THE NANNY

MOTHERS MINDING OTHER MOTHERS' CHILDREN

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Vicky Diaz, a 34-year-old mother of five, was a college-educated schoolteacher and travel agent in the Philippines before migrating to the United States to work as a housekeeper for a wealthy Beverly Hills family and as a nanny for their two-year-old son. Her children, Vicky explained to Rhacel Parrenas,

CHAIN

BY ARLIE RUSSELL HOCHSCHILD

were saddened by my departure. Even until now my children are trying to convince me to go home. The children were not angry when I left because they were still very young when I left them. My husband could not get angry either because he knew that was the only way I could seriously help him raise our children, so that our children could be sent to school. I send them money every month.

In her forthcoming book *Servants of Globalization*, Parrenas, an affiliate of the Center for Working Families at the University of California, Berkeley, tells an important and disquieting story of what she calls the "globalization of mothering." The Beverly Hills family pays "Vicky" (which is the pseudonym Parrenas gave her) $400 a week, and Vicky, in turn, pays her own family's live-in domestic worker back in the Philippines $40 a week. Living like this is not easy on Vicky and her family. "Even though it's paid well, you are sinking in the amount of your work. Even while you are ironing the clothes, they can still call you to the kitchen to wash the plates. It . . . [is] also very depressing. The only thing you can do is give all your love to [the two-year-old American child]. In my absence from my children, the most I could do with my situation is give all my love to that child."

Vicky is part of what we could call a global care chain: a series of personal links between people across the globe based on the paid or unpaid work of caring. A typical global care chain might work something like this: An older daughter from a poor family in a third world country cares for her siblings (the first link in the chain) while her mother works as a nanny caring for the children of a nanny migrating to a first world country (the second link) who, in turn, cares for the child of a family in a rich country (the final link). Each kind of chain expresses an invisible human ecology of care, one care worker depending on another and so on. A global care chain might start in a poor country and end in a rich one, or it might link rural and urban areas within the same poor country. More complex versions start in one poor country and extend to another slightly less poor country and then link to a rich country.

Global care chains may be proliferating. According to 1994 estimates by the International Organization for Migration, 120 million people migrated—legally or illegally—from one country to another. That's 2 percent of the world's population. How many migrants leave loved ones behind to care for other people's children or elderly parents, we don't know. But we do know that more than half of legal migrants to the United States are women, mostly between ages 25 and 34. And migration experts tell us that the proportion of women among migrants is likely to rise. All of this suggests that the trend toward global care chains will continue.

How are we to understand the impact of globalization on care? If, as globalization continues, more global care chains form, will they be "good" care chains or "bad" ones? Given the entrenched problem of third world poverty—which is one of the starting points for care chains—this is by no means a simple question. But we have yet to fully address it, I believe, because the world is globalizing faster than our minds or hearts are. We live global but still think and feel local.

FREUD IN A GLOBAL ECONOMY

Most writing on globalization focuses on money, markets, and

labor flows, while giving scant attention to women, children, and the care of one for the other. Most research on women and development, meanwhile, draws a connection between, say, World Bank loan conditions and the scarcity of food for women and children in the third world, without saying much about resources expended on caregiving. Much of the research on women in the United States and Europe focuses on a chainless, two-person picture of "work-family balance" without considering the child care worker and the emotional ecology of which he or she is a part. Fortunately, in recent years, scholars such as Ernestine Avila, Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Pierette Hondagneu-Sotelo, Mary Romero, and Rhacel Parrenas have produced some fascinating research on domestic workers. Building on this work, we can begin to focus on the first world end of the care chain and begin spelling out some of the implications of the globalization of love.

One difficulty in understanding these implications is that the language of economics does not translate easily into the language of psychology. How are we to understand a "transfer" of feeling from one link in a chain to another? Feeling is not a "resource" that can be crassly taken from one person and given to another. And surely one person can love quite a few people; love is not a resource limited the same way oil or currency supply is. Or is it?

Consider Sigmund Freud's theory of displacement, the idea that emotion can be redirected from one person or object to another. Freud believed that if, for example, Jane loves Dick but Dick is emotionally or literally unavailable, Jane will find a new object (say, John, Dick and Jane's son) onto which to project her original feeling for Dick. While Freud applied the idea of displacement mainly to relations within the nuclear family, the concept can also be applied to relations extending far outside it. For example, immigrant nannies and au pairs often divert feelings originally directed toward their own children toward their young charges in this country. As Sau-ling C. Wong, a researcher at the University of California, Berkeley, has put it, "Time and energy available for mothers are diverted from those who, by kinship or communal ties, are their more rightful recipients."

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If it is true that attention, solicitude, and love itself can be "displaced" from one child (let's say Vicky Diaz's son Alfredo, back in the Philippines) onto another child (let's say Tommy, the son of her employers in Beverly Hills), then the important observation to make here is that this displacement is often upward in wealth and power. This, in turn, raises the question of the equitable distribution of care. It makes us wonder, is there—in the realm of love—an analogue to what Marx calls "surplus value," something skimmed off from the poor for the benefit of the rich?

Seen as a thing in itself, Vicky's love for the Beverly Hills toddler is unique, individual, private. But might there not be elements in this love that are borrowed, so to speak, from somewhere and someone else? Is time spent with the first world child in some sense "taken" from a child further down the care chain? Is the Beverly Hills child getting "surplus" love, the way immigrant farm workers give us surplus labor? Are first world countries such as the United States importing maternal love as they have imported copper, zinc, gold, and other ores from third world countries in the past?

This is a startling idea and an unwelcome one, both for Vicky Diaz, who needs the money from a first world job, and for her well-meaning employers, who want someone to give loving care to their child. Each link in the chain feels she is doing the right thing for good reasons—and who is to say she is not?

But there are clearly hidden costs here, costs that tend to get passed down along the chain. One nanny reported such a cost when she described (to Rhacel Parrenas) a return visit to the Philippines: "When I saw my children, I thought, 'Oh children do grow up even without their mother.' I left my youngest when she was only five years old. She was already nine when I saw her again but she still wanted for me to carry her [weeps]. That hurt me because it showed me that my children missed out on a lot."

Sometimes the toll it takes on the domestic worker is overwhelming and suggests that the nanny has not displaced her love onto an employer's child but rather has continued to long intensely for her own child. As one woman told Parrenas, "The first two years I felt like I was going crazy. . . . I would catch myself gazing at nothing, thinking about my child. Every moment, every second of the day, I felt like I was thinking about my baby. My youngest, you have to understand, I left when he was only two months old. . . . You know, whenever I receive a letter from my children, I cannot sleep. I cry. It's good that my job is more demanding at night."

Despite the anguish these separations clearly cause, Filipina women continue to leave for jobs abroad. Since the early 1990s, 55 percent of migrants out of the Philippines have been women; next to electronic manufacturing, their remittances make up the major source of foreign currency in the Philippines. The rate of female emigration has continued to increase and includes college-educated teachers, businesswomen, and secretaries. In Parrenas's study, more than half of the nannies she interviewed had college degrees and most were married mothers in their 30s.

Where are men in this picture? For the most part, men—especially men at the top of the class ladder—leave child-rearing to women. Many of the husbands and fathers of Parrenas's domestic workers had migrated to the Arabian peninsula and other places in search of better wages, relieving other men of "male work" as construction workers and tradesmen, while being replaced themselves at home. Others remained at home,

responsible fathers caring or helping to care for their children. But some of the men tyrannized their wives. Indeed, many of the women migrants Parrenas interviewed didn't just leave; they fled. As one migrant maid explained:

> You have to understand that my problems were very heavy before I left the Philippines. My husband was abusive. I couldn't even think about my children, the only thing I could think about was the opportunity to escape my situation. If my husband was not going to kill me, I was probably going to kill him. . . . He always beat me up and my parents wanted me to leave him for a long time. I left my children with my sister. . . . In the plane . . . I felt like a bird whose cage had been locked for many years. . . . I felt free. . . . Deep inside, I felt homesick for my children but I also felt free for being able to escape the most dire problem that was slowly killing me.

Other men abandoned their wives. A former public school teacher back in the Philippines confided to Parrenas: "After three years of marriage, my husband left me for another woman. My husband supported us for just a little over a year. Then the support was stopped. . . . The letters stopped. I have not seen him since." In the absence of government aid, then, migration becomes a way of coping with abandonment.

Sometimes the husband of a female migrant worker is himself a migrant worker who takes turns with his wife migrating. One Filipino man worked in Saudi Arabia for 10 years, coming home for a month each year. When he finally returned home for good, his wife set off to work as a maid in America while he took care of the children. As she explained to Parrenas, "My children were very sad when I left them. My husband told me that when they came back home from the airport, my children could not touch their food and they wanted to cry. My son, whenever he writes me, always draws the head of Fido the dog with tears on the eyes. Whenever he goes to Mass on Sundays, he tells me that he misses me more because he sees his friends with their mothers. Then he comes home and cries."

THE END OF THE CHAIN

Just as global capitalism helps create a third world supply of mothering, it creates a first world demand for it. The past half-century has witnessed a huge rise in the number of women in paid work—from 15 percent of mothers of children aged 6 and under in 1950 to 65 percent today. Indeed, American women now make up 45 percent of the American labor force. Three-quarters of mothers of children 18 and under now work, as do 65 percent of mothers of children 6 and under. In addition, a recent report by the International Labor Organization reveals that the average number of hours of work per week has been rising in this country.

Earlier generations of American working women would rely on grandmothers and other female kin to help look after their children; now the grandmothers and aunts are themselves busy doing paid work outside the home. Statistics show that over the past 30 years a decreasing number of families have relied on relatives to care for their children—and hence are compelled to look for nonfamily care. At the first world end of care chains, working parents are grateful to find a good nanny or child care provider, and they are generally able to pay far more than the nanny could earn in her native country. This is not just a child care problem. Many American families are now relying on immigrant or out-of-home care for their *elderly* relatives. As a Los Angeles elder-care worker, an immigrant, told Parrenas, "Domestics here are able to make a living from the elderly that families abandon." But this often means that nannies cannot take care of their own ailing parents and therefore produce an elder-care version of a child care chain—caring for first world elderly persons while a paid worker cares for their aged mother back in the Philippines.

My own research for two books, *The Second Shift* and *The Time Bind*, sheds some light on the first world end of the chain. Many women have joined the law, academia, medicine, business—but such professions are still organized for men who are free of family responsibilities. The successful career, at least for those who are broadly middle class or above, is still largely built on some key traditional components: doing professional work, competing with fellow professionals, getting credit for work, building a reputation while you're young, hoarding scarce time, and minimizing family obligations by finding someone else to deal with domestic chores. In the past, the professional was a man and the "someone else to deal with [chores]" was a wife. The wife oversaw the family, which—in pre-industrial times, anyway—was supposed to absorb the human vicissitudes of birth, sickness, and death that the workplace discarded. Today, men take on much more of the child care and housework at home, but they still base their identity on demanding careers in the context of which children are beloved impediments; hence, men resist sharing care equally at home. So when parents don't have enough "caring time" between them, they feel forced to look for that care further down the global chain.

The ultimate beneficiaries of these various care changes might actually be large multinational companies, usually based in the United States. In my research on a Fortune 500 manufacturing company I call Amerco, I discovered a disproportionate number of women employed in the human side of the company: public relations, marketing, human resources. In all sectors of the company, women often helped others sort out problems—both personal and professional—at work. It was often the welcoming voice and "soft touch" of women workers that made Amerco seem like a family to other workers. In other words, it appears that these working mothers displace some of their emotional labor from their children to their employer, which holds itself out to the worker as a "family." So, the care in the chain may begin with that which a rural third world mother gives (as a nanny) the urban child she cares for, and it may end with the care a working mother gives her employees as the vice president of publicity at your company.

HOW MUCH IS CARE WORTH?

How are we to respond to the growing number of global care chains? Through what perspective should we view them?

I can think of three vantage points from which to see care chains: that of the primordialist, the sunshine modernist, and (my own) the critical modernist. The primordialist believes that our primary responsibility is to our own family, our own community, our own country. According to this view, if we all tend our own primordial plots, everybody will be fine. There is some logic to this point of view. After all, Freud's concept of displacement rests on the premise that some original first object of love has a primary "right" to that love, and second and

third comers don't fully share that right. (For the primordialist—as for most all of us—those first objects are members of one's most immediate family.) But the primordialist is an isolationist, an antiglobalist. To such a person, care chains seem wrong—not because they're unfair to the least-cared-for children at the bottom of the chain, but because they are global. Also, because family care has historically been provided by women, primordialists often believe that women should stay home to provide this care.

The sunshine modernist, on the other hand, believes care chains are just fine, an inevitable part of globalization, which is itself uncritically accepted as good. The idea of displacement is hard for the sunshine modernists to grasp because in their equation—seen mainly in economic terms—the global market will sort out who has proper claims on a nanny's love. As long as the global supply of labor meets the global demand for it, the sunshine modernist believes, everything will be okay. If the primordialist thinks care chains are bad because they're global, the sunshine modernist thinks they're good for the very same reason. In either case, the issue of inequality of access to care disappears.

The critical modernist embraces modernity but with a global sense of ethics. When the critical modernist goes out to buy a pair of Nike shoes, she is concerned to learn how low the wage was and how long the hours were for the third world factory worker making the shoes. The critical modernist applies the same moral concern to care chains: The welfare of the Filipino child back home must be seen as some part, however small, of the total picture. The critical modernist sees globalization as a very mixed blessing, bringing with it new opportunities—such as the nanny's access to good wages—but also new problems, including emotional and psychological costs we have hardly begun to understand.

From the critical modernist perspective, globalization may be increasing inequities not simply in access to money—and those inequities are important enough—but in access to care. The poor maid's child may be getting less motherly care than the first world child. (And for that matter, because of longer hours of work, the first world child may not be getting the ideal quantity of parenting attention for healthy development because too much of it is now displaced onto the employees of Fortune 500 companies.) We needn't lapse into primordialism to sense that something may be amiss in this.

I see no easy solutions to the human costs of global care chains. But here are some initial thoughts. We might, for example, reduce the incentive to migrate by addressing the causes of the migrant's economic desperation and fostering economic growth in the third world. Thus one obvious goal would be to develop the Filipino economy.

But it's not so simple. Immigration scholars have demonstrated that development itself can *encourage* migration because development gives rise to new economic uncertainties that families try to mitigate by seeking employment in the first world. If members of a family are laid off at home, a migrant's monthly remittance can see them through, often by making a capital outlay in a small business or paying for a child's education.

Other solutions might focus on individual links in the care chain. Because some women migrate to flee abusive husbands, a partial solution would be to create local refuges from such husbands. Another would be to alter immigration policy so as to encourage nannies to bring their children with them. Alternatively, employers or even government subsidies could help nannies make regular visits home.

The most fundamental approach to the problem is to raise the value of caring work and to ensure that whoever does it gets more credit and money for it. Otherwise, caring work will be what's left over, the work that's continually passed on down the chain. Sadly, the value ascribed to the labor of raising a child has always been low relative to the value of other kinds of labor, and under the impact of globalization, it has sunk lower still. The low value placed on caring work is due neither to an absence of demand for it (which is always high) nor to the simplicity of the work (successful caregiving is not easy) but rather to the cultural politics underlying this global exchange.

The declining value of child care anywhere in the world can be compared to the declining value of basic food crops relative to manufactured goods on the international market. Though clearly more essential to life, crops such as wheat, rice, or cocoa fetch low and declining prices while the prices of manufactured goods (relative to primary goods) continue to soar in the world market. And just as the low market price of primary produce keeps the third world low in the community of nations, the low market value of care keeps low the status of the women who do it.

One way to solve this problem is to get fathers to contribute more child care. If fathers worldwide shared child care labor more equitably, care would spread laterally instead of being passed down a social-class ladder, diminishing in value along the way. Culturally, Americans have begun to embrace this idea—but they've yet to put it into practice on a truly large scale [see Richard Weissbourd, "Redefining Dad," *TAP*, December 6, 1999]. This is where norms and policies established in the first world can have perhaps the greatest influence on reducing costs along global care chains.

According to the International Labor Organization, half of the world's women between ages 15 and 64 are working in paid jobs. Between 1960 and 1980, 69 out of 88 countries for which data are available showed a growing proportion of women in paid work (and the rate of increase has skyrocketed since the 1950s in the United States, Scandinavia, and the United Kingdom). If we want developed societies with women doctors, political leaders, teachers, bus drivers, and computer programmers, we will need qualified people to help care for children. And there is no reason why every society cannot enjoy such loving paid child care. It may even remain the case that Vicky Diaz is the best person to provide it. But we would be wise to adopt the perspective of the critical modernist and extend our concern to the potential hidden losers in the care chain. These days, the personal is global. ◆

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