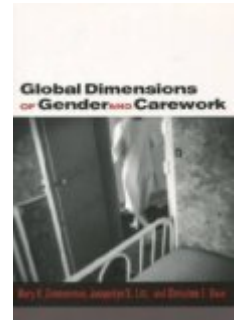


Mary Zimmerman, Jacquelyn Litt, Christine Bose, eds.. *Global Dimensions of Gender and Carework*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006. xi + 400 pp. \$25.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-8047-5324-1.



Reviewed by Elizabeth Rose

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The word "globalization" may evoke images of high-profile business travelers, international trade agreements, or video conferencing from one global city to another. The editors of this volume of essays call our attention to another aspect of today's global economy: the experience of women searching the globe for resources for themselves and their families. Migrating from developing countries to wealthier nations, they often find employment as maids, babysitters, nannies, kitchen workers, nurses, and personal care attendants for elderly and disabled people. These types of "carework" are understood around the world to be women's work, based in women's traditional responsibility for nurturing the young and meeting family needs. Not coincidentally, these jobs also tend to be low-paid, low-status occupations, filled by the most vulnerable workers.

In many historical settings, men have been more likely than women to migrate (the word for "woman" used in Botswana means "one who stays or remains" [p. 280]). But individual families as well as national economies increasingly depend on the wages sent home by migrating women,

who are often able to find work more readily than their male counterparts. Building on a body of feminist work on caring, this volume offers an exploration of the inequalities that structure current global exchanges of care among families and nations. The book's thirty chapters range widely, looking at the lives of Filipinas working in Taiwan, Latinas in Israel, Central Americans in Washington, D.C., Chinese and South Asian women in Canada, and Dominicans, Peruvians, and Africans in Western Europe, as well as Korean women who are prohibited from working in the United States while their husbands are students. One chapter looks at the other end of the socio-economic spectrum, exploring how pressures from the global economy are increasing work hours for highly paid stockbrokers in the United States, reinforcing the gendered division of labor in these privileged families. Other chapters define "carework" more broadly, describing the impact of the AIDS crisis on women's responsibilities for children in Botswana, activists providing medical care for victims of acid attacks in Bangladesh, and the efforts of women's organizations in Azerbaijan. Still other chapters introduce a theoretical

context or explore how public policies structure both migration and caregiving.

One of the key themes in the book centers on the inequalities among women who are positioned differently in the global economy. Women in industrialized countries have been able to pursue careers and gain greater equity with men in part because disadvantaged migrant women and other women of color are stepping into their old roles as caregivers. Immigrant women, in turn, often leave their own families behind in order to support them, relying on relatives or hired help in their home countries to fill the caregiving gap. In neither setting do men seem to have taken on a significant amount of caring work; they are practically absent from this volume. Indeed, the solution of hiring low-wage help seems to be a way to avoid redefining the division of household labor within families, or challenging the structure of work schedules.

In her essay in the volume, Bridget Anderson raises the intriguing question of whether women who hire other women as nannies and babysitters have achieved a situation similar to that of fathers in traditional families: taking part in the emotional and guidance-giving aspects of parenthood while having someone else do the physical work of care. Another essay notes that mothers who employ other women to take care of their children thus upgrade their own status to that of "mother-managers" (p. 240). Indeed, hiring a surrogate seems an ideal way to provide their children with the child-centered, "intensive mothering" ideal for which many middle-class families strive, without sacrificing one's own time completely. If European or North American employers are able to separate the "work" of mothering from their emotional "care" for their children in this way, however, the migrating mothers they hire are stuck with demonstrating their care for their children only through their paid work; they are not able to provide the day-to-day emotional support of motherhood for which many wish. While

both groups of women may be drawn into paid work in order to support their children, the options they have are quite different.

Several essays look at how mothers who migrate away from their children understand motherhood, and how they see themselves as mothers. In their study of Central American and Mexican migrating mothers, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Ernestine Avila note that when a father comes north and leaves a family in Mexico, he is fulfilling his duty of breadwinning for the family. When a mother does so, she risks violating her duty of nurturing the family, and strongly held beliefs that a mother must raise her own children. Migrant mothers thus strain to redefine their duty as mothers to include breadwinning; they insist in interviews that they are not abandoning their children, but making great sacrifices to support them by sending money and packages from abroad. Providing for children, however, is not enough; these women feel it important to maintain their motherly ties by exchanging letters, photographs, and phone calls so that physical absence does not signify emotional absence. One interviewee, who used telephone calls and letters to remind her daughters to take their vitamins, not to go to bed or to school on an empty stomach, and to use birth control, said that through these exchanges, "I'm here, but I'm there" (p. 256). The Latina cultural pattern of relying on grandmothers and godmothers for shared mothering enables some of these mothers to feel that their children are well cared for. Nevertheless, they express sadness, loss, and worry about their children's well being. Similarly, domestic workers in Europe spoke of their feelings of guilt at leaving their children behind, as well as loneliness. This can make their job of caring for other people's children or parents particularly painful. One Filipina worker in Rome explained, "Sometimes when I look at the children that I care for, I feel like crying" (p. 59). Other women find emotional rewards in their relationships with the children they care for, while also criticizing the mothering skills of their em-

ployers. This can confirm their identity as good mothers despite their distance from their own children (p. 272).

Many of the essays presume a sharp distinction between affluent women employers and the Third World women they employ to do various forms of carework. A few of the essays, however, show a more complicated picture. Separate essays by Pei-Chia Lan and Rhacel Salzar Parrenas on Filipina domestic workers in Taiwan, Los Angeles, and Rome show that migrant women working abroad are not at the bottom of the global social hierarchy, but rather are in the middle of a chain. They become careworkers abroad, while hiring local women (too poor to migrate) to fill the domestic gap they left behind. Filipina workers in Lan's study often felt they could make up for their degraded work status in Taiwan by becoming a "madam" at home. Similarly, one of Parrenas's interviewees spoke of looking forward to going back to the Philippines: "I will not lift my finger and I will be the signora. My hands will be rested and manicured and I will wake up at 12 o'clock noon" (p. 58).

Rather than being a ground for solidarity among women, carework is an arena where some women have power over others, which can lead to exploitation. It is also an arena deeply tied to personal identity, making the employer-employee relationship more fraught with tension than in other settings. Employers want to hire someone who will truly care for their children (or elderly parents), yet not supplant them in their children's affections. They often try to resolve the contradictions inherent in purchasing care by saying the worker is "like one of the family," but this rarely describes the relationship. Workers who do develop a strong emotional bond with those they care for may experience more loss when the job ends, and may be vulnerable to unreasonable demands from employers.

The attention in this volume is on the caregivers and those who hire them, rather than on

the children or others who receive care. Only one essay in this volume, by Mary Romero, focuses on children explicitly, giving us the voices of those whose mothers work in other households as domestics. A Caribbean woman whose mother left for four years to work in the United States speaks of rupture and loss in their relationship that could not be assuaged by phone calls, or even repaired by the family's reunion in New York. Children of domestic workers, Romero argues, are often forced to learn about class and privilege in very personal ways, whether in receiving hand-me-downs from the employer's family or seeing their mothers treated condescendingly by the children in their care. She recounts Edward Miller's recollection of standing on the seat of his father's car when they came to pick up his mother from her job as a maid for a white family. "This little boy, this little white boy about my age was crying his eyes out because my mother was leaving and I remember feeling a twinge of jealousy and downright anger because I had been taught never to cry when my mother left.... 'Get used to it, your mother has to go to work.' And here is this little white boy expressing all of this anguish and emotion because my mother was leaving him" (p. 244).

Arranging care for one's family members, or making a decision to migrate are typically understood as individual decisions. Some essays in this volume, however, remind us that nation-states play a strong role in regulating carework and migration, even in a global economy. For instance, Taiwan limits foreign workers from certain countries to specific occupations (domestics, caregivers, and construction or manufacturing workers). The law also requires regular health exams, prohibits marriage and pregnancy, and restricts job changes. Such laws enable a country to maintain its perceived racial/ethnic composition while still benefiting from needed workers; in effect it "outsources" the task of reproducing the workforce (p. 111). Supranational organizations such as the World Bank or International Monetary Fund (IMF) also play a role in structuring care-

work arrangements. For instance, in the late 1980s Brazil instituted an improved system of early childhood education, including better pay for staff, but the World Bank reversed this because it would be too costly. Instead, the country reverted to a more unskilled and informal type of care for young children. Scaling back the public sector (a priority for the IMF and World Bank) often means informalizing carework or transferring it to women for no pay. While some essays in the volume hold out the hope of creating "women-friendly states" such as Sweden, with policies that help families manage family needs as well as paid employment, the forces of globalization seem to work against it. A survey of policies of nations in the European, for instance, shows that carework is becoming more decentralized and privatized.

Global Dimensions of Gender and Carework brings together a wide range of interesting sociological work that cannot be fully summarized here. The volume is intended for use in the classroom; it moves back and forth between pieces that introduce a theoretical concept and longer selections from empirical research studies; each section includes a short list of discussion questions. The editors' introductions to each section effectively frame the questions and themes to be addressed, helping to integrate the material that follows and make connections throughout the volume. The conceptual pieces include work by well-known authors such as Cynthia Enloe, Nancy Folbre, and Evelyn Nakano Glenn, but in some cases the selections are so short (as little as three pages) that they are of limited value. Almost all the essays have appeared in print elsewhere (many were drawn from the journal *Gender and Society*), so the volume's contribution lies in weaving together work that reflects in different ways on the overall theme. It succeeds at this task, although in some cases the theme is stretched too thin to accommodate all the subjects the book covers; some essays seem to have relatively little to do with globalization per se, and the many different definitions of what constitutes "carework"

can be dizzying at times. As is probably inevitable in bringing together so many different authors, there is some repetition of key concepts and information.

Because it is more about caregivers, employers, and policy than about children, the volume will be of greater interest to those concerned with women's work, family patterns, global studies, and social policy than to those who want to hear the voices and experiences of children. It may also be frustrating to historians, who will want to know more about whether the patterns under discussion here are new, and what kind of historical change they represent. Some of the essays do acknowledge that patterns of domestic work, child-care, and migration go back many generations in the United States (as elsewhere), but the overall message of the volume is that it is discussing a new phenomenon. I would have appreciated more attention to ways in which recent patterns of global caregiving work echo, or reverse, historical patterns of global migration (such as Irish women coming to the United States in the nineteenth century to work as domestics), or connect to longstanding systems of labor and hierarchy. For instance, in her essay on Central Americans in Washington, D.C., Terry Repak notes that these migrants in the 1980s took the domestic and babysitting jobs that African-American women had been vacating since the 1960s. Were the work conditions of these caregiving jobs, and the relations between employers and workers, similar or different to that African-American women experienced in earlier decades? Is being the child of "the maid" essentially the same over time, or are there important aspects of transnational migration and carework today that make it different? Such questions go unanswered in this volume, but may provide the basis for fertile future collaboration between historians and sociologists.

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