Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood," *History Workshop Journal* 5, no. 1 (1978): 9–66, <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/5.1.9>. For mothers' and fathers' parental duties see Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, 115–16; Linda Young, *Middle Class Culture in the Nineteenth Century: America, Australia, and Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 25, 75–79, 10.1057/9780230598812.

seem to mirror arguments that historians have made about mothers' duty.⁹³ For instance, Rebecca Davies suggested that upper- and middle-class mothers in eighteenth-century England articulated maternal authority by exercising their duty as educators of children.⁹⁴ Although mothers in my study justified their authority in a similar manner, I have been deliberate in examining care, rather than duty. This is primarily because the term *duty* does not feature in women's discussions of their children in my sources.⁹⁵ While English pauper letters did not use the term *care*, it was significant in petitions from NSW and this shaped the focus of my analysis. This focus was particularly important in considering the voices of poor mothers on their own terms, rather than through the language of middle-class domestic ideals. Second, there is a semantic difference between the two terms. Women may have cared for children as part of their maternal duties, yet the term *duty* emphasises a social contract.⁹⁶ On the other hand, care defined as "looking after" children, connotes the effort that mothers invested in ongoing relationships.⁹⁷

My argument also examines mothers' authority. Specifically, I analyse the ways that women claimed this power over their children. Throughout petitions and pauper letters, women articulated contextually-specific types of authority: the right to have children under their custody, the right to determine their future prospects and the right to manage

⁹³ While Evans does not argue this, she demonstrates that poor mothers during the same period used the language of duty to justify abandoning their children at the London Foundling Hospital. She also helpfully highlights the link between duty and authority in legal thought, noting that according to Sir William Blackstone, a parent's authority over their children was founded on the practice of their duty, including maintaining, protecting and educating children; Evans, 'Unfortunate Objects,' 128–37; William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England: In Four Books* (New York: E. Duyckinck, 1822), 1:446–52, Gale, Cengage Learning.

⁹⁴ Rebecca Davies, *Written Maternal Authority and Eighteenth-Century Education in Britain: Educating by the Book* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 1–5, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315546117>.

⁹⁵ Although mothers did not use the term *duty* to discuss their children (Jane Boardman was the exception), the term formed part of the conventional valediction in Orphan School petitions, which state that the author "in duty bound shall ever pray ..."; Application of Jane Boardman, 2 March 1829b, NRS 783, NSWSA; Sokoll, *Essex Pauper Letters*, 59.

⁹⁶ Walker defines duty as "that to which a man is by any natural or legal obligation bound"; Walker, *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language*, 153.

⁹⁷ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "care, (n.1)," July 2018, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/27899?rskey=6pZedW&result=1&isAdvanced=false>.

their labour. Just as for care, I have grouped these various expressions according to a nineteenth-century understanding of authority as “a position of power or control; having, or so as to have, power *over* a person.”⁹⁸ As mothers claimed these specific forms of power, I do not provide a cultural history of authority in England and NSW during this time, but rather describe how women expressed their authority in each context. Although mothers’ descriptions of care and manifestations of their authority shift throughout these chapters, the link between them remains constant.

To explore this dynamic, each chapter of my thesis develops an increasingly complex picture of the ways that women described care and authority in conditions of poverty, and compares how they did so in different locations. The first chapter establishes my argument, while the following chapters extend its claims. Chapter One focusses on mothers’ descriptions of care for their children through moral training. It charts how these claims featured in women’s attempts to regain children from the Orphan Schools and compares the strategies that mothers in NSW and Gloucestershire used to find apprenticeships for their children. It suggests that, in both locations, mothers expressed care for children’s moral development as a means to claim custody over their children and direct their future courses. I argue that by doing so, mothers articulated a form of care-based authority, in which their attempts to manage their children were founded on their efforts to care for them.

Chapter Two examines women’s financial relationships with their children, focussing on care as economic support. It develops the argument proposed in Chapter One, first by suggesting that mothers also expressed care-based authority in their financial relationships with children. It then uses the context of this economic relationship to

⁹⁸ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “authority, (n.),” July 2018, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/13349?redirectedFrom=authority>.

explore how poverty influenced care-based authority. It compares how women negotiated the prospect of relinquishing custody of their children in NSW and Gloucester. In doing so, it argues that mothers flexibly described care-based authority according to their location and welfare context, but that these expressions were also contingent on the strictures of poverty.

Chapter Three adds a final layer of complexity. It focusses on how mothers articulated care for children through emotional language. Adding evidence from Gloucester Lunatic Asylum to that provided by petitions and pauper letters, I compare how women in different imperial contexts could describe care for children as a source of emotional distress or mental disorder. Using these sources, I suggest that while mothers portrayed care for children as the basis of their authority, it could also rob them of this authority, although with different consequences in NSW and Gloucestershire.

My study aims to push the boundaries of what scholars understand about poor mothers' power. I advance the work of historians who have revealed the agency of poor mothers by uncovering the ways that these women also articulated a sense of their own authority.

Chapter One: Authority

*That Memorialist from her industry is desirous not only of maintaining with credit and respect but also of bringing up her daughter to industrious habits whereby she may hereafter procure a comfortable and respectable livelihood.— Memorialist therefore, humbly prays that the Gentlemen ... will be pleased to restore her to her Mother's care.*¹

In May 1827, Mary Ann Caton wrote to the Female Orphan School requesting the return of her daughter, Caroline.² Despite describing her work as a laundress and claiming that she was an industrious woman who was able to provide for her daughter, the Schools denied Mary Anne's request, as Caroline had already been apprenticed. Little over a year later, Mary Ann discovered that Caroline's master, Michael Hindmarsh, had taken her first to Campbelltown, then to Five Islands, a set of small islands off the coast of Wollongong, NSW, where he had consigned her to "a person of the name of Smith." Dismayed that Michael had surrendered Caroline with apparently little concern, Mary Ann reported these events to the School, urging,

I being the Mother [of the] Child feel much grieved to think She Should
be So used and hopes you will take it in your humane Consideration
and let the Child be Sent to me as I have means of Supporting the Child

¹ *Memorialist* was another term for *petitioner*. Application of Mary Ann Caton, 1827, NRS 783 [4/333–35] microfilm reel 2776–77, Applications for Children out of the Orphan Schools, NSWSA, Sydney.

² Application of Mary Ann Caton, 21 May 1827, NRS 783, NSWSA.

and Shall Bring her up in the paths of Virtue. I hope Honoured
Gentlemen you will here this my Supplication Send my Child onst more
to my care.³

By contrasting her own ability to care for Caroline against this apparent ill-treatment from her master, Mary Ann justified and asserted her authority to reclaim her daughter. These intertwined notions of care and authority were central in women's requests for aid from the Sydney Orphan Schools and the parish in Gloucestershire.

Historians of England and Australia have not closely considered the authority of poor mothers. Research focusses on how women of the middle- and upper-classes expressed authority through their political and philanthropic activity.⁴ This is evident in scholarship on maternalist activism during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Britain and Australia. Patricia Grimshaw and Marilyn Lake reveal that maternalists claimed the right to speak on political issues by asserting that the capacity to bear children endowed women with unique expertise to establish social welfare practices.⁵ Similarly, Shurlee Swain and Elizabeth Harvey argue that middle-class women also established their authority through philanthropy.⁶ Swain's research on sisters Florence and Rosamond Davenport Hill argues that by advocating for boarding-out charity schemes in Australia, these women assumed expert speaking positions and claimed a role in welfare debates in

³ Application of Mary Ann Cayten, 21 March 1828, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁴ Rebecca Davies, *Written Maternal Authority and Eighteenth-Century Education in Britain: Educating by the Book* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315546117>.

⁵ Patricia Grimshaw, "Colonising Motherhood: Evangelical Social Reformers and Koorie Women in Victoria, Australia, 1880s to the Early 1900s," *Women's History Review* 8, no. 2 (1999): 329–46, [10.1080/09612029900200203](https://doi.org/10.1080/09612029900200203); Marilyn Lake, "Childbearers as Rights-Bearers: Feminist Discourse on the Rights of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Mothers in Australia, 1920–50," *Women's History Review* 8, no. 2 (1999): 350–51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612029900200205>; Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, "Womanly Duties: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, 1880–1920," *The American Historical Review* 95, no. 4 (1990): 1077, 1079, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2163479>; Patricia Grimshaw et al., *Creating A Nation* (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1994), 118.

⁶ Elizabeth Harvey, "Philanthropy in Birmingham and Sydney, 1860–1914: Class, Gender and Race" (PhD thesis, University College London, 2011), 124–30, <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1148213>.

England.⁷ Yet women's maternalist and philanthropic power came at the expense of working-class and Aboriginal Australian mothers.⁸ Eileen Yeo describes social mothering as the process by which philanthropists exchanged charity for opportunities to manage and transform the values and practices of labouring women.⁹ While this research highlights the ways that middle-class women have asserted authority, it does not consider how poor mothers may have done so. I provide this analysis by suggesting that poor women claimed or exercised authority over their children, examining authority first as custody and then as the right to direct children's futures.

This chapter compares how poor women articulated these forms of authority in NSW and Gloucestershire. It focusses on mothers' descriptions of moral care and their promises to teach children to be upright and hardworking members of society. The chapter begins by charting mothers' attempts to regain custody over their children in NSW. In petitions to withdraw children from the Orphan Schools, mothers committed to care for their offspring's moral development to establish that they deserved to reclaim their children. It then compares women's efforts to place children as apprentices in NSW and Gloucestershire. Apprenticeships were a means by which children could receive moral training and mothers used this argument to justify their attempts to direct their children's future courses. This chapter thus introduces and establishes the principal argument of this

⁷ Shurlee Swain, "Florence and Rosamond Davenport Hill and the Development of Boarding Out in England and Australia: A Study in Cultural Transmission," *Women's History Review* 23, no. 5 (2014): 754–55, <http://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2014.906833>; also see Anne O'Brien, *Philanthropy and Settler Colonialism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 17–18, ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁸ Grimshaw, "Colonising Motherhood," 329–46; Shurlee Swain, Patricia Grimshaw and Ellen Warne, "Whiteness, Maternal Feminism and the Working Mother, 1900–1960," in *Creating White Australia*, ed. Jane Carey and Claire McLisky, 214–29, (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2009); Margaret D. Jacobs, "Maternal Colonialism: White Women and Indigenous Child Removal in the American West and Australia, 1880–1940," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (2005): 453–76, <https://doi.org/10.2307/25443236>; Alison Holland, "Wives and Mothers like Ourselves? Exploring White Women's Intervention in the Politics of Race, 1920s–1940s," *Australian Historical Studies* 32, no. 117 (2001): 292–310, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10314610108596166>.

⁹ Eileen Jaynes Yeo, "Social Motherhood and the Sexual Communion of Labour in British Social Science, 1850–1950," *Women's History Review*, 1, no. 1 (1992): 78–80, 10.1080/09612029200200003; Eileen Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science: Relations and Representations of Gender and Class* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996), 120–26.

thesis, that poor mothers in NSW and Gloucestershire claimed or exercised authority over their children by describing evidence of their care. It forms the foundation for the following chapters, which will develop this idea further.

Articulating Authority

To examine the terms through which mothers articulated authority, I first examine petitions to withdraw children from the Sydney Orphan Schools. In these documents, mothers needed to justify their claims to custody of their children as the Schools did not have official systems for returning inmates to their parents.¹⁰ Governor Philip Gidley King established the Schools in part to protect children from what he claimed was the corrupting influences of convict and immoral parents, and School administrators endeavoured to sever contact between inmates and their mothers.¹¹ Parents who admitted their children to the Schools signed away their legal custody. The pro forma application for admission stated,

Petitioner hereby agrees that the said [blank] shall remain in the Orphan School so long as the said Trustees shall think fit, and that when of a

¹⁰ I have used the term *inmate* to reflect language used in the petitions, particularly as it connotes parents' loss of legal claim to their children.

¹¹ John Ramsland, *Children of the Back Lanes: Destitute and Neglected Children in Colonial New South Wales* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1986), 3–5; Joy Damousi, *Depraved and Disorderly: Female Convicts, Sexuality and Gender in Colonial Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 132–33, Cambridge Books Online; Dianne Snow, "Gender Relations and the Female Orphan School in Early Nineteenth Century New South Wales," in *Battlers and Bluestockings: Woman's Place in Australian Education*, ed. Sandra Taylor and Miriam Henry (Canberra: Australian College of Education, 1989), 4–5; Elizabeth Windschuttle, "Women of the Upper Classes & Middle Classes in Eastern Australia 1800–1850: Aspects of their Family & Social Lives, Their Intellectual Spheres & Their Involvement in Movements for Social Reform" (PhD thesis, University of New South Wales, 1990), 271–75, <http://handle.unsw.edu.au/1959.4/58281>; Tanya Evans, "The Meanings and Experiences of Single Mothers in Nineteenth-Century Sydney, Australia," *Annales de Démographie Historique* 127, no. 1 (2014): 78, <https://doi.org/10.3917/adh.127.0073>.

proper Age shall be disposed of at their discretion as an Apprentice or Servant.¹²

This was followed by space for the parent or guardian to sign. Yet lack of official process did not prevent mothers from attempting to reclaim their offspring. Mary Ann Allen was one of 72 mothers who petitioned the Schools to reclaim a child. Despite “not being aware of the necessary form of memorial,” she nonetheless asked that the Schools release her son Thomas, hoping that “want of form in the application will not be a bar to our getting him.”¹³ Without any legal right to their children, or recourse to official processes, mothers’ petitions were acts of persuasion.

Expressions of care were part of this persuasive process. While Joy Damousi, Tanya Evans and Beryl Bubacz show that many parents sought to persuade the Schools of their improved circumstances and ability to provide for children, historians have not carefully considered the role that the term *care* played in this process.¹⁴ Of 85 petitions requesting to withdraw children, 25 used the words *care* or *protection* to describe their relationships with their offspring; generally as a variation on the phrase *under my care*.¹⁵ In some cases, women used *restored to* or *returned to*, rather than *under*, and they often varied the possessive pronoun or possessive adjective (*her, my, our, my own, her own, a mother’s, a parent’s, parental, petitioner’s*). With just under a third of mothers employing these terms, this was an important theme, without being prevalent enough to be considered a conventional aspect of withdrawal petitions. Whether mothers described their care or protection, they used the terms to the same end: to reclaim their offspring.

¹² Application of Ann Whittaker written on the Rules and Regulations, 28 February 1829, NRS 782 [4/330–32] microfilm reel 2776, Applications for Admission into the Orphan Schools, NSWSA, Sydney.

¹³ Application of Mary Ann Allen, 27 August 1832, NRS 783, NSWSA.

¹⁴ Damousi, *Depraved and Disorderly*, 164–66; Tanya Evans, *Fractured Families: Life on the Margins in Colonial New South Wales* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2015), 90–91; Beryl M. Bubacz, “The Female and Male Orphan Schools in New South Wales, 1801–1850” (PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2007), 213, 223–31, <https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/handle/2123/2474>.

¹⁵ Written by 20 different women.

Mothers attempting to withdraw children from the Schools used the phrase *under my own care* to signify their custody, and thereby their authority. Mary Bolton asked to have her daughters Ellen and Sarah returned “under her own immediate care and superintendence.”¹⁶ By using the term superintendence, with its connotations of supervision and management, Mary seems to have associated her care with her authority. Petitioners also conveyed their role in managing children by emphasising their “immediate” care.¹⁷ Catherine Arundell expressed that having immediate care of her son would allow her to direct his labour, writing that she was “anxious to have him under her immediate care as he will be of material use to her on the farm.”¹⁸ The association between care and authority was further suggested by women who described the Schools’ custody in these terms. Mary Ann Caton portrayed her daughter as being under the “care & management” of the Schools, linking the institution’s actions in caring for her daughter with their power to manage her.¹⁹ By requesting that the Schools return children to their care, mothers seeking to recover their offspring used this term to indicate their custody and the authority it entailed.

Mothers were not the only people in colonial NSW who used *care* to characterise a relationship of authority; medical doctors also used the term. During this time, newspaper columns written by various surgeons used the phrase *under my care* to describe their relationships with patients who they were treating.²⁰ Prior to the professionalisation of medicine in NSW from the 1850s, medical doctors lacked the state-sponsored, orthodox

¹⁶ Application of Mary Bolton, 9 May 1831, NRS 783, NSWSA.

¹⁷ Applications of Johanna Taylor, 5 August 1829, Elizabeth Mortimer, 21 February 1831, Mary Bolton, 9 May 1831 and Catherine Arundell, 9 October 1832, NRS 783, NSWSA.

¹⁸ Application of Catherine Arundell, 9 October 1832, NRS 783, NSWSA.

¹⁹ Application of Mary Ann Caton, 1827, NRS 783, NSWSA.

²⁰ P.M. Hosking, “To the Editor of the Australian,” *The Australian*, December 30, 1834, 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article42006993>; William Bland, “Australian Surgery,” *The Sydney Monitor* June 12, 1833, 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article32143918>; Robert Mont. Martin, “To the Editor of the Sydney Gazette,” *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, April 20, 1827, 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article2188059>.

authority that they later claimed.²¹ Nevertheless, having a patient under their care seems to have afforded surgeons a level of control over their treatment, including, as in Dr William Bland's column, performing invasive surgery.²² While it is unlikely that this phrase acted as an overt signifier of political or social power, it nevertheless seems to have carried connotations of authority over another person. Mothers may therefore have drawn on this association between care and authority for their own advantage in their attempts to withdraw children from the Schools.

Moral Training: Attempts to Withdraw Children from the Orphan Schools

Mothers petitioning the Orphan Schools claimed custody of their children by explicitly using the term *care*, but this was not the only way that they did so. They also provided evidence of how they would care for their offspring by providing them with moral training. While mothers did not describe this training by using the term *care*, providing children with a moral education can be classified as an act of care. As moral education was a key way in which mothers could provide "oversight with a view to protection, preservation, or guidance," it accords with the definition of care discussed in the Introduction.²³ Mothers promised to provide this training for their children as part of their attempts to reclaim them from the Schools. While Damousi and Evans note this trend in Orphan School petitions, I build on their research by examining the ways that mothers made these promises, and how they mobilised the idea of care to strengthen their attempts to withdraw children.²⁴ Because women shaped these assurances in response to what they

²¹ Milton Lewis and Roy MacLeod, "Medical Politics and the Professionalisation of Medicine in New South Wales, 1850–1901," *Journal of Australian Studies* 12, no. 22 (1988): 70, 78–79, 10.1080/14443058809386972.

²² W. Bland, "Australian Surgery," 4.

²³ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "care, (*n.1*)," July 2018, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/27899?rskey=6pZedW&result=1&isAdvanced=false>.

²⁴ Damousi, *Depraved and Disorderly*, 164–67; Evans, "The Meanings and Experiences of Single Mothers in Nineteenth-Century Sydney, Australia," 79.

thought that the Orphan Schools expected, their appeals must be carefully examined within the institutional context of the Schools, as well as ideas about charity and morality in nineteenth-century NSW and Gloucestershire.

Historians have noted that the end of the eighteenth century marked a profound cultural shift in English welfare.²⁵ The poor laws became increasingly unpopular during this time and critics claimed that they encouraged laziness and dependence.²⁶ Mounting anxiety around pauperism combined with a rise in evangelicalism—with its emphases on self-exertion and moral reform—to conflate poverty with immorality or criminality.²⁷ Although philanthropists and parish overseers were previously concerned with whether the poor deserved aid, this question became increasingly prominent in the administration of nineteenth-century charity in both England its Australian colony.²⁸ Philanthropists saw their role as either distinguishing between the deserving and undeserving poor—in order to withhold aid from the latter—or to administer relief to the undeserving poor in such a manner that would bring about their reform.²⁹ Although there were similarities between

²⁵ Samantha Williams, “‘A Good Character for Virtue, Sobriety, and Honesty’: Unmarried Mothers’ Petitions to the London Foundling Hospital and the Rhetoric of Need in the Early Nineteenth Century,” in *Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700–1920*, ed. Alysa Levene, Thomas Nutt and Samantha Williams (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 90.

²⁶ Anne O’Brien, “‘Kitchen Fragments and Garden Stuff,’” *Australian Historical Studies* 39, no. 2 (2008): 154, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10314610802033148>; Williams, “‘A Good Character for Virtue, Sobriety, and Honesty,’” 90; Anna Davin, “Child Labour, the Working-Class Family, and Domestic Ideology in 19th Century Britain,” *Development and Change* 13, no. 4 (1982): 637, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.1982.tb00141.x>.

²⁷ Williams, “‘A Good Character for Virtue, Sobriety, and Honesty,’” 95, 90; Brian Dickey, “Why Were There No Poor Laws in Australia?,” *Journal of Policy History* 4, no. 2 (1992): 123, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0898030600006916>.

²⁸ Tanya Evans, *‘Unfortunate Objects’: Lone Mothers in Eighteenth-Century London* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 94–95, 101–02; Steve Hindle, “Dependency, Shame and Belonging: Badging the Deserving Poor, c.1550–1750,” *Cultural and Social History* 1, no. 1 (2004): 6–35, <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478003804cs00030a>.

²⁹ Anne O’Brien, *Poverty’s Prison: The Poor in New South Wales, 1880–1918* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1988), 12, 34, 36–39, 120–30; Shurlee Swain, “The Poor People of Melbourne,” in *The Outcasts of Melbourne: Essays in Social History*, ed. Graeme Davison, David Dunstan and Chris McConville (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1985), 105–109; Evans, *Fractured Families*, 168–69; Christina Twomey, “Courting Men: Mothers, Magistrates and Welfare in the Australian Colonies,” *Women’s History Review* 8, no. 2 (1999): 235, <http://doi.org/10.1080/09612029900200200>; Judith Godden, *Crown Street Women’s Hospital: A History 1893–1983* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2016) 3–5; John Murphy, “The Other Welfare State: Non-Government Agencies and the Mixed Economy of Welfare in Australia,” *History Australia* 3, no. 2 (2006): 44.8–44.9, <https://doi.org/10.2104/ha060044>; John Murphy, *A Decent*

what it meant to be deserving in NSW and Gloucestershire and both English and colonial charities valued sobriety and industry, the standards for moral living could be specific to different institutions.³⁰ Historians, including Samantha Williams and Steven King in Britain, and Swain in Australia, also contend that the poor were aware of these standards and often sought to comply with them, or at least to appear to do so.³¹ Women applying to the Sydney Orphan Schools and the parish in Gloucestershire seem to have appealed to such expectations to give their requests the best chance of succeeding.

The association between poverty and criminality was pronounced in the penal colony of NSW. Many of society's poorest, including numerous applicants to the Orphan Schools, were, or had been, convicts.³² As a result, the need to establish that one was deserving was particularly pressing for colonial mothers. Citing remarks by Governor King and the Reverend Samuel Marsden, Dianne Snow, John Ramsland and Joy Damousi have shown that the Schools' governing figures regarded working-class and convict

Provision: Australian Welfare Policy, 1870 to 1949 (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 63–64; Lynn Hollen Lees, "The Survival of the Unfit: Welfare Policies and Family Maintenance in Nineteenth-Century London," in *The Uses of Charity: The Poor on Relief in The Nineteenth-Century Metropolis*, ed. Peter Mandler, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 68–91; Hindle, "Dependency, Shame and Belonging," 6–35; Williams, "'A Good Character for Virtue, Sobriety, and Honesty,'" 100; Evans, 'Unfortunate Objects', 94–95.

³⁰ Williams, "'A Good Character for Virtue, Sobriety, and Honesty,'" 87; Ramsland, *Children of the Back Lanes*, 45; Murphy, *A Decent Provision*, 75. Later in the century this included only having children within wedlock, or only having one illegitimate child, as for Crown Street Women's Hospital and the Infant's Home, Ashfield; Godden, *Crown Street Women's Hospital*, 3–5; "The Infants' Home at Ashfield," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, July 7, 1886, 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13637411>.

³¹ Williams, "'A Good Character for Virtue, Sobriety, and Honesty,'" 97, 100; Steven King, "I Fear You Will Think Me Too Presumptuous in My Demands but Necessity Has No Law': Clothing in English Pauper Letters, 1800–1834," *International Review of Social History* 54, no. 2 (2009): 207, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859009000698>; Shurlee Swain, "Negotiating Poverty: Women and Charity in Nineteenth-century Melbourne," *Women's History Review* 16, no. 1 (2007): 99–112, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612020601049744>; Swain, "The Poor People of Melbourne," 105–109. O'Brien also argues that members of the working classes would monitor the deservingness of other labouring families in NSW during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; O'Brien, *Poverty's Prison*, 30.

³² O'Brien, "'Kitchen Fragments and Garden Stuff,'" 154; Applications of Ann Kelly, 26 August 1827, Eleanor Comber, 22 December 1827, Bridget Welsh, August 1830, Mary Bolton, 9 May 1831, Catherine Dailey, 21 September 1831 and John and Rose Jones, 1 December 1831, NRS 783, NSWSA.

women as incapable of caring for their children appropriately.³³ The Schools aimed to do so in their stead, and this involved teaching children industrious habits, as colonial administrators believed that hard work and personal exertion were a means to moral improvement.³⁴ Mothers seeking to reclaim offspring therefore needed to be able to demonstrate that they could provide this education for their children.

So, what were the Orphan Schools' expectations of these women? Although accounts of the Schools note that officials did not allow apparently undeserving parents to reclaim children, they do not provide a picture of the Schools' requirements.³⁵ As School officials investigated the circumstances of mothers who applied to withdraw children, some indication of these standards can be gained by studying evidence left in the course of these assessments.³⁶ The results of the Schools' investigations often appear as annotations on the reverse of mothers' petitions. These might list the assessor's findings, or the outcome of women's requests.³⁷ Annotations reveal that mothers needed to be able to demonstrate their good conduct, although these fleeting notes do not always indicate precisely what this involved. Priscilla Small certainly did not meet the standard. The report penned on her application stated that her husband kept a public house with a dubious reputation where "men are allowed to bring women," and her request to reclaim her daughters was refused.³⁸ Margaret Barrett's attempt to withdraw her son William was similarly unsuccessful. The assessment on her petition recorded that her appeal was "not

³³ Snow, "Gender Relations and the Female Orphan School," 4–5; Ramsland, *Children of the Back Lanes*, 3–5; Damousi, *Depraved and Disorderly*, 120, 132–33; Windschuttle, "Women of the Upper Classes & Middle Classes in Eastern Australia 1800–1850," 271–75.

³⁴ Ramsland, *Children of the Back Lanes*, 2–5; O'Brien, *Philanthropy and Settler Colonialism*, 18; Snow, "Gender Relations and the Female Orphan School," 5.

³⁵ Damousi, *Depraved and Disorderly*, 164–66; Bubacz, "The Female and Male Orphan Schools in New South Wales," 223–28; Barry Bridges, "The Sydney Orphan Schools" (Masters of Education thesis, University of Sydney, 1973), 612–15, <http://hdl.handle.net/2123/7358>. Bridges also notes that sectarian prejudice could influence the success of applications for children out of the Schools; 615–18.

³⁶ Ramsland, *Children of the Back Lanes*, 43.

³⁷ Applications of Johanna Taylor, 5 August 1829 and Mary Higgison, 25 August 1829, NRS 783, NSWSA.

³⁸ Application of Priscilla Small, 5 June 1826, NRS 783, NSWSA.

Granted because the woman's conduct is not good."³⁹ While it is impossible to know from this fragment what aspects of Margaret's behaviour were troubling, other examples are more descriptive. School administrators refused Elizabeth Dwyer custody of her daughter Anne because she arrived at the Female Orphan School "intoxicated."⁴⁰ Officials also expected petitioners to be free immigrants or emancipated convicts. Anne and David Patterson's application was unsuccessful because they were still serving their sentences.⁴¹ Yet a petitioner's moral deservingness, and particularly their industriousness, could overcome this requirement. Although Mary Clitherow was a prisoner, the Reverend William Cowper recommended that the Corporation grant her appeal to withdraw her daughter because she was "industrious."⁴² William also found the hardworking Elizabeth Kenniwell to be upright. After investigating her case, he stated that he was "not aware of any thing prejudicial to the present conduct of Elizth Kenniwell or her husband ... [who are] procuring their livelihood by dealing."⁴³ A mother's moral character was essential in successfully reclaiming her children from the Schools.

As these standards indicate, the idea of industry had a lot of purchase. It was not only used in the Schools' assessment of women, as we have just seen, but petitioners invoked the term as if it carried significant cultural weight. Mothers cited examples of their "industry," or "industrious habits" as proof of their deservingness.⁴⁴ It is difficult to discern which elements of petitions reflect mothers' own ideas, and which reflect the expectations of the Orphan Schools. In some instances, there may not have been a

³⁹ Application of Margaret Barrett, 19 October 1830, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁴⁰ Application of Richard and Elizabeth Dwyer, 4 February 1832, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁴¹ Application of David and Ann Patterson, 6 May 1827, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁴² Application of Mary Clitherow, 28 May 1827, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁴³ Application of Elizabeth Kenniwell, 8 May 1826, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁴⁴ See for instance: Applications of Catherine Dowling Henessey, 14 October 1830, Christopher and Mary Ann Clark, 5 November 1832 and Sarah Hall, 31 December 1826, NRS 783, NSWSA. Ramsland notes this but does not discuss it; Ramsland, *Children of the Back Lanes*, 45.

distinction. Whatever their personal values, however, mothers employed this concept of industry to reclaim custody of their children.

Appealing to a cultural climate that prized hard work and personal responsibility, women engaged to care for children's moral training by teaching them to be industrious. Such training promised to teach children to become "useful member[s] of society"—as Margaret Fry expressed in her petition—and so avoid the pauper dependence criticised in England. For boys, this often meant learning a trade, while girls engaged in domestic labour.⁴⁵ Margaret, and mothers like her, promised that their sons would be "apprenticed to some respectable business."⁴⁶ Margaret Quinn similarly assured the Schools that she would teach her children personal responsibility and independence by "placing them in such situations, as may in due time enable them to provide for themselves."⁴⁷ If boys were to be brought up to trades, girls such as Susan Wells and Caroline Doyle were simply to learn "habits of Industry."⁴⁸ Sarah Brown's request to have her three youngest daughters returned to her was the only petition to describe teaching a girl a craft—in this case, making artificial flowers.⁴⁹ Even so, Sarah described her daughter Eliza's work as an "art," rather than a trade. According to their mothers' petitions, girls such as Mary Barnes were to assist with "domestic concerns," while Margaret Clark, Mary and Ann Devlyn would assist with childcare.⁵⁰ Caring for children's moral development also meant providing them with a religious education, and women also drew on this example to prove that they were deserving.⁵¹ In their petition, Mary and Henry Mellett adapted Proverbs

⁴⁵ Application of Margaret Fry, 23 Aug 1826, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁴⁶ Application of Margaret Fry, 16 August 1825, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁴⁷ Application of Martin and Margaret Quinn, 22 November 1831, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁴⁸ Application of Rebecca Wells, 18 May 1827, NRS 782, NSWSA; Application of Mary Ann Caton, 1827, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁴⁹ Application of Sarah Brown, 18 May 1829, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁵⁰ Applications of Jane Barns, 1 July 1831 and Christopher and Mary Ann Clark, 5 November 1832, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁵¹ Applications of Alice Turley, 3 September 1833, Mary Ann Cayten, 21 March 1828, Ann Kelly, 26 August 1827, Mary Clitherow, 28 May 1827, Alice Maddox, 7 October 1829, Bridget Guider, 15 September 1829 and Catherine Arundell, 9 October 1832, NRS 783, NSWSA.

22:6 for their daughter Letitia. They “pledge[d] themselves that she shall be ‘brought up in the way she should go.’”⁵² By promising to provide moral training, mothers hoped to prove that they deserved to parent their children, and so reclaim custody of them.

At first glance, women’s promises to train their children may seem to reflect ideas about a mother’s duty as a moral guide and teacher. As mentioned, these ideas were certainly part of the rising domestic ideology in Britain and Australia during this period.⁵³ Yet petitioners to the Schools did not seem to indicate that by training their children they were fulfilling an obligation. While petitions were replete with references to duty, these expressed women’s thankfulness and obligation to the Schools—either in caring for children, or for returning them to their mothers. Jane Boardman was the only mother to suggest that her application to withdraw her son Thomas was motivated by duty.⁵⁴ Rather, petitioners portrayed their actions as voluntary. When Mary and Henry Mellett “pledge[d] themselves” to their daughter’s moral upbringing, they suggested that they were creating a new obligation, not fulfilling an existing duty.⁵⁵ Margaret Fry, Mary Ann Caton and Sarah Boyd similarly expressed that they were “desirous” of looking after their children’s moral training.⁵⁶ This voluntary language suggests that women did not evoke ideas around maternal duty. Their claims to provide children with moral training can therefore be regarded as acts of care. Women used this evidence of care to establish that they deserved to regain their custody, and thereby their authority, over children.

⁵² Application of Henry and Mary Mellett, 9 April 1830, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁵³ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes* (London: Century Hutchinson, 1987), 175, 335, 340; Davin, “Child Labour, the Working-Class Family, and Domestic Ideology in 19th Century Britain,” 639; Patricia Grimshaw et al., *Creating A Nation*, 202, 117–21.

⁵⁴ Application of Jane Boardman, 2 March 1829b, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁵⁵ Application of Henry and Mary Mellett, 9 April 1830, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁵⁶ Applications of Margaret Fry, 16 August 1825, Sarah Boyd (Higgins), 12 July 1833 and Mary Ann Caton, 1827, NRS 783, NSWSA.

In Gloucestershire, mothers corresponding with the parishes of Kingswood, Stonehouse and Tetbury were not seeking to regain custody of children.⁵⁷ Yet, as this thesis both examines women's relationships with their children and compares motherhood and poverty in NSW and Gloucestershire, it is worth briefly comparing how women established that they were morally deserving under different welfare regimes. In addition to the shared values of sobriety and industry mentioned earlier, it seems that children's moral training was also important in both NSW and Gloucestershire.⁵⁸ In his sermon on "Domestic Religious Education," Reverend Francis Close, of Cheltenham parish, Gloucestershire, argued that religious education was the duty of every Christian parent.⁵⁹ Like Mary and Henry Mellett, who petitioned the Orphan Schools, he also quoted Proverbs 22:6, urging that parents should "confidently commit the souls of their beloved offspring into the hands of God, resting upon his promise 'Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.'"⁶⁰ Values such as moral training, industry and sobriety therefore seem to have been shared by the two places.

Yet despite similar moral standards in these locations, mothers writing to the parish in Gloucestershire more often sought to demonstrate that they deserved aid by discussing their efforts to find paid employment. This may have been due to the attitudes of parish officials. While the poor arguably believed themselves to be entitled to relief they were also aware that this assistance was intended to be accessed only when they had no other

⁵⁷ If these women had relinquished their children to the parish workhouse, it is more probable that they would have returned in person to collection them, rather than applied by letter or petition. See Tim Hitchcock, "'Unlawfully Begotten on her Body': Illegitimacy and the Parish Poor in St Luke's Chelsea," in *Chronicling Poverty: The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640–1840*, ed. Tim Hitchcock, Peter King and Pamela Sharpe (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1997), 70–82. Peter Bartlett also notes the lack of bureaucracy involved in admission to the workhouse; Peter Bartlett, "The Asylum, the Workhouse, and the Voice of the Insane Poor in 19th-Century England," *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* 21, no. 4 (1998): 425, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-2527\(98\)00023-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-2527(98)00023-5).

⁵⁸ Davin argues that this was the case for nineteenth-century England more broadly; Davin, "Child Labour, the Working-Class Family, and Domestic Ideology in 19th Century Britain," 642.

⁵⁹ Francis Close "Domestic Religious Education," in *Miscellaneous Sermons, Preached in the Parish Church of Cheltenham*, by Francis Close (London: J. Hatchard and Son, 1834), 2:391.

⁶⁰ Close, "Domestic Religious Education," 2:398–99.

means of support—including self-help.⁶¹ It is likely that this language of work also reflects the type of assistance available to these women, as the parish generally sent money to paupers living outside their place of settlement.⁶² To persuade officials that they deserved aid, mothers therefore needed to show that they had tried, but were unable, to procure this money themselves.

As a result, women's letters recounted their attempts to help themselves. Esther Reed informed Tetbury parish that while she desired work, there was none available, as she and her daughter were "unable to get their living" due to a workman's strike.⁶³ Ann Bennett also sought to prove that her need for money was not caused by idleness, as she informed Tetbury parish that she had "Nothing to Support my poor Infants," in spite of the "little Earnd by my fingers."⁶⁴ Some paupers, such as Rosalind Matthews, framed their appeals for money as necessary in order for them to pursue employment. Rosalind requested money for rent from Kingswood parish, stating that she had "plenty of work and no whear to do it."⁶⁵ It seems that the same underlying values of industry and self-responsibility were at work in both NSW and Gloucestershire. Yet distinct social and institutional contexts meant that women articulated these ideas differently. Where petitioners in NSW more commonly invoked the term *industry*, correspondents to the parish discussed their attempts to find paid employment. While children's moral training was important in both contexts, it seems that in NSW, by citing this as an example of care, women could claim

⁶¹ Steve Hindle, "Exhortation and Entitlement: Negotiating Inequality in English Rural Communities, 1550–1650" in *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Britain and Ireland*, ed. Michael Braddick and John Walter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 122; Steven King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700–1850: A Regional Perspective* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 20.

⁶² Thomas Sokoll, "Negotiating a Living: Essex Pauper Letters from London, 1800–1834," *International Review of Social History* 45, (2000): 24, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859000115275>.

⁶³ Esther Reid to Tetbury Parish, 28 March 1828, P328a/OV/7//11, Overseers' Correspondence, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester.

⁶⁴ Ann Bennet to Tetbury Parish, 17 March 1824, P328a/OV/7/7, Overseers' Correspondence, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester.

⁶⁵ Rosalind Matthews to Kingswood Parish, 13 June 1833, P193/OV/7/1, Overseers' General Correspondence, Kingswood Parish, GA, Gloucester.

authority over their offspring. As we shall see in the next section, this dynamic played out in both NSW and Gloucestershire as mothers sought to organise apprenticeships for their children.

Exercising Authority: Apprenticeships in NSW and Gloucestershire

Mothers were not the only people who could provide children with moral training. In both NSW and Gloucestershire, women might describe their attempts to find apprenticeships for their offspring as part of their children's moral education. Although mothers were not directly providing this training, they described their role in organising apprenticeships as evidence of their care. In doing so, women sought to exercise authority over their children by directing their future prospects.

In NSW, as Evans and Bubacz note, some mothers organised apprenticeships for children interned in the Orphan Schools.⁶⁶ Both scholars interpret such actions as evidence of mothers' commitment to continued relationship with their children. Evans claims that some women arranged apprenticeships in order to have their offspring situated near them, while Bubacz even suggests that this might indicate "a caring attitude."⁶⁷ Yet neither closely examine the language through which women framed their attempts to organise apprenticeships. My research explores the ways that women justified their interference and interprets these actions as a means by which mothers attempted to claim authority over their children's future prospects.

The idea that mothers organised apprenticeships for their offspring in order to direct children's futures is first suggested by the fact that women generally came to these

⁶⁶ Evans, "The Meanings and Experiences of Single Mothers in Nineteenth-Century Sydney, Australia," 79; Bubacz, "The Female and Male Orphan Schools in New South Wales," 217–18; Bridges, "The Sydney Orphan Schools," 612.

⁶⁷ Evans, "The Meanings and Experiences of Single Mothers in Nineteenth-Century Sydney, Australia," 79; Bubacz, "The Female and Male Orphan Schools in New South Wales," 218.

arrangements before informing the Schools of their intentions. For instance, Elinor Logan wrote that she had already “partly engaged with Mr Coombs of Sydney ... to take” her son.⁶⁸ Ann McSperity had made similar arrangements with Mrs Winford, who lived at Homebush. Ann’s son would live, and presumably work, for, Mrs Winford, who in turn would pay Ann six shillings per week and support the boy.⁶⁹ Other women organised prospective masters and mistresses to directly request their children from the Schools. James Johnson’s mother arranged for Walter Hale, a blacksmith, to apply for her son.⁷⁰ Elizabeth Price both petitioned the Schools herself and engaged Joseph Clayton, a cooper, to request her son John as an apprentice.⁷¹ Although women framed these plans as requests, such actions can be considered claims to authority—as mothers portrayed themselves as having the purview to manage their children’s future employment.

Mothers who made such arrangements justified their interference by expressing a desire to take care of their children’s moral development. As noted, colonists valued hard work and independence and providing children with a trade could supply both aspects of this training. This was evident in Margaret Roach’s petition, which requested,

I should feel myself very much obliged by allowing me the Indulgence
of takeing my boy Sth Roach from your Institution, it being in my power
to provide him with a Trade, which will enable him, with honest
industry to go through the passage of life.⁷²

Of course, for children to receive appropriate moral training, the character of their masters or mistresses was also in question. Women who sought to place their children in trades

⁶⁸ Application of Elinor Logan, 4 September 1826, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁶⁹ Application of Ann McSperity, 29 October 1832, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁷⁰ Application of Walter Hale, 30 March 1827, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁷¹ Application of Joseph Clayton, 12 January 1827, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁷² Application of Margaret Roach, 13 November 1827, NRS 783, NSWSA.

therefore demonstrated care for their children by emphasising the upright characters of potential masters. Elinor Logan told the School Corporation that her plan with Mr Coombs of Sydney depended on “if his character should meet your approval.”⁷³ Anne Green linked the integrity of her chosen master with the future character of her sons. She described “Mr Cooper Architect & Builder,” as “a Good Master ... who will at is utmost Endeavour to Make them Good Tradesmen.”⁷⁴ Elizabeth Price also suggested that securing a good master was evidence of her care by highlighting her own role in the arrangement. She explained “I have found him a Good Master a person of the name of Joseph Clayton a Cooper in George Street whom will take every Care of him.”⁷⁵ It seems that mothers justified their attempts to plan their children’s futures by arguing that they were providing their children with opportunities for moral training.

Although women corresponding with the parish in Gloucestershire expressed similar ideas, their experiences of finding apprenticeships were different from their colonial sisters. Unlike women in NSW, who had relinquished legal claim to their children, paupers in my sample appear to have retained some right to direct their children’s future professions. This seems to be relatively typical of poor mothers’ experiences within England. Pamela Sharpe and Alys Levene provide some helpful background to pauper apprenticeships during this period. Sharpe reveals that the parish could arrange apprenticeships for children from around eight years old, slightly younger than their colonial counterparts (ages nine and ten for girls and boys respectively).⁷⁶ Yet much younger children might also be apprenticed. Levene observes that in London, the parish

⁷³ Application of Elinor Logan, 4 September 1826, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁷⁴ Application of Ann Green, 20 June 1826, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁷⁵ Application of Elizabeth Price, 12 January 1827, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁷⁶ Pamela Sharpe, “Poor Children as Apprentices in Colyton, 1598–1830,” *Continuity and Change* 6, no. 2 (1991): 254, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416000001351>; Application of Ann Whittaker written on the Rules and Regulations, 28 February 1829, NRS 782, NSWSA; Bubacz, “The Female and Male Orphan Schools in New South Wales,” 213.

might compel dependent families to surrender their children for apprenticeships from the age of four.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, from the late eighteenth century, most parents initiated apprenticeships themselves.⁷⁸

Like women in NSW who relied on the Orphan Schools' assent, pauper mothers who sought to organise apprenticeships themselves might also rely on the support of the parish. An unnamed mother, acutely ill, wrote to the overseers at Tetbury to inform them that she was returning to their parish. Before doing so, however, she wanted to apprentice her son. She explained "we should like to Put the boy Apprentice to Mr Norman iorn monger at Cheltenham first." Yet she seems to have expected the parish to complete the arrangements, as she was so unwell that she claimed, "I dont know one day from another."⁷⁹ Ann Bennett's case shows that pauper mothers may also have needed parochial assistance to pay the premium to have children bound as apprentices.

Ann Bennett's letters are remarkable, due to their length and detail. Between September and November of 1829 Ann corresponded with Tetbury parish to organise an apprenticeship for her son Thomas. Five letters survive from this exchange, beginning with Ann's news that after learning that the overseers had considered assisting with her son's apprenticeship, she had managed to secure a master, Henry Randall, a skilled worker and "a very industrious & honest man." Henry was demanding a premium of ten pounds, approximately double what the parish was willing to contribute. Yet Ann had also gone to considerable lengths to overcome this problem. She added, "I am glad to say I have got a friend who will advance the other £5."

⁷⁷ Alys Levene, "Parish Apprenticeship and the Old Poor Law in London: Parish Apprenticeship," *The Economic History Review* 63, no. 4 (2010): 918, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0289.2009.00485.x>; Sharpe, "Poor Children as Apprentices in Colyton," 255.

⁷⁸ Sharpe, "Poor Children as Apprentices in Colyton," 265.

⁷⁹ Nameless letter to Tetbury Parish, 17 July 1825, P328a/OV/7/8, Overseers' Correspondence, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester.

Throughout this letter, Anne continually stressed her own efforts towards having her son bound. In addition to having sourced half of the premium, she noted,

Of course I shall have to find my Son clothes & Washing during the whole 7 years & his Master the rest & that will be a great deal for me to do but please God I shall do the best I can for him.⁸⁰

By describing her role in finding a master, making a “friend” who would supply the additional five pounds, and continuing to financially support her son, Ann clearly sought to establish that she deserved assistance. She might have needed “that trifle” of a few pounds, but it was not for lack of either hard work or personal responsibility.⁸¹

Of course, such an expensive premium, besides “the stamp of £1 in addition” was bound to elicit opposition from parish officials.⁸² Yet, believing Henry to be “so good a Master” Ann persisted.⁸³ She followed up on her request twice, first after having received no reply, then again in urging her case when she was refused.⁸⁴ Reliant as she was on parish assistance, she did not make any explicit references to her right to manage her son’s future. Nevertheless, her insistence that the parish comply with her plan can be interpreted as an attempt to claim this authority.

She justified both her persistence and her plan on the basis that she was providing for her son’s moral upbringing. In her first letter she had already given Henry’s credentials as “honest and industrious.”⁸⁵ In her second letter, she described the role that he would play as a good master who could guarantee her son’s future independence. She urged,

⁸⁰ Ann Bennett to Tetbury Parish, 1 September 1829, P328a/OV/7/12, Overseers’ Correspondence, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester.

⁸¹ Ann Bennett to Tetbury Parish, 13 October 1829, P328a/OV/7/12, GA.

⁸² Ann Bennett to Tetbury Parish, 1 September 1829, P328a/OV/7/12, GA.

⁸³ Ann Bennett to Tetbury Parish, 5 October 1829, P328a/OV/7/12, GA.

⁸⁴ Ann Bennett to Tetbury Parish, 5 October 1829, P328a/OV/7/12, GA.

⁸⁵ Ann Bennett to Tetbury Parish, 1 September 1829, P328a/OV/7/12, GA.

It will be a very great disappointment to me if you do not comply to this as I may never have an opportunity again of finding so good a Master in learning my Son his business & of course rendering him able to obtain his own living without assistance.⁸⁶

While her circumstances differed to mothers in NSW—most notably because Ann had custody of Thomas—she also justified her attempt to direct her son’s prospects on the basis that it would provide him with moral training. Historians have shown that parish officials could invest significant effort in minimising the cost of poor relief, thus the select vestry’s eventual acquiescence suggests that Ann may have persuaded them of her authority.⁸⁷ Like mothers in NSW, by organising a master to care for her son in this way, Ann not only demonstrated that she deserved aid but also justified her actions in claiming authority over her son’s future.

This chapter has shown that poor mothers in NSW and Gloucestershire articulated care for their children and exercised authority over their lives in distinct ways. In NSW, mothers seeking to withdraw children from the Orphan Schools used the term care to signify their custody, and thus authority over children. Colonial women also attempted to persuade officials that they were morally deserving, and so regain their offspring, by describing the ways that they would provide for their children’s moral education. These women seem to have founded their efforts to recover custody of their children on their ability to care for them. A similar dynamic was at play in mothers’ attempts to organise apprenticeships for their offspring, although there were differences between women in

⁸⁶ Ann Bennett to Tetbury Parish, 5 October 1829, P328a/OV/7/12, GA.

⁸⁷ Pamela Sharpe, “‘The Bowels of Compaſſion’: A Labouring Family and the Law c.1790–1834,” in *Chronicling Poverty: The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640–1840*, ed. Tim Hitchcock, Peter King and Pamela Sharpe (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1997), 88–89; Samantha Williams, *Poverty, Gender and Life-Cycle Under the English Poor Law, 1760–1834* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), 81; J. R. Poynter, *Society and Pauperism: English Ideas on Poor Relief, 1795–1834* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), xix; Ann Bennett to Tetbury Parish, 27 October 1829 and 8 November 1829, P328a/OV/7/12, GA.

NSW and Gloucestershire. In NSW, mothers seem to have arranged apprenticeships to reclaim some power over their children's lives. In Gloucestershire, Ann Bennett's story suggests that mothers exercised their authority by organising apprenticeships and persuading the parish to support these plans. Despite differences between these imperial sites, in both contexts, mothers described how they would care for their children's moral upbringing to justify their attempts to claim or exercise authority over their futures. In other words, they articulated a care-based authority.

Chapter Two: Support

The relief that I do have towards my 4 poor children was 3/-per week but last Monday I was at the Justice meeting and there was an order granted for me to have one shilling more and that is the whole I and my poor children do have to subsist on for a week.¹

This complaint about money was the last in a long line of Mary Davies' troubles. According to her letter to Tetbury parish of June 1833, the parish had first removed Mary's family from Tetbury to Cardigan, Wales, where her husband Lewis had settlement.² The day after she arrived, Lewis absconded, leaving Mary with four dependent children; her youngest son David only three years old, and her eldest daughter Anne "very poorly without any sign of coming over her illness."³ Separated from her friends, without the assistance of her husband and caring for young and ill children, Mary was no longer able to provide for her family alone.

This chapter compares how poor mothers in NSW and Gloucestershire described care for their children through financial support. It builds on the previous section in two

¹ Mary Davies to Tetbury Parish, 5 June 1833, P328a/OV/7/17, Overseers' Correspondence, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester.

² Migrants to a parish where they did not have settlement could be removed, that is, sent back to the parish where they had a right to relief, if they became dependent; Steven King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700–1850: A Regional Perspective* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 22.

³ Lewis' absence was not the first. A Warrant for his arrest reveals that he left his family in February of that year for at least six weeks, leaving Mary and her children chargeable to their parish of residence at Tetbury. The expense of supporting them on what Mary described as "your good wage to us," may have been the factor that prompted their removal to Lewis' parish; Mary Davies to Tetbury Parish, 5 June 1833, P328a/OV/7/17, GA; Warrant for Lewis Davis, 8 March 1833, P328a/OV/7/26, Informations and Warrants to Apprehend Deserting Husbands, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester; Settlement Examination Mary Davies, 26 March 1833, P328a/OV/3/4/3, Settlement Examinations, Typescript, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester.

ways. First, it extends the idea of care-based authority. It suggests that this dynamic operated in mothers' economic relationships with their offspring and teases out the different ways that women described this dynamic in NSW and Gloucestershire. Second, it deepens our understanding of mothers' care-based authority by interrogating how it was affected by poverty. In both NSW and Gloucestershire, women might respond to poverty by either giving up children or threatening to do so. This chapter compares the various ways that women confronted this prospect. In NSW, when mothers could not support their offspring financially, they expressed other forms of care for children in order to maintain a tenuous sense of authority. In Gloucestershire, it seems that mothers described their struggle to provide for their offspring in order to justify their right to relinquish them. This difference suggests that when faced with poverty, mothers negotiated and adapted care-based authority according to their location and welfare context. Care-based authority was therefore flexible, but it was also contingent on the restrictions of mothers' indigence and the availability of aid.

Financial Support and Care-Based Authority

To determine how mothers' care-based authority could be influenced by economic poverty, it is necessary to first establish that this dynamic operated in women's financial relationships with their children, and how it manifested differently in NSW and Gloucestershire. My research therefore builds on the work of historians who have explored the family economies of the labouring poor—particularly mothers' financial arrangements with children in England and Australia during the nineteenth century. As mentioned in the Introduction, historians such as Ellen Ross, Anna Davin and Anne O'Brien have discussed children's financial dependence on their mothers and their

various roles in contributing to the family economy in both NSW and England.⁴ My analysis provides a new perspective on these relationships by suggesting that these two elements, children's dependence and their contribution, were connected. Using the frame of care-based authority, I argue that in both locations, mothers suggested that supporting their children entitled them to direct their offspring's labour or earnings.

This is an important development. Ross contends that in London between 1870 and 1918, wage-earning children saw their pay as a means to reimburse their mothers for years of support.⁵ Whereas Ross' evidence primarily comes from children's autobiographies and oral histories, my analysis suggests that mothers also articulated this expectation, not only in England, but also in the colony. In Gloucestershire, support for children was the basis upon which women managed their offspring's parish allowances, while in NSW, mothers writing to the Sydney Orphan Schools expected to direct children's labour.

Although women in both locations did not use the term *care* to describe acts of financial support, provision for children falls under the umbrella definition of care mentioned in the Introduction. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, in the early nineteenth century, to support meant "to provide resources for the maintenance of, bear

⁴ Scholarship that specifically focuses on mothers' work in supporting children is often found in literature on lone mothers, deserted wives and widows. See, for instance: Anne O'Brien, *Poverty's Prison: The Poor in New South Wales, 1880–1918* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1988), 89–100; Shurlee Swain and Renate Howe, *Single Mothers and Their Children: Disposal, Punishment and Survival in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 150–74; Christina Twomey, "Courting Men: Mothers, Magistrates and Welfare in the Australian Colonies," *Women's History Review* 8, no. 2 (1999): 231–46, <http://doi.org/10.1080/09612029900200200>; Tanya Evans, 'Unfortunate Objects': *Lone Mothers in Eighteenth-Century London* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 131–37; Patricia Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England 1580–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 72, Oxford Scholarship Online. For research on children as wage-earners, see Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870–1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 150–54, ACLS Humanities E-Book; Anna Davin, "Child Labour, the Working-Class Family, and Domestic Ideology in 19th Century Britain," *Development and Change* 13, no. 4 (1982): 638, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.1982.tb00141.x>; O'Brien, *Poverty's Prison*, 172–82; Christina Twomey, *Deserted and Destitute: Motherhood, Wife Desertion, and Colonial Welfare* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2002), 35–36.

⁵ Ross, *Love and Toil*, 158–62.

the expense of,” and “to provide food or sustenance for ... to provide with shelter and the necessities of life.”⁶ Mothers in both locations seem to have described support in this way, and the key synonyms that they used—*maintain* and *provide*—appear in this definition. As care involved “looking after” and to “heed in order to preservation,” supporting children by providing essential resources was a way in which mothers might care for them.⁷

Mothers in both NSW and Gloucestershire seem to have used the term *support* to describe a fairly set group of behaviours: feeding, clothing and housing children.⁸ In Gloucestershire, Ann Bennett requested assistance to support her sons by clothing them. She asked the overseers “to allow me the small pittance of two Shilling p^r Week to buy them a few Clothes being out of all business and Nothing to Support my poor Infants.”⁹ In NSW, Rebecca Wells described a similar struggle to provide clothes and sustenance for her children, stating, “I have with the many difficultys Clothed and Fed [them] until this present time but from Severity of the times I am not able to support the whole of them.”¹⁰ For Mary Ury, the struggle to obtain enough food for herself and her daughter Mary consumed most of her week. Her petition to the Orphan Schools noted, “this Memorialist is obliged to go – 4 days in the week to work, looking for the support of herself & child and ... cannot find a sufficiency of sustenance for herself or Child.”¹¹

⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “support, (v.),” July 2018, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/194674?rskey=GPTtXk&result=2&isAdvanced=false>.

⁷ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “care, (n.1),” July 2018, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/27899?rskey=6pZedW&result=1&isAdvanced=false>; John Walker, *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language*, 4th ed. (London: Ernest Fleischer, 1826), 66, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100783400>.

⁸ Some mothers in NSW also grouped education with these actions; Applications of Sarah Brown, 18 May 1829, Jane Barns, 1 July 1831 and Margaret Smith, 10 January 1832, NRS 783 [4/333–35] microfilm reel 2776–77, Applications for Children out of the Orphan Schools, NSWSA, Sydney.

⁹ Ann Bennet to Tetbury Parish, 17 March 1824, P328a/OV/7/7, Overseers’ Correspondence, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester.

¹⁰ Application of Rebaca [sic] Wells, 15 July 1828, NRS 782 [4/330–32] microfilm reel 2776, Applications for Admission into the Orphan Schools, NSWSA, Sydney.

¹¹ Application of Mary Ury, 14 May 1827, NRS 782, NSWSA.

Support may have involved a physical effort in feeding and clothing children, but as these women conveyed, it also required money. Mothers like Sarah Jones did not rely on officials to draw their own conclusions. Her petition to the Schools argued that she was “unable to support my children and pay house rent.”¹² Financial support was a key way that women expressed care for their children in correspondence with the parish and Orphan Schools.

Although mothers in both locations used the term *support* in this way, in NSW and Gloucestershire they differently articulated how they would provide for children, and in turn, how they would manage their children’s contributions to the family economy. In NSW, mothers emphasised how their economic circumstances shaped their ability to provide for children. In return for this support, they expected to direct their offspring’s labour. Financial provision was a key theme in petitions to the Orphan Schools. The terms *support*, *maintain*, *provide*, *keep* or *subsistence*, appeared in 106 of the 149 petitions, and *support* was the most prevalent, appearing in 70 petitions. The Schools’ requirements for admission and expectations for withdrawal seem to have shaped the frequency of this language. Parents seeking to admit children to the Orphan Schools needed to demonstrate that they could not maintain them, and those seeking to withdraw children sought to prove that they could.¹³ Petitioners to the Orphan Schools therefore discussed their support for children in the context of their economic circumstances.

Historians of the Orphan Schools have already observed that parents’ shifting fortunes assisted them to successfully admit or withdraw children from the Schools.¹⁴

¹² Application of Sarah Jones, 8 December 1827, NRS 783, NSWSA.

¹³ Application of Ann Whittaker written on the Rules and Regulations, 28 February 1829, NRS 782, NSWSA.

¹⁴ Joy Damousi, *Depraved and Disorderly: Female Convicts, Sexuality and Gender in Colonial Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 158–67, Cambridge Books Online; John Ramsland, *Children of the Back Lanes: Destitute and Neglected Children in Colonial New South Wales* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1986), 42–43, 45. Barry Bridges, “The Sydney Orphan Schools” (Masters of Education thesis, University of Sydney, 1973), 612, <http://hdl.handle.net/2123/7358>; Beryl M. Bubacz, “The Female and Male Orphan Schools in New South Wales, 1801–1850” (PhD thesis,

They also note that parents withdrew children because they needed them to contribute to the family economy.¹⁵ My discussion of financial support in Orphan School petitions supplies a more focussed analysis of the economic reasons that colonial mothers gave for withdrawing children. It provides a new perspective on the ways that they expressed their expectation to direct their children's labour by suggesting that this constituted a claim to authority over their offspring. By comparing colonial mothers' responses with those of their English contemporaries, it also reveals how mothers differently articulated their financial relationships with children throughout the Empire.

Mothers seeking to withdraw children from the Orphan Schools might describe their role in supporting their offspring to justify their attempts to direct children's labour. Matthew and Mary Kirby asked that Mary's daughter "may be restored to them," in order to have the girl's assistance in their domestic concerns. They stated that they "consider the Girl would be a very great acquisition to them, they being now surrounded with a young Family," and defended this appeal by adding that they had "the means of supporting them."¹⁶ Jane Barns employed a similar formula in her application to withdraw her daughter Mary. First asserting her "ability to support and educate her," she then explained that she was "much in want of her assistance in my domestic concerns."¹⁷ In the previous chapter we saw that Catherine Arundell requested permission to reclaim her son and direct his labour, as he would "be of material use to her on the farm." She too, supported her claim by establishing that she could provide for him. She noted that she was "Married to one Joseph Arundell a Settler ... and is in tolerable circumstances."¹⁸

University of Sydney, 2007), 212–13, 223–28, <https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/handle/2123/2474>; Tanya Evans, "The Meanings and Experiences of Single Mothers in Nineteenth-Century Sydney, Australia," *Annales de Démographie Historique* 127, no. 1 (2014): 79, <https://doi.org/10.3917/adh.127.0073>.

¹⁵ Bridges, "The Sydney Orphan Schools," 613; Bubacz, "The Female and Male Orphan Schools in New South Wales," 223–28; Evans, "The Meanings and Experiences of Single Mothers in Nineteenth-Century Sydney, Australia," 79.

¹⁶ Application of Matthew and Mary Kirby, 20 July 1833, NRS 783, NSWSA.

¹⁷ Application of Jane Barns, 1 July 1831, NRS 783, NSWSA.

¹⁸ Application of Catherine Arundell, 9 October 1832, NRS 783, NSWSA.

For these women, financial support of their offspring would lead to authority over children's contribution of the family economy.

Mothers in NSW expressed a number of reasons for wanting their children's assistance. Women carrying on their own businesses described their children as more trustworthy than people who weren't family members. Ann Green argued that having "launched into trade," she was "daily being plundered of her Little Substance for the want of a trusty servant." She sought to reclaim her sons John, James and George, to provide her with reliable service.¹⁹ Elizabeth Kenniwell similarly sought to withdraw her son Edward "in order to assist Petitioner and her husband in the business they now carry on of Shopkeepers and Dealers." Her husband's frequent absences for business left Elizabeth with a difficult decision to "either trust to entire strangers to assist her, or neglect the business."²⁰ By taking her own son into her service, she suggested that their relationship would protect her from possible deception or misconduct. Johanna Taylor also wished to avoid hiring strangers. She requested that her children Bartholemew [*sic*] and Catherine be returned in order to work for her. She stated that she had

a little establishment I keep in Sydney for "Board and Lodging", in which, while they might receive sufficient education at any of the Schools in Town, they could now make themselves so useful to me as to do away with the necessity of my employing Strangers.²¹

Another mother suggested that her daughter could free her from her domestic duties so that she could earn wages. Three weeks after the birth of her child, Mary Ann Clark petitioned the Schools to return her daughter Margaret, who was almost ten years old.

¹⁹ Application of Anne Green, 30 June 1825, NRS 783, NSWSA.

²⁰ Application of Elizabeth Kenniwell, 8 May 1826, NRS 783, NSWSA.

²¹ Application of Johanna Taylor, 5 August 1829, NRS 783, NSWSA.

Margaret would “relieve her mother from charge of the infant, and otherwise greatly assist her, and thus enable her to resume her usual work of washing.”²² Whether as trusted assistants in business, or as domestic labour to support other wage earners, mothers petitioning to withdraw their offspring from the Schools confidently planned the means by which they would direct children’s industry. Further, they suggested that their authority to do so rested on their efforts in maintaining children.

This desire for children’s industry seems to reflect their role in the family economy in NSW. Working-class parents expected their children to contribute to the family’s subsistence, although this labour was gendered, as we saw in the previous chapter.²³ Orphan School officials also appear to have seen children as workers and potential economic resources, as they placed children as apprentices and servants from the ages of nine and ten.²⁴ Petitioners who planned to take advantage of their children’s labour therefore seem to have expressed not only social convention, but also the Schools’ expectations for children. Colonial women may also have depended on their children’s assistance because they lacked extended familial support networks. Although the economy of makeshift was a central part of working-class survival in England, discussed below, it depended on family and neighbourhood networks that were disrupted by immigration and transportation to the new colony.²⁵ For instance, Ann Brown’s petition

²² Application of Christopher and Mary Ann Clark, 5 November 1832, NRS 783, NSWSA.

²³ Twomey, *Deserted and Destitute*, 35–36.

²⁴ Bubacz, “The Female and Male Orphan Schools in New South Wales,” 213; Application of Ann Whittaker written on the Rules and Regulations, 28 February 1829, NRS 782, NSWSA; Anne O’Brien, *Philanthropy and Settler Colonialism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 19, ProQuest Ebook Central. It is possible that this emphasis on children as economic resources was influenced by the use of child convicts as labourers, and historians such as Jan Kociumbas argue that this labour was in strong demand. Cameron Nunn’s recent analysis, however, suggests that this may not be the case, as colonists were reluctant to be assigned juvenile prisoners; Jan Kociumbas, *Australian Childhood: A History* (St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1997), 23; Cameron Nunn, “Juveniles as Human Capital: Re-Evaluating the Economic Value of Juvenile Male Convict Labour,” *Labour History*, no. 108 (2015): 62–64, <https://doi.org/10.5263/labourhistory.108.0053>.

²⁵ Tanya Evans, *Fractured Families: Life on the Margins in Colonial New South Wales* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2015), 5, 98.

lamented her lack of family “in this distant Colony from her relations.”²⁶ Reclaiming children from the Schools was possibly a means by which women began to re-form their economic support networks.²⁷ Whether lacking alternative support, or desiring children’s contribution to their businesses and households, colonial women portrayed children’s labour as an economic resource that they sought to take advantage of.

In Gloucestershire, mothers articulated support differently to women in the colony. Women reliant on the parish primarily described financial provision for their children through the language of money. The terms *support*, *maintain*, *keep* or *subsist*, so prevalent in petitions to the Orphan Schools, only appeared in nine of 33 pauper letters. Yet almost all paupers made references to money, with only three of 33 letters failing to mention it altogether. Mothers more commonly expressed their struggle to support children by using terms such as *money*, *pay*, *allowance* or by specifying a sum. Articulating support in this way appears to be the result of English mothers’ charitable context, and Steven King argues that paupers adopted and adapted the language of the poor laws in order to support their requests for aid.²⁸ It seems that these frequent references to money were shaped by the nature of nonresident relief—relief granted to paupers residing outside their parish of settlement—which generally took the form of monetary payments.²⁹ English mothers’

²⁶ Application of Ann Brown, 12 September 1832, NRS 783, NSWSA.

²⁷ Patricia Grimshaw and Graham Willett note that children, particularly adult children, could play a role in establishing family networks in the colonies; Patricia Grimshaw and Graham Willett, “Women’s History and Family History: An Exploration of Colonial Family Structure,” in *Australian Women: Feminist Perspectives*, ed. Norma Grieve and Patricia Grimshaw (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1981), 138.

²⁸ Steven King, “Negotiating the Law of Poor Relief in England, 1800–1840,” *History* 96, no. 4 (2011): 423–24, 434–35, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24429245>.

²⁹ Thomas Sokoll, “Negotiating a Living: Essex Pauper Letters from London, 1800–1834,” *International Review of Social History* 45, (2000): 24, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859000115275>. This was distinct, as parish relief could come in a variety of forms including residence in the workhouse, medical aid and material items, such as food and clothing. My examination of vestry minutes from Chipping Campden suggests that this was also practiced in Gloucestershire; Minutes of General Vestry and Select Vestry, 1822–1836, P81/VE/2/1–3, P81/VE/2/5, Chipping Campden Parish, GA, Gloucester; Steven King, “Reclothing the English Poor, 1750–1840,” *Textile History* 33, no. 1 (2002): 37–47, <https://doi.org/10.1179/004049602793710170>; King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, 156–58.

descriptions of support for their children were thus framed within this language of payments and allowances.

Of the mothers who discussed support for their children in monetary terms, ten made specific references to their “child’s pay” or “children’s money.” These appear to be references to payments granted to mothers of illegitimate children, who received parish support either in the form of a parochial allowance, or as assistance in enforcing the child’s father to pay maintenance.³⁰ Some paupers portrayed parish allowances as part of their own efforts to support their children. This represents a stark difference from colonial mothers seeking to establish their financial independence. Priscilla Shephard’s request demonstrates that parochial payments played a central role in allowing her to support her offspring. She urged the overseers at Kingswood parish not to halve her children’s allowance, claiming that it was “imposible for us to soport the childring for 1^s: 4^d 6 per week.”³¹ The importance of this assistance was most pronounced in Esther Clark’s frequent correspondence with Tetbury parish. Esther received payments for her two illegitimate children, and all but one of the five letters that she authored concerned this allowance.³² Three ran along the following lines:

Sir I Send you these few lines for you to Send me the Children mony
for I wants it yery Bad I Send a fortnight a go and you have not Sent it
plase to Send it by the Curior Next Tusday without fail.³³

³⁰ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, 272–73; Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England*, 33.

³¹ Robert and Sylla Shephard to Kingswood Parish, 12 November 1831, P193/OV/7/1, Overseers’ General Correspondence, Kingswood Parish, GA, Gloucester.

³² Esther Clark to Tetbury Parish, 25 February 1827 and Richard Clark to Tetbury Parish, 8 July 1827, P328a/OV/7/10, Overseers’ Correspondence, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester.

³³ Esther Clark to Tetbury Parish, 7 February 1827 and Esther Clark to Tetbury Parish, 25 February 1827, P328a/OV/7/10, GA; Richard and Esther Clark to Tetbury Parish, 25 July 1826, P328a/OV/7/9, Overseers’ Correspondence, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester.

While these were particularly bald reminders that she was due her allowance, Esther was by no means unique. Repeated references to “my child’s pay” or the “children’s money” appeared in mothers’ descriptions of their struggles to financially support their children.

In Gloucestershire, mothers also suggested that in return for maintaining children they were entitled to direct their offspring’s contribution to the family economy, although they had different expectations about what this contribution entailed. While women seeking to withdraw children from the Orphan Schools often portrayed their offspring as financial resources, women writing to the parish in Gloucestershire made little to no mention of children’s labour. Rather, these mothers were more likely to suggest that their children were burdens.³⁴ This disparity seems to be due, in part, to the difference between pauper letters and petitions as sources. It is unlikely that children’s labour was unimportant in Gloucestershire, as historians have shown that working-class families valued their offspring’s labour throughout England.³⁵ Rather, discussing children as burdens was a conventional strategy for gaining relief in England.³⁶ Yet despite this portrayal of children as an encumbrance, women also suggested—somewhat contradictorily—that they expected these burdensome children to contribute to the family’s survival through their parish wages. Further, like their colonial sisters, English mothers also sought to claim a precarious sense of authority over this contribution.

Women who received a regular allowance for their children often wrote to the parish to monitor their payments. These mothers demanded money that was overdue, protested

³⁴ Richard and Esther Clark to Tetbury Parish, 17 August 1825, P328a/OV/7/8, Overseers’ Correspondence, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester; Hannah Brown to Tetbury Parish, 23 August 1830, P328a/OV/7/13, Overseers’ Correspondence, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester; Rosalind Matthews to Kingswood Parish, 13 June 1833, P193/OV/7/1, GA.

³⁵ Davin, “Child Labour, the Working-Class Family, and Domestic Ideology in 19th Century Britain,” 638; Ross, *Love and Toil*, 150–54.

³⁶ Evans, ‘*Unfortunate Objects*,’ 113, 134–35; Jeremy Boulton, “Going on the Parish: The Parish Pension and its Meaning in the London Suburbs, 1640–1724,” in *Chronicling Poverty: The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640–1840*, ed. Tim Hitchcock, Peter King and Pamela Sharpe (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1997), 27.

when the parish reduced or cancelled payments and informed overseers exactly how much they were owed. A letter to Kingwood parish concerning “the Keeping of Ja^s Hill^s child” may be from the child’s mother. The author’s authoritative tone is hard to mistake, as she demanded what the father owed her, “six Weekes pay due June 25,” stating, “Sir I am not to be foolt A bout by that fellow spending my time for his Pleasure.”³⁷ Priscilla Shephard’s letter was similarly insistent, accusing the overseer at Kingswood of having “dealth very wrong with me in stoping part of the pay for my two children.”³⁸ Esther Paegler also monitored her payments, writing to Kingswood parish to “take liberty of erghling [urging] for my Childs money beeing 13 Weeks pay Dew on the 11 instanl.”³⁹ The close attention that women paid to children’s allowances suggests that they were not merely passive recipients of aid, but actively monitored this money. Women described how parish relief allowed them to support their offspring in order to assert their right to this money. Of course, as these women depended on parochial support, this was only a tenuous form of authority. Nonetheless, English mothers described their efforts to maintain their offspring in order to justify their authority over children’s parish allowances.

These attempts to manage children’s wages reflect the financial practices of England’s labouring poor and the place of parish relief in the family economy. Research on the household finances of working-class families highlights why these payments were so important. British historians have widely adapted historian Olwen Hufton’s phrase “economies of makeshift” to describe the range of survival strategies employed by the poor.⁴⁰ Plebeians took advantage of neighbourhood credit networks, shared resources

³⁷ J.C. More to Kingswood Parish, 30 June 1831, P193/OV/7/1, GA.

³⁸ Priscilla Shephard to Kingswood Parish, 8 January 1832, P193/OV/7/1, GA.

³⁹ Esther Paegler to Kingswood Parish, 12 February 1824, P193/OV/7/1, GA.

⁴⁰ Alannah Tomkins and Steven King, “Introduction,” in *The Poor in England, 1700–1850: An Economy of Makeshifts*, ed. Steven King and Alannah Tomkins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 13; Olwen Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France 1750–1789* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974).

among other families, traded assistance between friends and relatives, and sought to make do through a combination of paid and unpaid work.⁴¹ Yet, with the rise of industrialisation and enclosure of common land in the last half-century of the Old Poor Law, parochial aid was increasingly central to the survival of the working classes.⁴² This was particularly true when other measures failed, and some women writing to the parish in Gloucestershire described a lack of paid employment.⁴³ Looking after young children could also limit mothers' employment options, and for women like Sarah Edwards, a lone mother with a 12-month-old son, parish support was essential to her ability to survive.⁴⁴ As these letters represent the concerns of mothers who needed this support, they chiefly reflect one way in which children contributed to the family's finances. When unemployment or lack of a male wage-earner limited a family's makeshift strategies, children's allowances could be crucial to the family's survival. Mothers articulated care-based authority differently in NSW and Gloucestershire, yet in both contexts, they seem to have used evidence of their efforts to financially support offspring to justify their claims to manage their children's contribution to the family economy.

⁴¹ Tim Hitchcock, Peter King and Pamela Sharpe, "Introduction: Chronicling Poverty – The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640–1840," in *Chronicling Poverty: The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640–1840*, ed. Tim Hitchcock, Peter King and Pamela Sharpe (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1997), 12; Tomkins and King, "Introduction," 13.

⁴² Hitchcock, King and Sharpe, "Introduction," 12, 13; Davin, "Child Labour, the Working-Class Family, and Domestic Ideology in 19th Century Britain," 634–35; Jane Humphries, "Enclosures, Common Rights, and Women: The Proletarianization of Families in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries," *The Journal of Economic History* 50, no. 01 (1990): 17–42, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022050700035701>.

⁴³ Robert and Sylla Shephard to Kingswood Parish, 12 November 1831, P193/OV/7/1, GA; Ann Bennet to Tetbury Parish, 17 March 1824, P328a/OV/7/7, GA; Esther Reid to Tetbury Parish, 28 March 1828, Ester and Ann Reed to Tetbury Parish, 23 April 1828 and John and Mary White to Tetbury Parish, 20 December 1828, P328a/OV/7/11, Overseers' Correspondence, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester; Ann Bulmers to Tetbury Parish, 10 January 1829, P328a/OV/7/12, Overseers' Correspondence, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester.

⁴⁴ Hitchcock, King and Sharpe, "Introduction," 6; Evans also demonstrates this for lone mothers in eighteenth-century London; Evans, 'Unfortunate Objects,' 113, 134–35; S. Edwards to Tetbury Parish, 12 February 1833, P328a/OV/7/15, Overseers' Correspondence, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester; Bastardy Examination Sarah Edwards, 8 February 1832, P328a/OV/5/2, Bastardy Examinations, Typescript, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester; Filiation Order Sarah Edwards, 23 July 1835, P328a/OV/5/5, Filiation Orders, Typescript, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester.

The Poverty Problem: Relinquishing Children

Examining mothers' economic relationships with their children also allows us to explore the effect of poverty on mothers' care-based authority. If mothers' financial control was based on supporting their children, how did they articulate authority over their offspring when they were too poor to provide this kind of care? To explore this question, I compare how English and colonial women discussed the prospect of relinquishing their children. There is already considerable research on child abandonment, particularly around women's experiences and motives in surrendering children.⁴⁵ My analysis does not seek to repeat arguments that explain abandonment as a survival strategy or a response to illegitimacy. Nor do I examine the circumstances that prompted mothers to admit children to the Orphan Schools, as accounts of those institutions have done so.⁴⁶ Rather, as mothers in NSW and Gloucestershire surrendered, or threatened to surrender, children when they could no longer care for them financially, I use this prospect to explore how poverty might influence mothers' care-based authority. Under these circumstances, women in NSW and

⁴⁵ For illegitimacy and abandonment in Australia see Swain and Howe, *Single Mothers and Their Children*, 114–49. For illegitimacy in England and women's reluctance to abandon children, see Valerie Fildes, "Maternal Feelings Re-assessed: Child Abandonment and Neglect in London and Westminster, 1550–1800," in *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England: Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren*, ed. Valerie Fildes (London: Routledge, 1989), 153; Evans, 'Unfortunate Objects,' 129–37. On mortality rates of abandoned children see Alysa Levene, "The Mortality Penalty of Illegitimate Children: Foundlings and Poor Children in Eighteenth-Century England," in *Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700–1920*, ed. Alysa Levene, Thomas Nutt and Samantha Williams (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 34–49. For abandonment as a temporary measure see Evans, "The Meanings and Experiences of Single Mothers in Nineteenth-Century Sydney, Australia," 76; Tim Hitchcock, "'Unlawfully Begotten on her Body': Illegitimacy and the Parish Poor in St Luke's Chelsea," in *Chronicling Poverty: The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640–1840*, ed. Tim Hitchcock, Peter King and Pamela Sharpe (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1997), 73–79; Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England*, 47; Jeremy Boulton, "'It Is Extreme Necessity That Makes Me Do This': Some 'Survival Strategies' of Pauper Households in London's West End During the Early Eighteenth Century," *International Review of Social History* 45, (2000): 52–55, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859000115287>. For abandonment and the maternal indifference debate see Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500–1800* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1977), 81, 114; Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 174–75; Elisabeth Badinter, *The Myth of Motherhood: An Historical View of the Maternal Instinct*, trans. R. DeGaris (London: Souvenir Press, 1981), xx.

⁴⁶ Ramsland, *Children of the Back Lanes*, 18–19, 37–40; Evans, "The Meanings and Experiences of Single Mothers in Nineteenth-Century Sydney, Australia," 75; Bubacz, "The Female and Male Orphan Schools in New South Wales," 194–98; Bridges, "The Sydney Orphan Schools," 416–25; Damousi, *Depraved and Disorderly*, 164.

Gloucestershire continued to articulate a link between care and authority, although they expressed this differently in each location. I therefore suggest that mothers shaped and adapted their expressions of care-based authority in response to poverty and distinct charitable contexts.

Many petitioners to the Sydney Orphan Schools had sought to relinquish their children when they were no longer able to maintain them. Once children were admitted, and mothers were no longer caring for their offspring financially, women sought alternative ways to look after their children and so retain a sense of authority over their lives. One way that they did so was by keeping track of their wellbeing or movements. Tanya Evans, Beryl Bubacz and Barry Bridges note that women whose offspring were interned in the Schools attempted to maintain relationships with children by visiting them, organising apprenticeships close to where they lived and even reclaiming children at their places of apprenticeship.⁴⁷ In petitions to withdraw children, mothers described their efforts to keep track of their offspring as evidence of their ongoing care and used this evidence to justify their actions in advocating for their children's wishes or interests. This advocacy represented women's tenuous authority to speak on children's behalf and continue to influence their offspring's futures, despite having relinquished their responsibility for financial provision.

Mothers' descriptions of the ways in which they monitored children fall within our definition of care as "oversight with a view to protection." Mothers' protective purposes were clear in petitions that objected to how children were treated. Esther Woodley had kept track of the welfare of her son Henry, an inmate of the Male Orphan School. In her petition for his release, she recounted her visit to the institution, explaining, "I have

⁴⁷ Evans, "The Meanings and Experiences of Single Mothers in Nineteenth-Century Sydney, Australia," 78–79; Bridges, "The Sydney Orphan Schools," 402; Bubacz, "The Female and Male Orphan Schools in New South Wales," 219–20.

walked from Parramatta to Liverpool and Found him in a state that Grieved me Sore.” She explained that “the Poor Child is now getting to Understand that he is not attended to or Behaved to in a Christian Like manner,” and requested that the Schools return him to her protection.⁴⁸ In the previous chapter I noted that Mary Ann Caton expressed distress when her daughter Caroline was passed from master to master. By showing that she was aware of her daughter’s treatment, Mary Ann established her ability to speak in Caroline’s defence, and so request that the Corporation “let the Child be Sent to me.”⁴⁹ Keeping track of their offspring was a way in which mothers sought to care for and protect children residing in the Schools.

By recounting these examples of care, mothers established their attempts to act as their children’s advocates or defenders. Ann Pelehitt’s efforts to stay in touch with her son allowed her to urge the Schools to let her to place him as an apprentice. Her petition stated, “my Son John Pelehitt ... is desirous to learn a trade, and as he is now in the Orphan School Liverpool I am anxious to encourage him.”⁵⁰ Conveying that she had cared for her son by monitoring his wishes strengthened her position in promoting his interests. Elinor Logan also voiced her son’s feelings. Stating that it was “against my wish and his will,” she requested that School authorities would “spare a mothers feelings not to send her son to sea.”⁵¹ The same year, Margaret Fry also applied to the Schools to prevent her son from going into service at sea, “in consequence of his ill health, and bad sight.”⁵² Poor health was another reason why mothers became their children’s advocates. Mary Clitherow, Elizabeth Cassidy and Jane Boardman attempted to withdraw children

⁴⁸ Application of Mrs Woodley, 25 August 1832, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁴⁹ Application of Mary Ann Cayten, 21 March 1828, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁵⁰ Application of Ann Pelehitt, 27 July 1831, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁵¹ Application of Elinor Logan, 4 September 1826, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁵² Application of Margaret Fry, 23 Aug 1826, NRS 783, NSWSA.

with “very weakly constitution[s]” or “a Weak Body.”⁵³ Even when they relinquished custody and financial care of their children, women described their efforts to care for their offspring by keeping track of their health and employment. This allowed mothers to advocate for children’s desires or wellbeing. In some cases, women were successful in exerting this tenuous authority. Officials granted Mary Clitherow’s and Elizabeth Cassidy’s appeals to have children returned.⁵⁴

In Gloucestershire, poverty also impeded mothers’ ability to financially care for their offspring. Rather than expressing care through other means, however, English women faced with this situation described their struggle to maintain children in order to justify their authority to surrender their offspring. Like their colonial contemporaries, English mothers had the option to relinquish children and could give them up to the parish.⁵⁵ In my sample, only two mothers seem to have seriously considered surrendering their children. Nevertheless, another six threatened to do so. Within the context of the poor laws, these threats seem to be a means by which women experiencing acute indigence communicated authority over their children. While English mothers conveyed power over their offspring differently to women in NSW, they similarly justified this authority by describing their attempts to care for their children.

The threat to “come home”—or, as Ann Bennet phrased it, “throwing myself and Children Upon you,”—was common in pauper letters throughout England.⁵⁶ Nonresident paupers—paupers living away from their parish of settlement—used the term *home* to

⁵³ Applications of Mary Clitherow, 28 May 1827, Elizabeth Cassidy, 1826 and Jane Boardman, 2 March 1829a, NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁵⁴ Applications of Mary Clitherow, 28 May 1827 and Elizabeth Cassidy, 1826 NRS 783, NSWSA.

⁵⁵ From the eighteenth century this generally involved admission into the workhouse; Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England*, 37, 68; Hitchcock, “Unlawfully Begotten on her Body,” 73–79; Levene, “The Mortality Penalty of Illegitimate Children,” 35; Boulton, “It Is Extreme Necessity That Makes Me Do This,” 52–55.

⁵⁶ Ann Bennet to Tetbury Parish, 17 March 1824, P328a/OV/7/7, GA; Steven King, “Friendship, Kinship and Belonging in the Letters of Urban Paupers 1800–1840,” *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 33, no. 3 (2008): 259, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20762309>.

refer not to their place of residence, but to the parish where they had settlement, and thus a right to relief. According to the poor laws, nonresident paupers who became dependent on the parish where they lived could be sent back to their parish of settlement, at the expense of that parish.⁵⁷ This process of coming home, or *removal* in the language of the poor laws, was expensive. As many plebeians left their parishes of settlement to find work, it also risked taking families away from potential sources of employment and bringing them back to be a continued drain upon the home parish.⁵⁸ Paupers' claims that they would "come home" were therefore powerful persuasive strategies by which they compelled the parish to provide relief and so avoid greater expense.⁵⁹ Building on the work of Steve Hindle, Tim Hitchcock contends that through such tactics, the poor "utilized a powerful sense of agency in their dealings with the British state."⁶⁰ My analysis suggests that women's threats to relinquish their children to the parish not only expressed mothers' personal power and agency, as Hitchcock claims, but also their authority over their offspring.

Mothers' threats to send children "home" to their parish of settlement suggest that women believed they had the authority to do so. It is possible that this was a gendered form of authority. Under the Old Poor Laws fathers were expected to financially maintain their children, whether legitimate or not, and the parish had various legal means of enforcing this support including warrants to arrest absconding fathers and bastardy bonds

⁵⁷ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, 22.

⁵⁸ John and Sarah Medstone to Kingswood Parish, 2 December 1823, P193/OV/7/1, GA; Sokoll, "Negotiating a Living," 24, 43.

⁵⁹ Sokoll, "Negotiating a Living," 43–46; King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, 22; Hitchcock, King and Sharpe, "Introduction," 5; Peter Jones, "Clothing the Poor in Early-Nineteenth-Century England," *Textile History* 37, no. 1 (2006): 19, <https://doi.org/10.1179/004049606x94459>. Rachel Fuchs suggests that women in nineteenth-century Paris used a similar strategy; Rachel G. Fuchs, "Preserving the Future of France: Aid to the Poor and Pregnant in Nineteenth-Century France," in *The Uses of Charity: The Poor on Relief in The Nineteenth-Century Metropolis*, ed. Peter Mandler (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 106–107.

⁶⁰ Tim Hitchcock, "A New History From Below," review of *Essex Pauper Letters 1731–1837*, edited by Thomas Sokoll, *History Workshop Journal*, no. 57 (2004): 294, 297, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25472745>.

that compelled putative fathers to maintain illegitimate children.⁶¹ Mothers, on the other hand, did not have the same legal responsibilities and so were more easily able to relinquish care.⁶² Mothers' threats to send children back to their parish of settlement could be interpreted as evidence of their personal agency, and ability to deny parental responsibility. Yet this does not seem an adequate characterisation of mothers' communication. While both agency and authority involve exercising power, authority involves exerting power over others; as discussed in the Introduction.⁶³ Relinquishing custody of children could significantly influence their experiences and life prospects and was therefore a way in which mothers might exercise power over their offspring.

This sense of power over others was evident in Esther Clark's notice to Tetbury parish that she was "going to bring the Boy Home." She explained that she intended to send her son back to his parish of settlement because he was reluctant to "learn any thing whatso-ever."⁶⁴ Other letters from Esther attest to her acute poverty. It is unlikely that she could afford to keep a child who was unwilling to equip himself with industrious habits.⁶⁵ Her action in sending him back to Tetbury therefore seems to be an expression of her authority not to care for him. Although Esther was one of only two mothers who seemed to seriously consider relinquishing their children, the possibility that mothers could do so suggests that this was a threat with the weight of authority behind it.

The tone of these threats also suggests that mothers were asserting power over their children. Rosalind Matthews assumed an authoritative tone in the opening lines of a letter to Kingswood parish:

⁶¹ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, 272–73.

⁶² Hitchcock, "'Unlawfully Begotten on her Body,'" 73–79.

⁶³ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "authority, (n.)," July 2018, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/13349?redirectedFrom=authority>.

⁶⁴ Hester Clark to Tetbury Parish, 22 July 1828, P328a/OV/7//11, Overseers' Correspondence, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester; Nameless letter to Tetbury Parish, 1829, P328a/OV/7/12, GA.

⁶⁵ Hester Clark to Tetbury Parish, 22 July 1828, P328a/OV/7//11, Overseers' Correspondence, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester.

I am sorry that I obliged to trouble you so sun but ad you a given me the 50 shilling in the pleas of 30 I should not troubled you but my cumong To London was very expensive for I paid 6 shillings for the child and 12 for myself ... if you send the pound now in sted of the end of 20 weeks it will seave me being brot home again.⁶⁶

In the Introduction we saw that Sarah Edwards employed a similar manner when the father of her illegitimate son failed to pay her maintenance.⁶⁷ Without his allowance, the burden of support fell on Tetbury parish. Sarah wrote asking the overseers “wether you intend to stop the Money,” underlining her threat, “if you do I must directly give my Child up to you.” In these cases, women expressed authority to gain what they needed from the parish.

Just as for women in NSW, mothers in Gloucestershire portrayed their efforts to care for children as underlying these expressions of authority. They premised their threats to relinquish children on their struggle, or inability, to support their families any longer. In the previous example Sarah Edwards threatened to give up her son. She justified her right to do so by claiming that she was unable to maintain him, arguing, “I am sure it is impossible for me to Support him and myself on my own exertion.”⁶⁸ We have also seen that Priscilla Shephard was struggling to provide for her children on diminished parish payments. Demanding that Kingswood parish reinstate her previous allowance, she informed them that if they failed to do so, she would make her children the parish’s responsibility. She explained, “if you do not think proper to allow me the 2: d6 per week

⁶⁶ Rosalind Matthews to Kingswood Parish, 13 June 1833, P193/OV/7/1, GA.

⁶⁷ Bastardy Examination Sarah Edwards, 8 February 1832, P328a/OV/5/2, GA; Filiation Order Sarah Edwards, 23 July 1835, P328a/OV/5/5, GA.

⁶⁸ S. Edwards to Tetbury Parish, 12 February 1833, P328a/OV/7/15, GA.

as usall My Husband is Determend to send the Childring Home.”⁶⁹ Of course, such threats represent a limited form of authority, as these letters show that mothers depended on parochial support. Nonetheless, by citing their inability to care for their children alone and threatening to bring them “home,” mothers evoked their authority to throw parental care and financial support completely on the parish.

Comparison between mothers’ financial relationships with their children in NSW and Gloucestershire shows that women’s descriptions of care-based authority were shaped by poverty, as well as their social and welfare contexts. Within the different settings of the Orphan Schools and the poor laws, mothers expressed support for their children through specific terms. In NSW, women emphasised their broader economic circumstances, while in Gloucestershire women mirrored the monetary language of nonresident relief. In turn, they also expected to direct different aspects of their children’s contribution to the family economy, either as labour or parish allowances. When poverty prevented women from providing for their children financially and they were faced with the prospect of surrendering their offspring, women adapted their expressions of care-based authority. In NSW, mothers described how they had cared for children by monitoring their wellbeing in order to claim the right to speak as their children’s advocates. Women in Gloucestershire sought to claim a similarly precarious authority over their children by threatening to send them home to the parish, justifying these claims on the basis that they could not maintain their offspring. Mothers’ expressions of care and authority were therefore flexible, but comparison shows they could also be tenuous and contingent on the strictures of poverty and women’s welfare regimes.

⁶⁹ Robert does not seem to be the children’s father and did not have the same legal responsibilities. Robert and Sylla Shephard to Kingswood Parish, 12 November 1831, P193/OV/7/1, GA.

Chapter Three: Emotion

Causes and Previous Appearances: Distress of mind for the loss of her husband & extreme anxiety lest she should be unable to provide for herself & her daughters.¹

So read Mrs Tookey's case file from Gloucester Lunatic Asylum. In September 1831, Richard Coley M.D. examined Mrs Tookey and declared, "to the best of my knowledge and belief she is a Lunatic, and a proper object to be admitted into the Lunatic Asylum."² Her completed medical certificate, from which the case file would be later compiled, also stated that the "supposed cause of the malady," was "Mental anxiety for the support of herself & three Daughters with a very small certain Income." At the age of 52, recently widowed with three children and exhibiting "depression of spirits accompanied by 'Religious Despair,'" Mrs Tookey was admitted to the Asylum.³

Mrs Tookey was one of 46 mothers interned in Gloucester Lunatic Asylum between July 1823 and August 1834, allegedly because of mental disturbance caused by their children. The Asylum was one of many institutions established in the first half of the nineteenth century with the aim of "contributing to the relief of this most distressing malady [insanity]," for "Pauper Lunatics," as its first annual report declared.⁴ The Asylum

¹ Case Notes Tookey, 6 September 1831, HO22/70/2, Case Book B, Horton Road Hospital (First County Lunatic Asylum), GA, Gloucester.

² I use the terms *lunacy* and *insanity* to reflect the language used in these documents.

³ Case Notes Tookey, 6 September 1831, HO22/70/2, GA; Medical Certificate Mrs Tookey, 6 September 1831, HO22/83/2/10, Case Papers, Horton Road Hospital (First County Lunatic Asylum), GA, Gloucester.

⁴ Anthony Ossa-Richardson, "Possession or Insanity? Two Views from the Victorian Lunatic Asylum," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 74, no. 4 (2013): 554, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43290161>; First Annual Report of the Visitors of the General Lunatic Asylum for the County and City of Gloucester, 1824, HO22/8/1/1, Annual Reports of the County Lunatic Asylum, Horton Road Hospital (First County Lunatic Asylum), GA, Gloucester, 3.

opened in July 1823, and, in line with its intention, its patients were overwhelmingly from the labouring poor.⁵ Of the sample analysed in this chapter, the parish paid the fees for 40 of 46 women, who were classified as third class—or “pauper”—patients.⁶ “Second class” patients were similarly working-class. They were referred to as “Charity Patients,” whose friends and families paid a fee determined by a committee.⁷ Combined with pauper letters and petitions to the Sydney Orphan Schools, case notes for these patients provide evidence of poor mothers’ emotional practice as defined by Monique Scheer.

This chapter builds on the previous sections to explore how care-based authority operated in women’s affective relationships with their children. It seeks to advance the work of historians such as Linda Pollock, Ellen Ross, Valerie Fildes, Pat Jalland and Shurlee Swain, who have demonstrated that mothers in the past—particularly poor and unmarried mothers—loved their offspring.⁸ It moves beyond the question of *if* mothers

⁵ Annual Reports show that pauper patients were consistently four or five times more numerous than first class patients; Annual Reports of the County Lunatic Asylum, 1824–1830, 1832–1833, HO22/8/1/1, Horton Road Hospital (First County Lunatic Asylum), GA, Gloucester; House Committee Journal, 1823–1835, HO22/3/1, Horton Road Hospital (First County Lunatic Asylum), GA, Gloucester, 1.

⁶ Charges for Maintenance for Sarah Harris, 3 January 1829, 4 July 1829, P316/OV/7/1, Correspondence Relating to Relief for the Poor, Stonehouse Parish, GA, Gloucester.

⁷ One of these women was clearly working-class, two others widowed and there was little information about the fourth. The Asylum classified two patients in my sample as first class, or “Opulent Patients,” whose private apartments and servant to wait on them cost between two and three guineas per week. Susan Hobbs does not seem to be ‘opulent’ being “the wife of a baker,” while Mrs Tookey from the chapter’s opening anecdote was worried about her limited income; Case Notes Tookey, 6 September 1831 and Susan Hobbs, 18 October 1828, HO22/70/2, GA; First Annual Report of the Visitors of the General Lunatic Asylum for the County and City of Gloucester, 1824 and The Tenth Annual Report of the Visitors of the General Lunatic Asylum for the County and City of Gloucester, 1833, HO22/8/1/1, GA. For more information on the founding and admission practices of Gloucester Lunatic Asylum see Leonard Smith, “‘Your Very Thankful Inmate’: Discovering the Patients of an Early County Lunatic Asylum,” *Social History of Medicine* 21, no. 2 (2008): 239–42, <https://doi.org/10.1093/shm/hkn030>.

⁸ Linda A. Pollock, *A Lasting Relationship: Parents and Children Over Three Centuries* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1987), 13, 53; Linda A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent–Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 141, 268; Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870–1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 167, 179, ACLS Humanities E-Book; Valerie Fildes, “Maternal Feelings Re-assessed: Child Abandonment and Neglect in London and Westminster, 1550–1800,” in *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England: Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren*, ed. Valerie Fildes (London: Routledge, 1989), 153; Pat Jalland, *Australian Ways of Death: A Social and Cultural History 1840–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 73; Shurlee Swain, “Birth and Death in a New Land Attitudes to Infant Death in Colonial Australia,” *The History of the Family* 15, no. 1 (2010): 32, <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.hisfam.2009.09.003>; Patricia Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England 1580–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 70–71, Oxford Scholarship Online; Tanya Evans, ‘*Unfortunate Objects*’: *Lone Mothers in Eighteenth-Century London* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 133; Lynette Finch, “Caring for

loved their children, to compare how affection and concern for children could influence women's authority in NSW and Gloucestershire. This chapter therefore focusses on how mothers expressed care as emotional attachment and concern; although it also considers other types of care, including care as custody and financial support. It applies the analytical framework of emotion as practice to pauper letters and petitions to the Orphan Schools, comparing the ways that poor mothers in each context described care as a source of grief, distress and anxiety.⁹ I then use this lens to examine how care for children affected women admitted to Gloucester Lunatic Asylum.

Chapters One and Two argued that mothers described care for children in order to claim or exercise authority over them, although this authority could be limited or tenuous. This chapter elaborates on the precarious nature of mothers' authority by exploring how care for children could make women vulnerable to negative emotions or confinement in the Asylum. I compare how care could have different emotional effects on women in NSW and Gloucestershire and argue that, in addition to being a source of power and authority, care for children could also be a means by which women lost authority over their offspring.

Scheer's framework of emotion as practice provides tools for critically analysing how women expressed their feelings in petitions, pauper letters and Asylum case notes. As discussed in the Introduction, according to this frame, emotional practices are produced by a combination of embodied feelings and outward expressions in specific social contexts.¹⁰ Mothers practiced emotion in these sources through what Scheer calls

Colonial Infants: Parenting on the Frontiers," *Australian Historical Studies* 29, no. 110 (1998): 112, 126, <http://dio.org/10.1080/10314619808596063>.

⁹ In doing so, I also develop Evans' claim that parents used petitions to express their affection for children; Tanya Evans, "The Meanings and Experiences of Single Mothers in Nineteenth-Century Sydney, Australia," *Annales de Démographie Historique* 127, no. 1 (2014): 79, <https://doi.org/10.3917/adh.127.0073>.

¹⁰ Monique Scheer, "Are Emotions A Kind of Practice (And is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion," *History and Theory* 51, no. 2 (2012): 212–15, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2303.2012.00621.x>.

“communicating,” using affect as a means of social exchange.¹¹ According to Scheer, communicating emotion involves both speech and physical behaviours such as tears, breathing patterns and facial expressions—even if historians do not always have evidence of these.¹² In examining mothers’ expressions of grief, anxiety and distress, it is therefore important not to create a false division between the emotions women ‘felt’ and those that they showed, as both are elements of communicating emotion. Rather, as specific, socialised responses, emotional practices should be seen as both expressive and mobilised for a purpose. The historian’s challenge is thus to examine how mothers mobilised emotions within different welfare regimes—in this case, to strengthen mothers’ applications for aid.¹³ By employing this methodology I take a similar approach to other historians of poverty who argue that mothers’ requests for aid could also express their feelings.¹⁴ Using this framework, I regard poor women’s descriptions of grief, anxiety and distress as at once strategies for procuring aid, and expressions of emotion.

Affected Mothers

Just as for their moral and financial relationships, poor mothers suggested that care lay at the heart of their emotional relationships with children. Yet, in this case, mothers conveyed that caring for children could be a source of negative emotions, such as grief, rather than authority, as we saw in the first two chapters. The idea that women’s personal relationships could lead to emotional vulnerability may seem unremarkable, however, I analyse how women themselves articulated this vulnerability in order to explore its possible consequences for their authority later in the chapter. By examining expressions

¹¹ Scheer, “Are Emotions a Kind of Practice,” 214.

¹² Scheer, “Are Emotions a Kind of Practice,” 212, 214–15.

¹³ Scheer, “Are Emotions a Kind of Practice,” 215.

¹⁴ Evans, ‘*Unfortunate Objects*,’ 131; John Styles, “Objects of Emotion: The London Foundling Hospital Tokens, 1741–1760,” in *Writing Material Culture History*, ed. Giorgio Riello and Anne Gerritsen (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 165–71.

of grief, anxiety and distress, I suggest that mothers themselves often attributed emotional upset to actions involved in caring for children.

Some mothers described feelings of care for children by expressing concern for their wellbeing. During the early nineteenth-century the term *care* could also signify concern, and working-class women in both locations would have been familiar with this use in the biblical exhortation not to worry, “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”¹⁵ In Gloucestershire, mothers described concern about their families’ poverty as a source of grief. Chapter Two related that Lewis Davies had abandoned Mary and her children, leaving them destitute. The very act of expressing these events and concern for her children moved Mary to weep. She told the Overseer that it was “with Tears in my Eyes I do inform you that I would wish if I was never come to Cardigan.”¹⁶ Ann Bennett was also worried about her son’s future. As noted, the parish initially refused to provide the premium for his apprenticeship. Anne claimed that the failure to do “my sun that Charity,” had rendered her emotions beyond expression. While she stated that “I cannot discribe my feelings,” her claim that “I ham so very much disappointed,” implied a measure of sorrow.¹⁷ Both of these mothers suggested that care and concern for their children had caused their grief.

Mothers in NSW expressed a similar connection between concern and sorrow. Yet petitioners who had lost custody of their children more commonly expressed grief at the mistreatment of their offspring. As discussed, when Esther Woodley visited the Male

¹⁵ Phil. 4:6 (King James Version); John Walker, *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language*, 4th ed. (London: Ernest Fleischer, 1826), 66, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100783400>; *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “care, (v.),” July 2018, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/27902?rskey=6pZedW&result=4&isAdvanced=false>.

¹⁶ Mary Davies to Tetbury Parish, 5 June 1833, P328a/OV/7/17, Overseers’ Correspondence, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester.

¹⁷ Ann Bennett to Tetbury Parish, 13 October 1829, P328a/OV/7/12, Overseers’ Correspondence, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester.

Orphan School she found that her son Henry was “not attended to or Behaved to in a Christian Like manner.” She explained to School authorities that finding him thus had “Grieved me Sore.”¹⁸ I have also described Mary Ann Caton’s dismay when her daughter was treated poorly by her master. Like Esther, concern for her daughter prompted Mary Ann to express her own sadness, stating “I ... feel much grieved to think She Should be So used.”¹⁹ Whether their concern was caused by the trials of poverty, or mistreatment of children, some mothers in both NSW and Gloucestershire portrayed care as a source of emotional distress.

Women not only communicated grief to express their feelings, they also seem to have used this emotional practice to demonstrate that they deserved aid. By conveying sadness, mothers may have sought to evoke the idea of virtuous motherhood and so establish their moral deservingness. In England and NSW, the rise of domesticity during the first half of the nineteenth century resulted in a valorisation of motherhood that saw maternal love as pure, and a source of moral training.²⁰ In 1834, the *Cheltenham Chronicle* published an anecdote about the “the purity of maternal feelings.” Despite being married to composer Carl Maria Von Weber, the paper reported his wife’s claim that her children’s “innocent prattle” was “the most beautiful music to a mother’s ear.”²¹ In NSW, a poem appearing in the *Sydney Gazette* in 1831 contained similar ideas. “The

¹⁸ Application of Mrs Woodley, 25 August 1832, NRS 783 [4/333–35] microfilm reel 2776–77, Applications for Children out of the Orphan Schools, NSWSA, Sydney.

¹⁹ Application of Mary Ann Cayten, 21 March 1828, NRS 783, NSWSA.

²⁰ Anna Davin, “Child Labour, the Working-Class Family, and Domestic Ideology in 19th Century Britain,” *Development and Change* 13, no. 4 (1982): 638–39, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.1982.tb00141.x>. Linda Young, *Middle Class Culture in the Nineteenth Century: America, Australia, and Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 69, 73–76, 10.1057/9780230598812; Leonore Davidoff, “Class and Gender in Victorian England: The Diaries of Arthur J. Munby and Hannah Cullwick,” *Feminist Studies* 5, no. 1 (1979): 95, 10.2307/3177552. Patricia Grimshaw notes that this was less pronounced in the Australian colonies until the 1840s; Patricia Grimshaw, “In Pursuit of True Anglican Womanhood in Victoria, 1880–1914,” *Women’s History Review* 2, no. 3 (1993): 332, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612029300200037>.

²¹ “Art and Nature,” *Cheltenham Chronicle*, May 29, 1834, 2, microfilm reel, Cheltenham Local Studies Library.

Mother,” connected women’s affection for children with maternal purity, pairing lines such as “Beautiful and pure of heart!” with “hath made thy soul’s delight / Thine own children in thy sight.”²² This purity of heart might be manifested in mothers’ anxiety for children, as implied by a poem published in the *Cheltenham Chronicle* in 1821. “A Tribute to Affection,” read, “o’er my cradle first thy tears / Were blended with maternal fears, / And anxious doubts for me.”²³ Of course, working-class family life did not fit the domestic ideology that such ideas were built on.²⁴ Yet cultural tropes can provide scripts that inform emotional practices.²⁵ It is possible that mothers applying for aid from the Schools and parish called upon this image of a mother’s pure feeling in order to portray themselves as deserving.

This was particularly suggested by petitioners to the Orphan Schools. Jane Barns may have sought to evoke this imagery when she premised her appeal to regain her daughter on “the feelings of a Mother.”²⁶ We have seen that Elinor Logan requested that the Orphan Schools revoke their plan to send her son into service at sea, yet she also invoked maternal love to strengthen her appeal. Perhaps hoping to elicit an empathetic response from authorities she asked them to “spare a mothers feelings not to send her son to sea.”²⁷ By describing sadness at children’s treatment, mothers corresponding with both the Schools and the parish seem to have drawn on the image of pure maternal affection to support their requests. Descriptions of grief were both strategies for soliciting aid and a way to express emotion.

²² “The Mother,” *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, May 10, 1831, 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article2200485>.

²³ “A Tribute to Affection,” *Cheltenham Chronicle*, February 8, 1821, 4, microfilm reel, Cheltenham Local Studies Library.

²⁴ Davin, “Child Labour, the Working-Class Family, and Domestic Ideology in 19th Century Britain,” 637–39, 643.

²⁵ Scheer, “Are Emotions a Kind of Practice,” 217–18.

²⁶ Application of Jane Barns, 1 July 1831, NRS 783, NSWSA.

²⁷ Application of Elinor Logan, 4 September 1826, NRS 783, NSWSA.

This dual role of emotional communication is also apparent in mothers' descriptions of anxiety and distress. Women used both terms in petitions and pauper letters as part of their appeals for aid. Steven King and Tanya Evans are among the few historians who have examined the vocabulary of poverty from the perspectives of English plebeians, including the rhetoric of misfortune, sex, rights and obligations, sickness and the poor laws.²⁸ In Australia, historians have primarily studied language used to describe the poor, rather than the language used by the poor.²⁹ In both historiographies, few scholars have closely examined the emotional significance of this rhetoric. By comparing the ways that mothers in NSW and Gloucestershire used the terms *anxiety* and *distress* to both solicit aid and communicate their feelings, my analysis reveals the two-fold significance of this emotional language; although there is scope for future research in this area.

In Gloucestershire, poor mothers used the language of anxiety to both express their feelings and to urge parish officials to provide relief. During this period the term *anxiety* combined "trouble of mind" with "a strong desire *for* something, *to* do something, or *that* something should happen."³⁰ As for expression of grief, poor mothers in southern

²⁸ Steven King, "Negotiating the Law of Poor Relief in England, 1800–1840," *History* 96, no. 4 (2011): 410–35, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24429245>; Steven King, "Regional Patterns in the Experiences and Treatment of the Sick Poor, 1800–40: Rights, Obligations and Duties in the Rhetoric of Paupers," *Family & Community History* 10, no. 1 (2007): 61–75, <https://doi.org/10.1179/175138107x185256>; Steven King, "Friendship, Kinship and Belonging in the Letters of Urban Paupers 1800–1840," *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 33, no. 3 (2008): 249–77, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20762309>; Evans, 'Unfortunate Objects,' 109–17, 122–25, 131–34. Scholarship on paupers' language in Britain is largely methodological in focus, as historians discuss how to analyse pauper letters and legal documents produced by parish relief, such as settlement and bastardy examinations; Thomas Sokoll, *Essex Pauper Letters 1731–1837* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 54–55, 59–60; Steven King, "Pauper Letters as a Source," *Family & Community History* 10, no. 2 (2007): 167–68, <https://doi.org/10.1179/175138107x234431>; Tim Hitchcock and John Black, *Chelsea Settlement and Bastardy Examinations, 1733–1766* (Loughborough: London Record Society, 1999), x.

²⁹ Anne O'Brien, "'Kitchen Fragments and Garden Stuff,'" *Australian Historical Studies* 39, no. 2 (2008): 154, 159, 161, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10314610802033148>; Joy Damousi, *Depraved and Disorderly: Female Convicts, Sexuality and Gender in Colonial Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 4, Cambridge Books Online; Shurlee Swain, "Negotiating Poverty: Women and Charity in Nineteenth-century Melbourne," *Women's History Review* 16, no. 1 (2007): 103, 109, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612020601049744>.

³⁰ Walker, *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language*, 23; *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "anxiety, (n.)," July 2018, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/8968?redirectedFrom=anxiety>.

England principally described anxiety as a result of their poverty and inability to support their children. We have seen that Sarah Edwards wrote to Tetbury parish describing her struggle to maintain her child, having neither “seen nor heard from my friends” nor received support from the child’s father. She concluded her letter by stating that she was “Waiting with anxiety for an answer,” and added a biting postscript, “I am sure I am more anxious for his caption [capture] than you or else you would have had him before this.”³¹ Sarah seems to have deployed this acerbic valediction to compel the parish to pursue her lover. Her anxiety was central to this strategy, contrasting her own desire for his capture against the parish’s inertia. She also suggested that she was worried because of her inability to care for her infant. Ann Bennett expressed similar feelings during her prolonged efforts to secure an apprenticeship for her son, stating “I am anxious to do a good part towards my son & the Parish at the same time.” Ann’s anxiety conveyed her concern to provide for her son’s future support and her wish to treat the parish well.³² In doing so, she both requested assistance and attempted to demonstrate that she deserved it. Employing the language of anxiety to request aid and express their emotions, Ann and Sarah also suggested that their worry was due to the struggle to care for their children.

Mothers in NSW also linked feelings of anxiety with care for children. Rather than describing support for children as a source of worry, like their English contemporaries, colonial mothers described their anxiety to have children returned to their care, as in custody. When Anne Brown tried to withdraw her sons to assist with her developing business, she also conveyed a longing to be reunited with her children. She explained that she was “most Anxious ... that She may be blessed with her Children about her.”³³ It seems that mothers deployed such language to coax School authorities into returning

³¹ S. Edwards to Tetbury Parish, 12 February 1833, P328a/OV/7/15, Overseers’ Correspondence, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester.

³² Ann Bennett to Tetbury Parish, 5 October 1829, P328a/OV/7/12, GA.

³³ Application of Ann Brown, 12 September 1832, NRS 783, NSWSA.

children to their parents' care. Faith and John Matthews' petition to regain Faith's son described their wishes for a favourable outcome. It informed the Schools that they were "anxiously awaiting your Kind order for his discharge."³⁴ It is also possible that Mary Bolton evoked the image of the naturally affectionate mother by stating that she was "naturally anxious to have her youngest daughter, Sarah."³⁵ Care for children also seems to have been a source of anxiety for mothers in the colony, yet for these women, care involved renewed custody, rather than financial provision.

Mothers in NSW and Gloucestershire also expressed feelings of distress. This was a significant term in the language of poverty as it could signify both emotional and economic suffering.³⁶ During the early nineteenth century in both locations, distress was a common synonym for indigence and want. For instance, in Gloucestershire, the *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette* used the term to describe the conditions of communities that were economically depressed.³⁷ *Distress* was also used within the context of parochial relief. Churchwardens, overseers and members of the community corresponding with the parish applied the term to describe paupers' abject circumstances.³⁸ In Sydney, the Orphan Schools also used this language. According to the Corporation's regulations for admission into the Schools, they would take in children to "relieve the distress of a large family."³⁹ Mothers in England and NSW used the term in this sense, describing their

³⁴ Application of Faith and John Matthews, 3 November 1831, NRS 783, NSWSA.

³⁵ Application of Mary Bolton, 9 May 1831, NRS 783, NSWSA.

³⁶ Walker, *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language*, 144; *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "distress, (n.)," July 2018, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/55762?rskey=AXAx8K&result=1&isAdvanced=false>; Joan Kent and Steve King, "Changing Patterns of Poor Relief in Some English Rural Parishes Circa 1650–1750," *Rural History* 14, no. 2 (2003): 131, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0956793303001006>.

³⁷ "Real Distress," *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette*, January 8, 1822, 2, microfilm reel, GA, Gloucester; "Agricultural Distress," *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette*, January 29, 1822, 4, microfilm reel, GA, Gloucester; "Kingswood Benevolent Society," *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette*, March 26, 1822, 2, microfilm reel, GA, Gloucester.

³⁸ Walter Hill to Tetbury Parish, 6 May 1833, P328a/OV/7/17, GA; James Hawkins to Kingswood Parish, 18 July 1821, and Thomas Wells, Robert Dighton and Thomas Smurthwaite to Kingswood Parish, 21 July 1821, P193/OV/7/1, Overseers' General Correspondence, Kingswood Parish, GA, Gloucester.

³⁹ Application of Ann Whittaker written on the Rules and Regulations, 28 February 1829, NRS 782 [4/330–32] microfilm reel 2776, Applications for Admission into the Orphan Schools, NSWSA, Sydney.

economic hardship and how it prevented them from providing for their children financially. They also suggested that this inability to care for their children resulted in emotional distress.

Paupers in England used the term *distress* to refer to their circumstances, but these circumstances also shaped their emotions. In Chapter Two we saw that Esther Reid and her daughter were out of work due to a strike. Writing to Tetbury parish Esther used this language, describing the “present distressed state of things in this town.”⁴⁰ Receiving no answer, and without a resolution between the carpet weavers and layers, Esther wrote again the following month, requesting, “you Sir will be a friend to the widow and the Fatherless In Causing me to have some relief Sent me to Save me & My Child from actual Distress.” This second letter used the term in both its senses, first to describe her poverty, and then by referring to her situation as an emotionally “Distressing Case.”⁴¹ Esther was not the only pauper unable to support herself and her children. When Pheby [*sic*] Parker’s husband became ill, Pheby was similarly unable to maintain her offspring. Her letter to Tetbury parish explained,

“My Husband is verey ill and under the Docter Hands and I ham in Great Distress I have three Small Children the oldest is four year old and I Shall be Kindly obliged to you if you will Send me Sum thing to Suparte us During his illness.”⁴²

⁴⁰ Esther Reid to Tetbury Parish, 28 March 1828, P328a/OV/7//11, Overseers’ Correspondence, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester.

⁴¹ Ester and Ann Reed to Tetbury Parish, 23 April 1828, P328a/OV/7//11, Overseers’ Correspondence, Tetbury St Mary Parish, GA, Gloucester.

⁴² Pheby Parker to Tetbury Parish, 27 October 1832, P328a/OV/7/15, GA.

Both Esther and Pheby seem to have used the term *distress* somewhat ambiguously, suggesting that their financial suffering, and inability to maintain children were also linked to emotional upset.

In NSW, petitioners to the Orphan Schools also portrayed feelings of distress as a response to their struggle to financially support their families. Sarah Radley said that she “feels considerable distress from having no means of providing for her daughter now nine years of age.”⁴³ Sarah West, whose story opened this thesis, expressed similar feelings, stating “i am so Destressed that i have not nor neither can I procure anything for their [her children’s] Subsistence.”⁴⁴ Unlike in England, however, colonial women more explicitly suggested that both their emotional and economic suffering had been caused by their children. Charlotte Shrimpon and Mary Weavers suggested that having too many children to maintain had led them into “great distress.”⁴⁵ Mary Ann Silk similarly claimed that her “distress” was caused by her children, explaining that “the trouble I had in rearing them ... prevents me for the present of going to service.”⁴⁶ Whether economic or emotional, colonial mothers linked their distress with their inability to financially support their children.

Although mothers in England and NSW emphasised different causes of their grief, anxiety or distress, care was a common thread throughout their descriptions. Whether women expressed care as emotional concern, financial support or as custody of children, mothers in both locations consistently suggested that various forms of care could lead to negative emotions. While mothers expressed care for children in order to claim or

⁴³ Application of Sarah Radley, 16 October 1827, NRS 782, NSWSA.

⁴⁴ Application of Sarah Jane West, 23 June 1832, NRS 782, NSWSA.

⁴⁵ Application of Mary Ann Silk, 11 July 1833, NRS 782, NSWSA.

⁴⁶ Applications of Charlotte Shrimpton, 18 September 1828 and Mary Weavers, 21 March 1828, NRS 782, NSWSA.

articulate authority over them—as we saw Chapters One and Two—in their emotional relationships women described care as a cause of emotional distress and vulnerability.

Disordered Mothers: Gloucester Lunatic Asylum

Concern and affection for children not only made women vulnerable to negative emotions but could also result in admission to a lunatic asylum. Although I initially accessed case notes from Gloucester Lunatic Asylum to redress uneven sample sizes between mothers from NSW and Gloucestershire, these provide insight into the possible emotional consequences of caring for children in conditions of poverty. As I do not have comparative data for NSW, these simply provide a case-study. Nevertheless, these records support my findings from pauper letters and petitions to the Schools by suggesting that care for children—whether emotional or financial—could make women vulnerable to negative emotions or even mental disturbance.

In order to use case notes, it is important to first examine how they were created, and situate within them within the context of lunacy, poverty, gender and the process of confinement. Case notes were recorded upon admission to Gloucester Asylum. Staff examined each patient and entered their details in the Casebook.⁴⁷ These notes consisted of a table calling for the patient's age, marital status, number of children and various details about their condition (for instance causes, manifestations and previous appearances). These records were intended to be compiled from completed medical certificates, which the law required as part of the process of admission from 1811.⁴⁸ While there was a lack of medical consensus on what lunacy involved during this time, officials

⁴⁷ Bartlett, "The Asylum, the Workhouse, and the Voice of the Insane Poor in 19th-Century England," 425.

⁴⁸ Bartlett, "The Asylum, the Workhouse, and the Voice of the Insane Poor in 19th-Century England," 425.

considered these notes to be scientific evidence.⁴⁹ The Asylum's governing committee stipulated that casebooks be kept as a "Medical Journal in which every case is to be entered for the benefit of the Institution & the advancement of Medical Science."⁵⁰ The Asylum's medical context would therefore have mediated patients' voices.

It is important, however, not to overemphasise the role that the medical gaze played in creating case notes. Research on poverty and insanity in England during the nineteenth century has shown that working-class families and poor law officials played a central role in the administration and institutionalisation of pauper lunatics.⁵¹ Historian David Wright argues that during the nineteenth century the impetus for confinement was provided by families overburdened with the management and support of relatives who were violent or disordered.⁵² As such, historians working in this subfield, including Peter Bartlett, Catherine Coleborne and Akihito Suzuki, use case notes to study the perspectives of

⁴⁹ There was a broad understanding that insanity was a medical condition and authorities at Gloucester Lunatic Asylum certainly took this view. The Asylum's first annual report provided the following definition: "Insanity is a disease which, in its early stage, is curable, and often cured; in its more advanced stage, is remediable, and often relieved." Nevertheless, in 1830 professor of Medicine John Conolly noted that there was little consensus among physicians on how to define lunacy. Ossa-Richardson also shows that the role of the demonic continued to be part of discussions of lunacy throughout the nineteenth-century; John Conolly, *An Inquiry Concerning the Indications of Insanity*, (London: John Taylor, 1830), 291–93, <https://ia600207.us.archive.org/25/items/b21914655/b21914655.pdf>; First Annual Report of the Visitors of the General Lunatic Asylum for the County and City of Gloucester, 1824, HO22/8/1/1, GA, 3; Ossa-Richardson, "Possession or Insanity?," 553–56; Hilary Marland, "Disappointment and Desolation: Women, Doctors and Interpretations of Puerperal Insanity in the Nineteenth Century," *History of Psychiatry* 14, no. 3 (2003): 303–20, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957154X030143003>.

⁵⁰ House Committee Journal, 1823–1835, HO22/3/1, GA, 4.

⁵¹ Elaine Murphy, "The New Poor Law Guardians and the Administration of Insanity in East London, 1834–1844," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 77, no. 1 (2003): 45–74, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44447693>; Cathy Smith, "Family, Community and the Victorian Asylum: A Case Study of the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum and Its Pauper Lunatics," *Family & Community History* 9, no. 2 (2006): 109–24, <https://doi.org/10.1179/175138106x146133>; David Wright, "Getting Out of the Asylum: Understanding the Confinement of the Insane in the Nineteenth Century," *Social History of Medicine* 10, no. 1 (1997): 137–55, <https://doi.org/10.1093/shm/10.1.137>; Bill Forsythe, Joseph Melling and Richard Adair, "The New Poor Law and the County Pauper Lunatic Asylum—The Devon Experience 1834–1884," *Social History of Medicine* 9, no. 3 (1996): 335–55, <https://doi.org/10.1093/shm/9.3.335>; Peter Bartlett, "The Asylum, the Workhouse, and the Voice of the Insane Poor in 19th-Century England," *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* 21, no. 4 (1998): 422–23, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-2527\(98\)00023-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-2527(98)00023-5).

⁵² David Wright, "The Certification of Insanity in Nineteenth-Century England and Wales," *History of Psychiatry* 9, no. 35 (1998): 268, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957154X9800903501>; Wright, "Getting Out of the Asylum," 139.

asylum patients and their families.⁵³ In Gloucestershire, it seems that family members, or even patients themselves, might supply information for case notes. Some records bear the marks of friends and family members who accompanied patients and whose observations were recorded.⁵⁴ Information included in medical certificates taken prior to admission also appears to have come from patients or their families, who provided the patient's history, odd behaviour or threats against other people.⁵⁵

It is difficult to determine to what extent mothers described their own conditions. Women's voices may have been dismissed, as "talks incoherently" was a common symptom listed.⁵⁶ Historians of lunacy and gender, particularly Elaine Showalter, have argued that the very idea of lunacy was gendered and classed.⁵⁷ Showalter claims that during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, poor women were most likely to be institutionalised and accusations of lunacy could be a way to control women's behaviour,

⁵³ Bartlett, "The Asylum, the Workhouse, and the Voice of the Insane Poor in 19th-Century England," 421–32; Catharine Coleborne, *Madness in the Family: Insanity and Institutions in the Australasian Colonial World, 1860–1914* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 74–87, <https://doi-org.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/10.1057/9780230248649>; Akihito Suzuki, "Lunacy and Labouring Men: Narratives of Male Vulnerability in Mid-Victorian London," in *Medicine, Madness and Social History: Essays in Honour of Roy Porter*, ed. Roberta Bivins and John V. Pickstone (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2007), 119, 127, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230235359_10.

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Poole's daughter seems to have provided information for case notes that was not formerly in the medical certificate, as they read "The daughter Subsequently admitted ..." From 1829, case notes recorded which surgeon/s had signed medical certificates, which magistrates had authorised warrants, as well as whether friends or relatives had sought admission; Case Notes Elizabeth Poole, 19 July 1828, HO22/70/2, GA; Case Notes Catherine Millard 26 July 1823, Sarah Stevens 7 April 1827 and Jane Griffin, 24 July 1823, HO22/70/1, Case Book A, Horton Road Hospital (First County Lunatic Asylum), GA, Gloucester; Case Notes John Ferris 21 October 1828, Emily Preen, 29 April 1830, Mary Banett, 12 June 1832, William Ford, 7 December 1832, Charles Houyatt [*sic*], 2 September 1833 and Charlotte Croft, 14 April 1834, HO22/70/2, GA.

⁵⁵ Medical Certificate, Sarah Roper, 12 July 1824, HO22/83/2/2; Case Papers, Horton Road Hospital (First County Lunatic Asylum), GA, Gloucester; Medical Certificate, Mary Tratman, 15 October 1827 and Ann Hill, 10 November 1827, HO22/83/2/5, Case Papers, Horton Road Hospital (First County Lunatic Asylum), GA, Gloucester.

⁵⁶ Case Notes Jane Griffin, 24 July 1823, Hannah Bishop, 18 February 1824 and Isabella Millard, 2 October 1827, HO22/70/1, GA; Case Notes Mary Anne Cramer, 7 July 1829, HO22/70/2, GA.

⁵⁷ Elaine Showalter, "Victorian Women and Insanity," *Victorian Studies* 23, no. 2 (1980): 179–80, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3827084>; Samantha Pegg, "'Madness Is a Woman': Constance Kent and Victorian Constructions of Female Insanity," *Liverpool Law Review* 30, no. 3 (2009): 207–23, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10991-010-9065-x>.

with psychiatrists often disregarding the voices of female patients.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, case notes indicate that women's testimonies may have been considered. For instance, Elizabeth Davis' file read "she states" before detailing her history.⁵⁹ Lucy Perry and Elizabeth Marshall also seem to have described aspects of their own conditions. Lucy "expressed herself as being uneasy as to her future state," while Elizabeth "frequently speaks of a sense of someone touching her face."⁶⁰ Despite the influence of medical notions and contexts, case notes may also reveal the observations of patients and their families.

Case notes can therefore provide evidence of women's emotional practices.⁶¹ Records from Gloucester Asylum are replete with affective language. "Melancholia," or "spirits depressed," was the most common emotion recorded, appearing in 21 files. Although these notes describe practices that observers considered to be abnormal—for instance, inappropriately regulated feelings of sadness or anger—they captured the ways that women communicated emotion through language and behaviour. Whether or not medical staff, friends or family members interpreted these performances as patients intended, case notes document this process of communication and interpretation. They list both patients' behaviour and observers' conclusions about women's affective states. In doing so, they provide evidence, albeit mediated, of how some women expressed their feelings and possible causes of those feelings. The relationship between emotion and insanity in early nineteenth-century lay and medical understanding is beyond the purview

⁵⁸ Showalter, "Victorian Women and Insanity," 162–65, 173–75; <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3827084>; Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830–1980*, (London: Virago, 1987), 154.

⁵⁹ Case Notes Elizabeth Davis, 16 March 1829, HO22/70/2, GA.

⁶⁰ Case Notes Lucy Perry, 5 December 1827, HO22/70/1, GA; Case Notes Elizabeth Marshall, 15 August 1828, HO22/70/2, GA.

⁶¹ For instance, although she does not use the analytical frame of emotion as practice, Julie-Marie Strange employs case notes from Lancaster Moor and Prestwich Asylums to explore how grief was expressed in the north-west of England between 1870 and 1914; Julie-Marie Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 221–28, ProQuest Ebook Central.

of this chapter.⁶² I do not seek to untangle affect from mental disorder or lunacy, as emotions are listed throughout case notes as causes, symptoms, manifestations and diagnoses of lunacy; even appearing under “Occupation and Habits of Life.”⁶³ Rather, I use this evidence of women’s emotion to suggest that care for children made women vulnerable to not only negative feelings but also diagnoses of insanity.

The mothers in my sample were all admitted to the Asylum because of some disorder attributed to their offspring. Within this collection, I focus on causes of insanity that related to caring for children.⁶⁴ The first form of care evident in these documents is love and affection. Scholars engaging with the maternal indifference debate use evidence of women’s grief to argue that mothers felt emotionally attached to their offspring, and historian Julie-Marie Strange also suggests that expressions of grief in asylum case notes can be read as evidence of love.⁶⁵ Case notes from Gloucester Asylum that describe women’s grief in the face of their children’s deaths can therefore also be considered evidence of their care. Hannah Sadler was “very much depressed” when she lost a child who had been “so severely burnt, that after a few days lingering, it died.”⁶⁶ Mary Harris’ condition allegedly began when she “lost her son who was about 17 years of age in November last.” Mary exhibited dejected spirits, “threatened to destroy her children & has attempted to hang herself.”⁶⁷ Some women communicated affection for deceased

⁶² For research that examines affect and lunacy see Suzuki, “Lunacy and Labouring Men,” 118–28; Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain*, 221–28; Hilary Marland, “Under the Shadow of Maternity: Birth, Death and Puerperal Insanity in Victorian Britain,” *History of Psychiatry* 23, no. 1 (2012): 78–90, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957154X11428573>. For a detailed discussion of insanity and emotion in the context of Australia and New Zealand see Coleborne, *Madness in the Family*, 94–106.

⁶³ Case Notes Isabella Millard, 2 October 1827, HO22/70/1, GA.

⁶⁴ Although the issue of childbirth and puerperal insanity appeared in my case files, I do not explore this issue, as it has been addressed elsewhere; Marland, “Disappointment and Desolation,” 303–20; Hilary Marland, *Dangerous Motherhood: Insanity and Childbirth in Victorian Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 10.1057/9780230511866; Marland, “Under the Shadow of Maternity,” 78–90; Morag Allan Campbell, “‘Noisy, Restless and Incoherent’: Puerperal Insanity at Dundee Lunatic Asylum,” *History of Psychiatry* 28, no. 1 (2017): 44–57, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957154X16671262>.

⁶⁵ Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain*, 127; Swain, “Birth and Death in a New Land Attitudes to Infant Death in Colonial Australia,” 31; Jalland, *Australian Ways of Death*, 73.

⁶⁶ Case Notes Hannah Sadler, 19 May 1829, HO22/70/2, GA.

⁶⁷ Case Notes Mary Harris, 1 September 1824, HO22/70/1, GA.

children through emotional and mental disturbance. When Elizabeth Hart received “the sudden Intelligence of the death of an illegitimate child,” she exhibited “mania,” and “suddenly left her service & wandered about without food or Shelter.”⁶⁸ For these women, care for deceased children seems to have resulted in grief and possibly even mental disorder.

It was not only love for children that caused mothers’ mental and emotional distress. The struggle to care for children by financially supporting them also seems to have led some women to be certified as insane.⁶⁹ Isabella Millard’s family had experienced acute poverty. Staff recorded that her condition—manifested by talking “incessantly and incoherently especially on subjects of religion”—was due to “Family distress – her goods were sized for debt – her family turned out of the home being unable to pay their rent.”⁷⁰ Similarly, Elizabeth Grist’s “husband and family had been for some time in indigent circumstances: & their goods being suddenly seized for Rent, the woman’s insanity follow’d the alarm thus given.” It seems that the struggle to provide for her family made Elizabeth vulnerable to negative emotion, as she exhibited “fear of destruction.”⁷¹ Case notes also attributed Hester Long’s condition to “the dump of a new house to which she remov’d with her family.” This “dump” seems to have upset Hester, as she communicated “mania” and unreasonable “excitement.”⁷² These accounts suggest that the strain of caring for children in destitute circumstances might also result in women’s emotional distress. In these cases, care for children, either as love or financial provision, might cause

⁶⁸ Case Notes Elizabeth Hart, 12 April 1834, HO22/70/2, GA.

⁶⁹ This finding is consistent with other research. Suzuki’s study of anxiety leading to madness in working-class men and Marland’s research on puerperal insanity both argue that poverty was often considered a cause of lunacy; Suzuki, “Lunacy and Labouring Men,” 120, 124; Marland, “Disappointment and Desolation,” 307.

⁷⁰ Case Notes Isabella Millard, 2 October 1827, HO22/70/1, GA.

⁷¹ Case Notes Elizabeth Grist, 24 October 1828, HO22/70/2, GA.

⁷² Case Notes Hester Long, 30 September 1829, HO22/70/2, GA.

women to experience negative emotions or behave in a way that resulted in their being defined as insane.

Affected Authority

By suggesting that caring for children could make women emotionally vulnerable—or in the case of mothers in Gloucestershire, cause them to be confined in the Asylum—I am not arguing that care-based authority simply does not apply to mothers’ emotional relationships with their children. Rather, I extend our understanding of the instability of care-based authority. The first two chapters note that mothers’ authority could be tenuous and often depended on the acquiescence of School and parish officials. In this chapter, I suggest that emotional distress or allegations of lunacy could prompt women to lose their authority over their offspring; both willingly and unwillingly.

In Gloucestershire, pauper letters do not provide evidence of how mothers’ emotions influenced their authority, however, some indication can be gained from the records of Gloucester Lunatic Asylum. When care for children resulted in admission to the Asylum, mothers seen to have lost much of their individual autonomy and authority over children. According to the 1808 Act for the Better Care and Maintenance of Lunatics, Being Paupers or Criminals in England, magistrates issued warrants for pauper lunatics that coerced them into asylums. These warrants ordered “Constables and Overseers, to convey the said [blank] to the Lunatic Asylum, and there deliver h[er/him] into the Custody of [blank] the Governor thereof.”⁷³ We have seen how women’s custody of children was

⁷³ Warrant for Jane Griffin, 24 July 1823, HO22/83/2/1, Case Papers, Horton Road Hospital (First County Lunatic Asylum), GA, Gloucester. Although the relevant act changed in 1828 (to An Act to Amend the Laws for the Erection and Regulation of County Lunatic Asylums and More Effectually to Provide for the Care and Maintenance of Pauper and Criminal Lunatics in England) the same language was used in warrants throughout this period, for instance see Warrant for Millicent Cox, 21 July 1834, HO22/83/2/13, Case Papers, Horton Road Hospital (First County Lunatic Asylum), GA, Gloucester. On some warrants the old legislation was crossed out and the new annotated on the side; Warrant for Charlotte Margrate, 27

associated with their authority in NSW. In Gloucestershire, in the context of institutionalisation, magistrates seem to have used this term to strip mothers of this authority. Asylum administration also had little to say about women's ongoing relationships with children, and conditions for patients' contact with families were absent from the Asylum's rules and regulations.⁷⁴ Although historian Leonard Smith found that Gloucester Asylum's medical superintendents encouraged family visits—particularly for first-class patients—his examination of the superintendents' correspondence also suggests that some families did not have direct contact with inmates.⁷⁵ For any poor mothers who did manage to maintain relationships with their families, their authority over their children would have been mediated, if not impeded, by their confinement. It is reasonable to propose that at least some poor mothers interned at Gloucester Lunatic Asylum lost not only their autonomy but also authority over their children.

Similar difficulties are involved in examining evidence from NSW. Mothers' petitions to the Orphan Schools were also silent on the ways that emotional vulnerability influenced their authority. Yet evidence can be gathered from some of the men who petitioned the Schools. Among these petitions are reports of women who abandoned their children. These accounts must be treated with care. Petitioners wrote their applications in a society shaped by patriarchal values and some men described mothers in derogatory terms, calling one woman “an abandoned character,” and another “a woman of very bad habits.”⁷⁶ While men's accounts of women who left their families might suggest that women were callous and selfish, historians who have examined child abandonment, such

June 1829, HO22/83/2/8, Case Papers, Horton Road Hospital (First County Lunatic Asylum), GA, Gloucester.

⁷⁴ House Minute Book, 1813–1851, HO22/1/1, Horton Road Hospital (First County Lunatic Asylum), GA, Gloucester, 216–21.

⁷⁵ Smith, “‘Your Very Thankful Inmate’, 240, 242–44. Smith's work builds on Louise Wannell, “Patients' Relatives and Psychiatric Doctors: Letter Writing in the York Retreat, 1875–1910,” *Social History of Medicine* 20, no. 2 (2007): 297–313, 10.1093/shm/hkm043.

⁷⁶ Applications of Unnamed Petitioner, 22 June 1829 and Thomas Doyle 22 May 1833, NRS 782, NSWSA.

as Fildes, Swain and Evans have countered this portrayal, demonstrating that women were generally reluctant to abandon children and often expressed love for them.⁷⁷

Nevertheless, it seems that some women chose to leave their families, and so relinquished authority over their children. In examining these accounts, Joy Damousi suggests that many women left because of violent or oppressive partners.⁷⁸ Considering my analysis of women's expression of grief, anxiety and distress, it seems that they might also have abandoned their families as a response to the strain of caring for children. Perhaps it was the struggle to support three children with a husband imprisoned for debt that motivated Stephen Johnson's unnamed partner to leave. Stephen simply reported that she had "eloped from my House and Children."⁷⁹ Similarly, the effort of caring for the children of "a drunken man," may have prompted James Harris' wife to leave her family as she had "absconded from her home about four years ago, abandoning her children, and leaving them in a helpless condition."⁸⁰ Of course, without the testimonies of women themselves it is impossible to make firm conclusions from this evidence. Yet combined with petitioners' expressions of anxiety and distress, mothers' absences suggest that when care became too onerous, and emotional distress unbearable, some women may have chosen to abandon care and authority of their children altogether.

Mothers' expressions of emotion suggest that caring for children could cause women to lose authority over their offspring. Women who wrote to the parish or the Orphan Schools communicated grief, anxiety and distress, indicating that in both NSW and Gloucestershire caring for children could make mothers vulnerable to these emotions.

⁷⁷ Fildes, "Maternal Feelings Re-assessed," 153; Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England*, 70–73; Shurlee Swain and Renate Howe, *Single Mothers and Their Children: Disposal, Punishment and Survival in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 114–49; Evans, 'Unfortunate Objects,' 129–37.

⁷⁸ Damousi, *Depraved and Disorderly*, 158.

⁷⁹ Application of Stephen Johnson, 15 February 1828, NRS 782, NSWSA.

⁸⁰ Application of Archibald Bell, 23 October 1828, NRS 782, NSWSA.

Case notes from Gloucester Lunatic Asylum also provide evidence of mothers' feelings, and it seems that acts of care could not only prompt women to emotional distress but could also result in admission to the Asylum. In turn, these feelings or the process of confinement may have caused women to lose their authority altogether. English mothers interned in the Asylum seem to have lost contact with, and so power over, their children. In NSW, grief and anxiety caused by caring for children in conditions of poverty may have caused women to abandon their families. For mothers living in poverty, care-based authority might have allowed them to assert some power over their children, but this was a precarious form of power as caring for children might also cause mothers to lose this authority.

Conclusion

In comparing how mothers articulated their relationships with their children in NSW and Gloucestershire, I have placed the language of poor women's authority centre stage. This represents a new development in a historiography that, in seeking to rebut ideas about the poor as powerless or passive, has hitherto focused on finding evidence of poor women's agency. While labouring mothers in England and Australia still faced the strictures of poverty and patriarchy, my research suggests that they also had a sense of their own authority and articulated this in their dealings with charitable institutions.

I have argued that by describing evidence of their moral and financial care, poor women who were in many ways dependent on the assistance of charitable institutions, were nonetheless able to claim power over their children. The dynamic of care-based authority which women described in their moral and financial relationships with children manifested in various forms of authority. These included custody of children, organising apprenticeships in order to direct their offspring's future prospects, and the right to manage children's labour and wages. Comparison between mothers corresponding with the parish in Gloucestershire and those petitioning the Sydney Orphan Schools shows that although this care-authority dynamic remained common, women articulated it differently in their moral, financial and emotional relationships with children, and according to their welfare contexts.

Distinct welfare systems shaped the terms through which women expressed financial support for their children and the different aspects of their labour that they expected to direct. In NSW, women seeking to withdraw their children from the Orphan Schools cited their ability to support their offspring by explaining how their economic circumstances had improved. Such explanations seem to have justified their claims to direct their

children's labour, either in family businesses or in their domestic concerns. In Gloucestershire, mothers discussed financial provision through the monetary language of nonresident relief. By describing their efforts to maintain children, they too claimed the right to manage their offspring's contribution to the family economy; although they sought to monitor their children's allowances, rather than their labour.

Poverty could also have a profound effect on this dynamic. In NSW, when mothers could not support their children financially, they found alternative ways to care for them, for instance, by keeping track of their wellbeing. This allowed women to retain some tenuous authority over their children by advocating on their behalf. Poor mothers in Gloucestershire negotiated their inability to maintain children differently. They described their struggle to provide for children in order to justify their threats to relinquish offspring to the parish. The tone of these threats signals that women believed that the struggle to support their offspring gave them the authority to give up their children. This comparison suggests that mothers' care-based authority was not only shaped by their contexts but also contingent on the restrictions of poverty and different welfare regimes.

By analysing women's emotional relationships with their children, I further explored the precarious nature of care-based authority, arguing that looking after children might prompt mothers to lose their authority. In both NSW and Gloucestershire, mothers conveyed that love and concern for children could be a source of grief, anxiety and distress. Evidence from Gloucester Lunatic Asylum also indicates that emotionally and financially caring for children might make women vulnerable to being defined as insane. Internment in the Asylum seems to have impeded both women's contact with children and their power over them. In NSW, it is also probable that some mothers living in poverty and struggling to care for their children were so affected by grief, anxiety or

distress that they chose to abscond from their families, and in doing so, also abandoned their authority.

My research contributes to our understanding of mother-child relationships by revealing that the intertwined notions of care and authority were central to women's descriptions of their interactions with their children. By comparing how mothers articulated their relationships in two imperial contexts, I have also revealed the ways that poverty and indigence closely shaped these relationships, influencing how mothers expressed care for their children, and their varied forms of authority over them.

My finding that mothers may have articulated a form of authority that was based, not on force or domination, but on care, challenges historians to rethink the way that we understand authority. Authority is commonly understood—currently as well as during the nineteenth century—as “power to enforce obedience or compliance.”¹ This ability to *enforce* carries with it connotations of coercion and compulsion, particularly for feminist historians, for whom female oppression under patriarchal authority has been a central point of discussion since the 1970s.² While poor mothers certainly claimed power over their children and the right to direct their lives and work, this power seems to have been based on women's attempts to protect and provide for children, and to promote their

¹ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “authority, (n.),” July 2018, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/13349?redirectedFrom=authority>.

² For work that uses the phrases *patriarchal authority* or *male authority* see Sally Alexander and Anna Davin, “Feminist History,” *History Workshop Journal*, no. 1 (1976): 5, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4288030>; Sally Alexander, “Women, Class and Sexual Differences in the 1830s and 1840s: Some Reflections on the Writing of a Feminist History,” *History Workshop Journal*, no. 17 (1984): 137, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4288549>; Anna Davin, “Child Labour, the Working-Class Family, and Domestic Ideology in 19th Century Britain,” *Development and Change* 13, no. 4 (1982): 634, 639, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.1982.tb00141.x>; Patricia Grimshaw, “‘Christian Woman, Pious Wife, Faithful Mother, Devoted Missionary’: Conflicts in Roles of American Missionary Women in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii,” *Feminist Studies* 9, no. 3 (1983): 494, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3177610>; Marilyn Lake, “Childbearers as Rights-Bearers: Feminist Discourse on the Rights of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Mothers in Australia, 1920–50,” *Women's History Review* 8, no. 2 (1999): 352, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612029900200205>; Patricia Crawford, “‘The Sucking Child’: Adult Attitudes to Child Care in the First Year of Life in Seventeenth-Century England,” *Continuity and Change* 1, no. 1 (1986): 43, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416000000060>; Linda Young, *Middle Class Culture in the Nineteenth Century: America, Australia, and Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 74, 180, [10.1057/9780230598812](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230598812).

interests. This then begs the question, does poor mothers' care-based authority represent a new conception of authority? Or a uniquely feminine form of power? In 1988, historian Marilyn Lake issued a call to arms to feminist historians:

Our challenge is to transform the disciplinary paradigm by challenging the masculine model of social reality which underpins it, a model which honours death over birth, the individual over the collectivity, the self-made man over community sustaining women.³

Perhaps care-based authority, which involved this “community sustaining” behaviour that Lake urged historians to reveal, was chiefly used by women. These questions call for further research. It would be necessary to closely examine the gendered nature of care-based authority, whether men used similar arguments and to what extent fathers appealed to different sources of power when seeking to claim authority over their children. This thesis also provides the foundation for a more detailed study of how mothers from different social classes articulated care and authority, which would reveal more detail about the effects of poverty on women's relationships with their children.

I have also highlighted a lack of research, particularly in Australia, on the terms through which the poor solicited aid, and the role that emotional language played in this process. While this thesis has made small advances in this direction, further study on the interaction between language, poverty and emotion may reveal more about the affective practices of the labouring classes in England and its Australian colonies.

This thesis has shown that poor mothers were not only active participants in negotiating aid from the Orphan Schools or parish but used these encounters to express their authority. Descriptions of care were essential to this process, as mothers cited

³ Marilyn Lake, “Women, Gender and History,” *Australian Feminist Studies* 3, no. 7–8 (1988): 9, <http://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.1988.9961604>.

evidence of moral and financial care in order to justify their claims to power. In adding a history of emotions methodology to this 'bottom-up' examination of poor mothers, I have also suggested that caring for children could be an unreliable foundation for poor mothers' authority, as it could also undermine this power. In doing so, I have challenged historians to not only consider the ways that poor mothers articulated authority, but also the foundation of authority itself.

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