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# UNRAVELING PRIVILEGE: WORKERS' CHILDREN AND THE HIDDEN COSTS OF PAID CHILDCARE

MARY ROMERO\*

## INTRODUCTION

The Ms. Foundation developed “Take Our Daughters to Work Day” in an effort to boost girls’ self-confidence by exposing them to career women in the workforce. In April 2000 the day included special events introducing girls to high technology occupations, NASA’s Women in Space program, congressional staffers on Capitol Hill, and other highly paid, nontraditional female professional jobs.<sup>1</sup> This is all well and good for girls in the middle- and upper-classes. For such sheltered children, the world of work is often a hidden and mysterious realm. The fourth Thursday in April may encourage them to enter highly paid and prestigious fields currently dominated by men. But for girls whose mothers are among the majority of women laboring in the low-paying service and manufacturing sectors, going to work with mom is more likely an everyday experience—one that will probably lower self-confidence, reduce expectations, and damage self-esteem.

Some mothers have long histories of taking their daughters to work—sponsored not by the Ms. Foundation but by low wages and the lack of after school care. Throughout rural America, young girls still accompany their working mothers into the fields and assist in stoop labor. In cities, they wait at the end of the counter until their moms finish their shift at the cleaners, the restaurant, or the beauty salon. In immigrant and refugee neighborhoods, girls too young for working papers still help with piecework or wait for their mothers in sweatshops and garment factories. In the suburbs, they work with their moms after hours, vacuuming and emptying wastebaskets in

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1. See Ms. Foundation for Women, *Take Our Daughters To Work*, at <http://www.takeour-daughterstowork.org> (last visited Mar. 15, 2001).

office buildings, or changing sheets and cleaning toilets in private households.

Reflecting on the “Take Our Daughters to Work Day” program challenged me to think about how parents’ employment contributes to the social reproduction of their children and socializes them to class, race, and gender privileges. This particular program does much more than expose young girls to career women in the workforce. The “Take Our Daughters to Work Day” program is based on the assumption that individual choice and decision making explain sex segregation and discrimination in the workplace. One must believe that if the next generation of girls can individually break the glass ceiling, this upward mobility will also eliminate categories in the labor force where women are under represented. More importantly, it requires a great leap of faith that these individual choices will somehow simultaneously eliminate sex-segregated, female-dominated, low-paid occupational categories like maids, laundresses, waitresses, etc. These ideological beliefs require us to ignore social class and the realities of racial inequality in America. Placing self-esteem, ambition, and hard work at the center of work and family concerns marginalizes or makes invisible larger issues of social and economic justice, such as: increasing the minimum wage; making childcare benefits and healthcare coverage available to all families; bargaining for flexible work options, including part-time work options with benefits, flextime, job sharing, shorter work weeks with no loss of pay, and an end to mandatory overtime.<sup>2</sup> Workers’ children often suffer the consequences of our society’s low minimum wage, lack of healthcare and childcare benefits, inflexible work schedules, and required overtime. These conditions are commonly experienced by the children of the working poor and lower-middle-class who occupy a wide range of low-wage, dead-end jobs. However, when factory or office workers are required to remain on the job after hours, the benefits to the employer and costs to the worker are camouflaged with layers of economic exchange. In contrast, the children of parents employed in domestic service and the rest of the low-wage caring industry frequently experience a special stigma and form of exploitation. They see first hand, not only the material abundance and privileged circumstances of the children of privilege, but they experience directly the exchange of inequity. The higher quality, paid

2. See AFL-CIO, *Working Women*, at <http://www.aflcio.org/women.index.html> (last visited Mar. 15, 2001).

reproductive labor the employers' families receive produces as a direct consequence lower amounts of unpaid reproductive labor in their own families. In other words, when household workers are asked to stay an extra hour to watch the employer's child or to do additional cleaning, an hour is taken from her own child, her ability to provide "quality" time or do reproductive labor in her home.

I want to conceptualize childcare as a scarce resource in order to address inequities and privileges maintained by not addressing the need for caregiving with solutions requiring the fundamental restructuring of society. Limiting the discussion to ways that care work is normatively linked to gender<sup>3</sup> and measuring the disproportionate caregiving between men and women within the family<sup>4</sup> erases the imbalance between families. The current crisis in work and family is not only the result of women entering the labor force, the gendered division of domestic labor, or the devaluation of caregiving, but is related to numerous social changes that occurred simultaneously.

## I. MIDDLE-CLASS WOMEN INCREASE THEIR LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

Communities became increasingly structured around nuclear families.<sup>5</sup> Workers' hours expanded,<sup>6</sup> while corporate reorganization and temporary employment eroded workers' confidence and security.<sup>7</sup> Support for public education<sup>8</sup> and welfare<sup>9</sup> declined. Single

3. See generally FRANCESCA M. CANCIAN & STACEY J. OLIKER, *CARING AND GENDER* (2000).

4. See JOHN P. ROBINSON & GEOFFREY GODBEY, *TIME FOR LIFE: THE SURPRISING WAYS THAT AMERICANS USE TIME 197-99* (1997); Sampson L. Blair & Daniel T. Lichter, *Measuring the Division of Household Labor: Gender Segregation of Housework Among American Couples*, 12 J. FAM. ISSUES 91, 91-113 (1991).

5. See JOHN F. FREIE, *COUNTERFEIT COMMUNITY: THE EXPLOITATION OF OUR LONGINGS FOR CONNECTEDNESS* 60 (1998) (discussing the appeal that community, particularly commercial businesses, have for the American family no longer connected to a neighborhood).

6. See generally JULIET B. SCHOR, *THE OVERWORKED AMERICAN: THE UNEXPECTED DECLINE OF LEISURE* 117-29 (1991).

7. See generally KEVIN D. HENSON, *JUST A TEMP* (1996); JACKIE KRASAS ROGERS, *TEMPS: THE MANY FACES OF THE CHANGING WORKPLACE* (2000).

8. See DAVID C. BERLINER & BRUCE J. BIDDLE, *THE MANUFACTURED CRISIS: MYTHS, FRAUD, AND THE ATTACK ON AMERICA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS* 65-67 (1995) (critiquing statistics and arguments used to defund public education and gain support for privatization of schooling).

9. See generally KAREN SECCOMBE, "SO YOU THINK I DRIVE A CADILLAC?": *WELFARE RECIPIENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE SYSTEM AND ITS REFORM* 3 (1999) (describing the impact that recent cuts have had on women's lives).

parents and two-earner couples began seeking employment to supplement inadequate government benefits.<sup>10</sup>

Much of the workforce began working more hours to make ends meet or to hold on to increasingly scarce "secure" jobs, and others are trying to maintain a certain lifestyle.<sup>11</sup> While these are clearly major social movements and dislocations, they are experienced individually as work and family conflict. Remedies addressing individual solutions to caregiving<sup>12</sup> do not eliminate the conflict but merely shift the burden to more vulnerable and less protected groups.<sup>13</sup> I argue that shifting childcare and other reproductive labor from unpaid female family members to the shoulders of low-wage female (and often immigrant) workers does not bring society closer to eliminating work and family conflict, but actually maintains and strengthens systems of privilege and related values that support masculinity, femininity, whiteness, and citizenship.

In order to reveal the hidden costs of paid reproductive labor in employers' homes, I examined the "mothering" of domestics' and nannies' children.<sup>14</sup> This research uncovered both micro and macro links between paid and unpaid reproductive labor and related systems of privilege and domination made necessary by inadequate assistance for all working families. In this Article, I will argue that reforms and proposals ignoring the working conditions of women who are paid care workers presuppose gender essentialism<sup>15</sup> while perpetuating ideological assumptions about the nature of caring that reinforce the status quo.<sup>16</sup> I will briefly reiterate the major themes in the work and family conflict literature and note the links to earlier feminist debates

10. See Ida Susser, *The Separation of Mothers and Children*, in DUAL CITY: RESTRUCTURING NEW YORK 216 (John Hull Mollenkopf & Manuel Castells eds., 1991) (describing the changes from the mid-1970s to the 1980s requiring two incomes to maintain the same standard of living in New York City).

11. See SCHOR, *supra* note 6, at 107-38.

12. Examples include childcare experts' advice to over-extended parents on how to turn limited time with their children into "quality" time, employees seeking flexible and reduced hours, or corporate development of "family-friendly" policies.

13. See Susser, *supra* note 10, at 217-20 (discussing the contradiction that middle-class women face in juggling the need to be available to children and time commitments to their professional career, and identifying poor immigrants serving as housekeepers, baby sitters, and combination full-time housekeepers to meet the demands).

14. See Mary Romero, *Who Takes Care of the Maid's Children?*, in FEMINISM AND FAMILIES 151 (Hilde Lindermann Nelson ed., 1997).

15. See Angela P. Harris, *Race and Essentialism in Feminist Legal Theory*, 42 STAN. L. REV. 581 (1990).

16. See Stephanie M. Wildman with Adrienne D. Davis, *Making Systems of Privilege Visible*, in PRIVILEGE REVEALED: HOW INVISIBLE PREFERENCE UNDERMINES AMERICA 7 (Stephanie M. Wildman ed., 1996).

on the “politics of housework”<sup>17</sup> and the social construction of contemporary mothering. I will then consider how hiring a domestic or nanny enables middle-class women to enter the labor force while retaining aspects of mothering central to her class and gender identity by shifting oppressive aspects of caregiving, thus reproducing stratified social relationships.

I begin by distinguishing care processes and social relationships embedded in the hiring of nannies that expose class privilege and the social curriculum of class relations that socialize domestic employers’ and domestic workers’ children to their social position. I then examine care work in the domestic worker’s family from the standpoint<sup>18</sup> of the children. Like the domestic employers’ children who might accompany their mothers and fathers to college campuses, law firms, science laboratories, and hospital wards, the children of domestic workers are socialized by helping their mothers clean apartments, private houses, and small office buildings.<sup>19</sup> In each instance the children are exposed to their mothers’ work status and are treated accordingly. I will summarize my own research on private household workers and their children<sup>20</sup> while building on the legal and social science literature regarding in-home workers classified as domestics, nannies, au pairs, caretakers, and babysitters. Interview data that I collected from the adult children of domestic workers facilitates rethinking caregiving as a national and global need rather than a private family issue. I argue that solutions to society’s care needs structured around individual responsibility and purchasing power reproduces a stratified nation of families stereotyped by race, class, and gender. I conclude with a call for proposals that engage in the fundamental restructuring of the economy.

## II. UNCOVERING THE “NATURE” OF UNPAID AND PAID CHILDCARE

The care crisis depicted in recent legal and social science feminist writings has revived arguments that are reminiscent of the 1960s and ’70s debates on the “politics of housework.”<sup>21</sup> The debate began with

17. See generally *THE POLITICS OF HOUSEWORK* (Ellen Malos ed., 1980).

18. See DOROTHY E. SMITH, *WRITING THE SOCIAL: CRITIQUE, THEORY, AND INVESTIGATIONS* 46-48 (1999) (discussing the importance of identifying and specifying the standpoint from which knowledge is produced in the social sciences).

19. See Romero, *supra* note 14, at 151.

20. See *id.* at 153.

21. See *THE POLITICS OF HOUSEWORK*, *supra* note 17, at 7. “There will be no true

the conceptualization of care work as women's unpaid labor relegated to the private sphere of the family.<sup>22</sup> It continued by identifying the inequalities that women as caretakers experience as employees,<sup>23</sup> and noted the absence of public support for caregiving.<sup>24</sup> The theoretical similarities bring us full circle, forcing a reconceptualization of the essence of care.<sup>25</sup>

### A. *Care Work, Parenting, and Motherhood*

During the last four decades of women's increased participation in the labor force, there have been significant increases in men's contribution to family care.<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, the burden of care work in the family remains largely on the shoulders of women.<sup>27</sup> Married women with children not only do a greater share of domestic work,<sup>28</sup> but are responsible for major household tasks that are the most time-consuming and the least possible to postpone.<sup>29</sup> Not surprisingly, working mothers report less leisure time and experience higher levels of stress than their husbands.<sup>30</sup> Simultaneously, there is an increased

liberation of women until we get rid of the assumption that it will always be women who do housework and look after children—and mostly in their own homes." *Id.*

22. See MICHAEL KIMMEL, *MANHOOD IN AMERICA: A CULTURAL HISTORY* 158-59 (1996) (arguing that the separate spheres of the brain left women locked in the ideology of domesticity and masculinity excluded men from caring obligations); Dorothy E. Roberts, *Spiritual and Menial Housework*, 9 *YALE J.L. & FEMINISM* 51, 52-55 (1997) (discussing the public-private dichotomy and the gendered separation of waged and unwaged labor).

23. See generally JOAN WILLIAMS, *UNBENDING GENDER: WHY FAMILY AND WORK CONFLICT AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT* (2000); GENDER & FAMILY ISSUES IN THE WORKPLACE (Francine Blau & Ronald Ehrenberg eds., 1997).

24. See generally SONYA MICHEL, *CHILDREN'S INTERESTS/MOTHERS' RIGHTS: THE SHAPING OF AMERICA'S CHILD CARE POLICY* (1999); ELIZABETH ROSE, *A MOTHER'S JOB: THE HISTORY OF DAY CARE 1890-1960* (1999); Mary L. Heen, *Welfare Reform, Child Care Costs, and Taxes: Delivering Increased Work-Related Child Care Benefits to Low-Income Families*, 13 *YALE L. & POL'Y REV.* 173 (1995).

25. See CANCIAN & OLIKER, *supra* note 3, at 21; see also Katharine Silbaugh, *Turning Labor into Love: Housework and the Law*, 91 *NW. U.L. REV.* 1 (1996).

26. See Scott Coltrane & Justin Galt, *The History of Men's Caring, Evaluating Precedents for Fathers' Family Involvement*, in *CARE WORK: GENDER, CLASS, AND THE WELFARE STATE* 15 (Madonna Harrington Meyer ed., 2000) (reviewing research findings on the changes in the division of household labor and childcare).

27. *Id.* at 17; see also BETH ANNE SHELTON, *WOMEN, MEN, AND TIME: GENDER DIFFERENCES IN PAID WORK, HOUSEWORK AND LEISURE* 30 (1992) (discussing the distribution of homework between husbands and wives and arguing gender performance motivates the continued gendered division of labor).

28. See Coltrane & Galt, *supra* note 26, at 17.

29. These tasks are: (1) meal preparation and cooking; (2) housecleaning; (3) shopping for groceries and household goods; (4) washing dishes or cleaning up after meals; and (5) laundry (including washing, drying, folding, ironing, and mending clothes). See Blair & Lichter, *supra* note 4, at 93.

30. See generally ARLIE HOCHSCHILD, *THE SECOND SHIFT: WORKING PARENTS AND THE*

popularity in the promotion of “family values” and male responsibility while strong essentialist beliefs about women as caregivers and mothers are emphasized, and caring for children is represented as natural, universal, and unchanging.<sup>31</sup> Traditional male roles as protector, provider, and leader are central tenets in conservative defense of traditional fatherhood, while nurturing remains an almost exclusive feature of mothering,<sup>32</sup> and more generally, of womanhood: “All women need to be mothers, that all mothers need their children and that all children need their mothers.”<sup>33</sup>

Contemporary views on socially appropriate mothering constitute “a gendered model that advises mothers to expend a tremendous amount of time, energy, and money in raising their children.”<sup>34</sup> In her book, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, sociologist Sharon Hays identified the prevailing ideology of motherhood prescribed by childcare experts,<sup>35</sup> and accepted by mothers, as advocating child-centered, emotionally demanding, labor-intensive, and financially draining methods.<sup>36</sup> The increasing emotional dimension of motherhood transfers household tasks and childcare from “real” work to a “labor of love”<sup>37</sup> and builds on the

REVOLUTION AT HOME 6 (1989); Rosalind C. Barnett & Yu-Chu Shen, *Gender, High- and Low-Schedule-Control Housework Tasks, and Psychological Distress: A Study of Dual-Earner Couples*, 18 J. FAM. ISSUES 403, 403-05 (1997).

31. See Coltrane & Galt, *supra* note 26, at 17.

32. See *id.* at 18-20 (providing a critique of literature on fatherhood and identifying various research arguments that support gender-segregated parenting).

33. ANN OAKLEY, WOMAN'S WORK: THE HOUSEWIFE, PAST AND PRESENT 186 (1974).

34. See SHARON HAYS, THE CULTURAL CONTRADICTIONS OF MOTHERHOOD 54 (1996); see also Linda Kelly, *The Fantastic Adventure of Supermom and the Alien: Educating Immigration Policy on the Facts of Life*, 31 CONN. L. REV. 1045, 1049-51 (1999) (discussing the legal and cultural construction of “supermom”); Adrien Katherine Wing & Laura Weselmann, *Transcending Traditional Notions of Mothering: The Need for Critical Race Feminist Praxis*, 3 J. GENDER RACE & JUST. 257, 260-63 (1999) (discussing contemporary assumptions about mothering).

35. Childcare experts advocating childcare models advocating intensive mothering include: T. BERRY BRAZELTON, M.D., FAMILIES: CRISIS AND CARING (1989); PENELOPE LEACH, YOUR BABY AND CHILD: FROM BIRTH TO AGE FIVE (1998).

36. While Hays does note class differences in mothering (working-class and poor mothers stress children's formal education, provide rules, and emphasize obedience; whereas middle-class mothers promote their children's self-esteem, provide choices, and negotiate rules) she argues that all mothers “share a set of fundamental assumptions about the importance of putting their children's needs first and dedicating themselves to providing what is best for their kids, as they understand it.” HAYS, *supra* note 34, at 86.

37. See MARGARET JANE RADIN, CONTESTED COMMODITIES 105 (1996) (discussing work and labor); see also Katharine Silbaugh, *Commodification and Women's Household Labor*, 9 YALE J.L. & FEMINISM 81, 83-85 (1997) (arguing for conceptualization of household labor in economic terms rather than emotional or sentimental that applies to both waged and unwaged labor); ANN GAME & ROSEMARY PRINGLE, GENDER AT WORK 127 (1983):



ideological foundation inherited from the “cult of domesticity” and the “cult of true womanhood.”<sup>38</sup> Principles of scientific management applied to homemaking, along with the growing industry of childrearing manuals, teaches the middle-class working mother to adopt the mother-manager model that requires her to devote herself to arranging activities that further her children’s development and monopolizes “quality” time with her children.<sup>39</sup>

## B. *Substituting Mothers*

### 1. Subdividing Care Work

Private household workers are distinguished from nannies along the lines of housecleaning and childcare; however, job descriptions do not necessarily fall neatly into these separate categories.<sup>40</sup> Live-in domestics and nannies have the most difficulty maintaining boundaries between housecleaning and childcare, but all private household workers struggle against increasing work loads and this struggle blurs the distinction. Live-in positions incorporating both childcare and housework lend themselves to particular abuse because

Laundering became not just laundering but an expression of love; cooking and cleaning were regarded as “homemaking,” an outlet for artistic inclinations and a way of encouraging family loyalty; changing nappies was not just a shitty joy but a time to build the baby’s sense of security and love for the mother; scrubbing the bathroom was not just cleaning but an exercise of maternal instincts, keeping the family safe from disease.

*Id.*

38. See generally NANCY COTT, *THE BONDS OF WOMANHOOD: “WOMAN’S SPHERE” IN NEW ENGLAND, 1780–1835* (1977). Not all women gained the privileges of mothering advocated in the cult of domesticity or the cult of womanhood. Women of color, immigrant women, and poor women entered the labor force to contribute the basic necessities for their family. See also Bonnie Thornton Dill, *Our Mother’s Grief: Racial Ethnic Women and the Maintenance of Families*, 13 J. FAM. HIST. 415, 415-20 (1988) (discussing the exclusion of African American, Latina, and Asian American women from the dominant culture of domesticity); Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Racial Ethnic Women’s Labor: The Intersection of Race, Gender and Class Oppression*, 17 REV. RADICAL POL. ECON. 86, 87-89 (1985) (discussing the use of women of color as cheap labor particularly in white households or in lower-service work in institutional settings and caring for other families).

39. Although Hays does not refer to mother-manager, her list of questions suggesting activities related to intensive mothering capture the essence of the model:

Why do many professional-class employed women seem to find it necessary to take the kids to swimming and judo and dancing and tumbling classes, not to mention orthodontists and psychiatrists and attention-deficit specialists? . . . Why must a “good” mother be careful to “negotiate” with her child, refraining from demands for obedience to an absolute set of rules? Why must she avoid spanking a disobedient child and instead feel the need to explain, in detail, the issues at hand? Why does she consider it important to be consciously and constantly attentive to the child’s wishes?

HAYS, *supra* note 34, at 5-6.

40. See JULIA WRIGLEY, *OTHER PEOPLE’S CHILDREN* 5 (1995); BRIDGET ANDERSON, *DOING THE DIRTY WORK? THE GLOBAL POLITICS OF DOMESTIC LABOUR* 15 (2000).

of the unregulated work hours, the expectation of emotional labor, and the vulnerable status of the worker.<sup>41</sup> Emotional labor is more likely required by domestics assigned caregiving tasks:<sup>42</sup> “The domestic is . . . an extension of, surrogate for, the woman of the house”<sup>43</sup> and consequently they were frequently expected to fulfill the psychological needs of their employers and families.<sup>44</sup> Based on her analysis of various work situations, Judith Rollins concluded that employers expecting emotional labor hire women to relieve them from the burden of housework and to enhance their own feelings of superiority.<sup>45</sup> Applying Rollins’s analysis to the specific case of live-in nannies, hiring a surrogate is an ideal strategy for maintaining child-centered, emotionally demanding, and labor-intensive mothering, while shifting the burden from one’s own shoulders. Domestics and nannies are relegated the more physical and taxing part of child work while employers upgrade their own status to mother-managers.<sup>46</sup>

## 2. Working Conditions

The structure of the occupation, characterized by the informality of negotiations conducted in the privacy of the employer’s home and lacking definitive contract criteria,<sup>47</sup> affords considerable opportunities for employer abuses<sup>48</sup> and makes it difficult or impossible for

41. See Shellee Colen, *“Like a Mother to Them”: Stratified Reproduction and West Indian Childcare Workers and Employers in New York*, in *CONCEIVING THE NEW WORLD ORDER: THE GLOBAL POLITICS OF REPRODUCTION* 78 (Faye D. Ginsburg & Rayna Rapp eds., 1995).

42. Childcare workers are more often assumed unable to be competent employees without emotional attachment. See Susser, *supra* note 10, at 218 (discussing the expectation that domestics are available as the constant care provider and provider of “unconditional” love).

43. JUDITH ROLLINS, *BETWEEN WOMEN: DOMESTICS AND THEIR EMPLOYERS* 183 (1985).

44. See Cameron Macdonald, *Manufacturing Motherhood: The Shadow Work of Nannies and Au Pairs*, 21 *QUALITATIVE SOC.* 25, 27-29 (1998) (discussing social construction of mothering and care giving tasks between mother and caregiver).

45. See *id.* at 31; see also ROLLINS, *supra* note 43, at 180 (maintaining that “the presence of the deference-giving inferior enhances the employer’s self-esteem as an individual, neutralizes some of her resentment as a woman, and, where appropriate, strengthens her sense of self as a white person”).

46. See BARBARA KATZ ROTHMAN, *RECREATING MOTHERHOOD: IDEOLOGY AND TECHNOLOGY IN A PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY* 198-202 (1989) (discussing the managerial mother); see also Roberts, *supra* note 22, at 55-59 (arguing for a division of labor based on spiritual and mental housework); Susser, *supra* note 10, at 218 (discussing the kinds of planning and arranging that mothers do instead of actually spending time with their children).

47. See Susser, *supra* note 10, at 220.

48. See Romero, *supra* note 14, at 164-65; see also Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Regulating the Unregulated?: Domestic Workers’ Social Networks*, 41 *SOC. PROBS.* 50, 55-60 (1994); Maria Ontiveros, *To Help Those Most in Need: Undocumented Workers’ Rights and Remedies Under Title VII*, 20 *N.Y.U. REV. L. & SOC. CHANGE* 607, 610-15 (1993); Mary Romero, *Immigration,*

workers to organize.<sup>49</sup> While employers in domestic service engage in similar self interests as other employers—increasing the amount of labor and decreasing its value—they resist other dimensions of employment: (1) acknowledging that when a private household worker or caretaker is hired, their home becomes the employee's workplace;<sup>50</sup> (2) accepting the worker as an employee rather than as an extension of the employer's roles as housewife or mother;<sup>51</sup> and (3) actively resisting practices of modern work culture.<sup>52</sup> Domestic labor may be priceless, but employers are unwilling to pay very much for it.<sup>53</sup>

While intimate relationships between employees and employers have been material for novels,<sup>54</sup> films,<sup>55</sup> and myths,<sup>56</sup> studies indicate that such relationships are much more exploitative than personally or financially rewarding to workers.<sup>57</sup> Judith Rollins,<sup>58</sup> Evelyn Nakano Glenn,<sup>59</sup> and others<sup>60</sup> counter popular media depictions of maids and butlers. Rather than treatment as “one of the family,” the occupation is characterized by everyday rituals of verbal<sup>61</sup> and spatial deference.<sup>62</sup>

*the Servant Problem, and the Legacy of the Domestic Labor Debate: “Where Can You Find Good Help These Days!”*, 53 U. MIAMI L. REV. 1045, 1048 (1999).

49. See Peggie R. Smith, *Regulating Paid Household Work: Class, Gender, Race, and Agendas of Reform*, 48 AM. U. L. REV. 851, 918-24 (1999) (discussing current attitudes and conditions impairing unionization efforts).

50. See MARY ROMERO, MAID IN THE USA 98 (1992); see also STEPHEN L. CARTER, THE CONFIRMATION MESS: CLEANING UP THE FEDERAL APPOINTMENTS PROCESS 179-82 (1994) (arguing that Nannygate is an unconstitutional infringement on the privacy of employing families for example).

51. See *id.* at 130 (discussing family analogy used by employers to distort relationship); see also Roberts, *supra* note 22, at 65 n.72.

52. See *id.* at 98; see also Suzanne Goldberg, *In Pursuit of Workplace Rights: Household Workers and a Conflict of Laws*, 3 YALE J.L. & FEMINISM 63, 100 (1990).

53. See *Proposals to Simplify and Streamline the Payment of Employment Taxes for Domestic Workers: Hearings Before the Subcomm. on Social Security and the Subcomm. on Human Resources of the House Comm. on Ways and Means*, 103d Cong. 4, 39-40 (1993) (recognizing noncompliance with employment taxes in domestic service).

54. See, e.g., MARJORIE KINNAN RAWLINGS, CROSS CREEK 5 (1942) (characterizing her employee, Idella Parker, as the perfect maid).

55. See, e.g., CLARA'S HEART (Warner Bros. 1988); CORRINA, CORRINA (New Line Cinema 1994); IMITATION OF LIFE (Universal 1934 & 1959); THE LONG WALK HOME (Miramax Films 1990).

56. See ROMERO, *supra* note 50, at 120-23.

57. *Id.*; see also ANDERSON, *supra* note 40, at 20; BONNIE THORNTON DILL, ACROSS THE BOUNDARIES OF RACE AND CLASS 19 (1994); EVELYN NAKANO GLENN, ISSEI, NISEI, WAR BRIDE: THREE GENERATIONS OF JAPANESE AMERICAN WOMEN IN DOMESTIC SERVICE 25 (1986); ROLLINS, *supra* note 43, at 190; WRIGLEY, *supra* note 40, at 10; Colen, *supra* note 41, at 80; Romero, *supra* note 14, at 155.

58. See ROLLINS, *supra* note 43, at 190.

59. See GLENN, *supra* note 57, at 30.

60. See ROLLINS, *supra* note 43, at 195; GLENN, *supra* note 57, at 35.

Rollins argues that the rituals functioned to affirm and enhance the status of employers and their families.<sup>63</sup> Bridget Anderson asserts that:

The employment of a paid domestic worker . . . facilitates status reproduction, not only by maintaining status objects, enabling the silver to be polished or the clothes to be ironed, but also by serving as a foil to the lady of the house. The hired productive worker is reproducing social beings and sets of relationships that are not merely not her own but also deeply antagonistic to her own interests. Her presence emphasizes and reinforces her employer's identity—as a competent household manager, as middle-class, as white—and her own as its opposite.<sup>64</sup>

By purchasing the low-wage labor of other women in order to substitute for the unpaid labor of wives and mothers, employers are engaged in the social reproduction of their family status; that is, a social reproduction of privileges based on gender, as well as class, race, sexuality, and citizenship.<sup>65</sup>

### 3. Labor Market Dynamics

The working conditions experienced by live-in and day work in employers' homes ranges widely in wages and salary, benefits, abuses, and job descriptions. Journalist and writer, Louise Rafkin's book, *Other People's Dirt: A Housecleaner's Curious Adventures*, explores the different shapes and forms the activity of cleaning "other people's dirt" takes.<sup>66</sup> In doing so, Rafkin captures the intersecting hierarchies of race, class, and gender, as well as citizenship and sexuality. She begins her writings by describing her entrance into the occupation as a well-paid and college educated independent worker, and moves onto her interviews with exotic housecleaners in San Francisco who clean in the nude, a lady's maid to the Fricks, the Hearsts, and the Rockefellers, and the Mexican immigrant woman who cleaned her

61. See ROMERO, *supra* note 50, at 115-16; ROLLINS, *supra* note 43, at 164-67.

62. See ROMERO, *supra* note 50, at 116-18; ROLLINS, *supra* note 43, at 171-73.

63. See ROLLINS, *supra* note 43, at 203.

64. ANDERSON, *supra* note 40, at 19-20.

65. Ritualized cleaning, household management, and other forms of labor servicing life-styles are rooted in the cult of domesticity. See FAYE DUDDEN, *SERVING WOMEN: HOUSEHOLD SERVICE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA* 140-41 (1983).

66. See LOUISE RAFKIN, *OTHER PEOPLE'S DIRT: A HOUSECLEANER'S CURIOUS ADVENTURES* 97 (1998). Many of the experiences Rafkin describes are quite similar to the accounts found in the literature on tensions between employee and employer: requests for additional work without additional pay, detailed instructions of how to clean, excessive supervision, and difficulty of cleaning around family members and pets. *Id.* at 100.

own family's house.<sup>67</sup> The social relationships embedded in each case are manifestations of the statuses of race, class, gender, sexuality, and citizenship. These are crucial differences that underlie life chances: that is, the monetary value of a specific person's labor,<sup>68</sup> and that person's ability to obtain employment and shape job options.<sup>69</sup> These differences are precisely the labor-market dynamics shaped by social sanctions and restrictions that either limit or increase workers' opportunities.

Both micro- and macro-level analyses demonstrate how racialized-gendered-immigrants and non-migrants<sup>70</sup> are positioned on the continuum of household labor as domestics, nannies, or au pairs; and differentiated by wages, benefits, and overall working conditions. At a micro level, employee and employer social networks<sup>71</sup> and

67. See *id.* at 10.

68. See Doreen Mattingly, *Making Maids: United States Immigration Policy and Immigrant Domestic Workers*, in GENDER, MIGRATION AND DOMESTIC SERVICE 65 (Jane Henshall Momsen ed., 1999) (reporting the average wage for day work is between \$8–10 per hour and an average of \$2.72 per hour for live-in workers).

69. Rafkin describes how two women's work experiences underscored the significance of these differences in the labor market dynamics. She described her short tenure with a corporate cleaning service that she coins McCleaners. After completing three jobs that she and Lena (co-worker) charged clients \$85, \$130, and \$95, she received only \$16.50 for the day. After the second day Rafkin quits and tells Lena, her black colleague, to do the same. Lena points out that employers do not accept black independent workers as they do white ones. Rafkin writes:

John and his Happy Maids office staff make it okay for rich people to allow people they are normally afraid of into their homes. People will trust nameless faces as long as they are in uniform, and as long as they know their place. A Happy Maid would always know her place; the amount of her paycheck would make her value perfectly clear.

RAFKIN, *supra* note 66, at 135-36. Rafkin also draws from her childhood memories to recall the Mexican immigrant woman, Lupita, who cleaned her family's house. Comparing the differences between her paid reproductive labor and that of a poor, Mexican immigrant woman, she concludes the following:

We come from different branches of the housecleaning family, branches that rarely intertwine. Cleaning, I am given carte blanche to observe lives I would otherwise never touch. Aside from this, my cleaning life gives me free afternoons and a healthy and often embarrassingly high hourly wage. For Lupita, cleaning was one of only a few options open to an illegal single mother. What else could she have done? Child care? Dishwashing?

My clients overpay me so they don't have to face the contradictions and guilt of hiring someone like Lupita. It is easier to pay a nice, educated white girl than to engage someone who may be problematic, someone who reminds them of how messy the world really is.

*Id.* at 104-05.

70. See generally MIMI ABRAMOVITZ, REGULATING THE LIVES OF WOMEN: THE SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF PUBLIC WELFARE 3-7 (1988) (examining the historical role of the state in defining middle-class married women as "fit" and "deserving" and poor single women as "unfit" mothers and thus, denied support and forced to seek low-wage). See also Sylvia A. Law, *Women, Work, Welfare, and the Preservation of Patriarchy*, 131 U. PA. L. REV. 1249, 1249-55 (1983).

71. See ROMERO, *supra* note 50, at 144; Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Occupational*

employer preferences<sup>72</sup> shape local domestic labor workforces. Employee and employer networks are evident in the residential clusters of racial ethnic and immigrant domestics and nannies throughout the country.<sup>73</sup> Different populations of workers frequently become stereotyped as ideal employees for housework, childcare, or for live-in positions.<sup>74</sup> Past work experience or skills are less likely to be the basis for hiring private household workers than personality.<sup>75</sup> Racial and ethnic preference for housework versus childcare, as well as their willingness to do the most amount of work for the least amount of pay, are common items on the list of criteria used by employers to hire domestics. Consequently, paid domestic labor is not only segregated by gender, but is stratified by race and citizenship status; higher status individuals are employed at the top of the market and individuals with the lowest status are employed in the least favorable working conditions. Macro-level analysis of labor-market dynamics indicates that areas with the highest levels of income inequality employ the largest number of private household workers in the country.<sup>76</sup> Immigration and welfare policies<sup>77</sup> control the flow of low-wage workers available for domestic and nanny positions.<sup>78</sup> Restricting government subsidies and opportunities for legal work status, or to become citizens, ghettoizes populations of women in domestic service.<sup>79</sup>

*Ghettoization: Japanese American Women and Domestic Service, 1905–1970*, 8 *ETHNICITY* 352, 380 (1981); Hondagneu-Sotelo, *supra* note 48, at 55–56.

72. See ROLLINS, *supra* note 43, at 127–31 (discussing employers preferences based on race and ethnicity); WRIGLEY, *supra* note 40, at 25 (discussing reasons that employers hire or avoid immigrant women as domestics).

73. See Mattingly, *supra* note 68, at 71–73.

74. See *id.* at 75.

75. See ROMERO, *supra* note 50, at 111.

76. See Ruth Milkman et al., *The Macrosociology of Paid Domestic Labor*, 25 *WORK & OCCUPATIONS* 483, 483–88 (1998) (finding that in regions in the United States with the highest income inequality among women, domestic service is relatively large; whereas in locations with minimal income inequality, the occupation is of trivial importance or even absent).

77. See *id.*

78. In her study of childrearing and household formation in New York City, Ida Susser asserted that the “control of migrant entries . . . affects the cost of domestic service and the availability of women to replace those who find well-paid work.” Susser, *supra* note 10, at 208.

79. See Mattingly, *supra* note 68, at 74–76 (discussing the ghettoization effect that the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 has had on immigrant women employed as domestics and nannies in California); see also GRACE CHANG, *DISPOSABLE DOMESTICS: IMMIGRANT WOMEN WORKERS IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY* (2000); ANDERSON, *supra* note 40, at 25.

### III. REVEALING PRIVILEGES EMBEDDED IN PAID CARE WORK

#### A. *Mothering and the Boundaries of Paid Care Work: Who Is Caring for the Maid's Children?*

Childcare arrangements made by private household workers and nannies are similar to other poor and working-class mothers in the United States: mothers and fathers juggle work hours to allow one parent to be home with the children; they call upon relatives or siblings for help;<sup>80</sup> they give older siblings responsibility for childcare and domestic labor;<sup>81</sup> sometimes they are forced to leave the children alone, or in a few cases, take their children to work.<sup>82</sup> Changes in work and school schedules require flexibility and contingency plans, but the absence of available and affordable childcare greatly limits options for paid laborers.<sup>83</sup>

Live-in positions pose severe restrictions making it difficult and sometimes impossible for domestics to mother their own children. The circumstances forcing working mothers to accept live-in positions underscore the irony that “to be good mothers, women leave their children to migrate.”<sup>84</sup> Women accept live-in positions during periods of economic crisis<sup>85</sup> or while transitioning to U.S. residence.<sup>86</sup> Occasionally, women find employers who are willing to accept their children (usually one child) as part of the live-in arrangement. Two

80. See Romero, *supra* note 14, at 154 (interviewees describing extended family assuming childcare during their mothers' absence).

81. See *id.* at 155.

82. When the option was taking the child to work or leaving the child alone, some mothers were able to obtain their employer's permission to bring the child for the day. Interviewees who were the oldest in the family recall accompanying their mothers to their day jobs. See *id.*

83. The irregular hours of domestic service resulting from employers' last minute requests, placed additional burden on mothers finding adequate childcare. *Id.*

84. See Shelle Colen, “Just a Little Respect”: West Indian Domestic Workers in New York City, in MUCHUACHAS NO MORE: HOUSEHOLD WORKERS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN 172-73 (Elsa M. Chaney & Mary Garcia Castro eds., 1989).

85. An interviewee describes his mother leaving their home in the south during an economic crisis to take a job as a live-in domestic in New York. Since his father was unemployed, the higher paying live-in domestic position in New York was lucrative enough to warrant separating the family. See Romero, *supra* note 14, at 153-54; see also ELIZABETH CLARK-LEWIS, LIVING IN, LIVING OUT: AFRICAN AMERICAN DOMESTICS IN WASHINGTON, D.C., 1910-1940, at 51-65 (1994) (discussing the movement north in search of work in domestic service).

86. Three interviewees were the son and daughters of immigrants. Ricardo Olivas, a Latino growing up in San Francisco in the '50s, was separated from his mother while she took a live-in position in the city. Since she was a single mother and her relatives had not yet immigrated to the United States, she had few childcare options to accommodate her working situation. She was able to enroll her sons in a boarding school in the area. See Romero, *supra* note 14, at 154.

children of domestic workers that I interviewed described mothers who were employed as live-in workers and had arranged to keep their children with them full-time; one mother kept her daughters with her on weekends.<sup>87</sup> Both children began by sharing the maid's quarters with their mothers as small children and as the employers' children left for college and vacated their rooms, they moved into their own rooms. In both cases, employers were unable to pay a full-time salary thus requiring their mothers to do day work throughout the neighborhood, and then return to clean and pick-up after their live-in employer. The arrangement was maintained throughout most of their working lives because living-in with one employer and doing day work allowed the workers to enroll their children in neighborhood schools which were some of the best schools in the country.<sup>88</sup> However, in each case, the boundaries between family and work were blurred and the distinction between paid and unpaid reproductive labor disappeared.

A growing number of women employed as domestics and nannies are engaged in transnational mothering. The following account of children who spent a number of years with their grandmothers while their mothers were employed as live-in domestics, exemplify the conditions, personal sacrifices, and family disruption posed in transnational motherhood. When Sophia Miller was twelve, her mother migrated to New York from St. Vincent, leaving her for four years. Once her mother obtained a green card, she was able to send for her daughter and son. Years later, as a college student, Sophia still felt the loss and rupture in their mother-daughter relationship. The following quote points to the personal cost of transnational mothering:

Those four years I went through a lot of changes and she wasn't there. I think growing up I didn't really need her as much as I

87. One child remembers:

It was extremely hard for her to spend the weekend away from us where we didn't really know anyone here. I spent most of the time during weekends with my father, but so then as she got to know the Patrona we were able to go there with her and spend the weekend with her, and she really liked us and she actually liked us to talk to her two children—the little girl was 5 and the little boy was 2 or 3. She liked us to speak to them in Spanish. They were fluent in Spanish and French and English. She really liked having us around, so we would go. We would go to the park.

Interview on file with author.

88. See Mary Romero, *One of the Family or Just the Mexican Maid's Daughter? Belonging, Identity and Social Mobility*, in *WOMEN'S UNTOLD STORIES: BREAKING SILENCE, TALKING BACK, VOICING COMPLEXITY* 142 (Mary Romero & Abigail Steward eds., 1999) (describing a daughter living with her mother in the employer's home, attending school, and participating in the community with the employer's children).



needed her during that four years when she left. So like, I don't know there's things I would've liked to talk to her about and she wasn't there, and now she's around I really don't have that need for her as much as I did back then, and I that's something I can't get over you. I keep saying, "Well you weren't around. You were never there." I've kind of resented her at first . . . "Why isn't she coming back [I asked my grandmother]?" "She said she was going to be gone for a month." She was gone for four years. We resented her for that for awhile, I really did.<sup>89</sup>

Time spent at work, the demand to work late,<sup>90</sup> and requests to take work home are all factors influencing the rearing and socialization of the workers' children. Circumstances of childrearing for immigrant and poor women employed as household workers differ from their employers. Middle-class children may not spend much more time with their working mothers than the children of domestics, but they are provided a parental substitute.<sup>91</sup> Live-in, as opposed to day work, is the major factor shaping the kind of mothering workers engaged in. Employers' requests for employees to work in their own home changes the quality of time spent with the employees' own children. Cooking,<sup>92</sup> sewing, and childcare may not be entirely opposed by workers because they can care for their own children while earning money. However, these tasks extend the number of hours engaged in paid labor, and shift the cost of equipment and electricity to the worker. Bringing the employer's reproductive labor into the employee's home may also include the children's unpaid labor if they assist their mother in ironing, cooking, and babysitting.

89. Interview on file with the author.

90. See Susser, *supra* note 10, at 218 (describing employers' practice of assuming the availability of nannies).

91. A quote from Edward Miller points to this distinction: "I only experienced her [mother] from I guess 5:30 to 8:00 at night, for three hours of the day, because we had to go to bed at that time, at eight or eight-thirty at night and the little white kids got to benefit from her all day." Romero, *supra* note 14, at 156.

92. This usually involved employers' requests for cooking particular kinds of ethnic food that were not readily available and took hours to prepare. Sal Lujan remembered his mother cooking Mexican food for her employer's party in Texas.

They've asked her to make Mexican food and they give her a lot of money. They've paid like sixty bucks or something. They give her sixty bucks and she'd make tamales or something like that, and plus she tells them "you have to buy everything." So they buy everything and she gets to make the whole thing over at their house.

*Id.* at 157.

Boundaries marking paid and unpaid caregiving were significant in identifying the divisions between work and family. Mother-manager was a distinguishing feature of parental activities.<sup>93</sup>

However, at times these boundaries were crossed and domestics' children recognized that their mother had indeed been the principle caretaker throughout the lives of the employers' children.<sup>94</sup>

### B. *Social Reproduction: Learning about Privilege*

Domestic service involves the social reproduction of class, as well as gender and race privileges in both employees' and employers' families.<sup>95</sup> Ascribing children their parent's social status is a form of social reproduction that links family and work. This takes a peculiar form in domestic service when adolescent children are called upon to augment or replace their mother's paid labor. This is a strategy women doing domestic labor are forced to use to handle family emergencies or illnesses when they fear being fired or losing pay if they miss work. Because they do not receive sick pay or leave, they frequently have no one but family members to call upon. Wages and benefits (or lack thereof) establish the economic conditions that contextualize childrearing and socialization. Like other poor and working class children, the years of dependency are restricted to early childhood rather than extending into adolescence and early adulthood.<sup>96</sup> Children of domestics take their place in the division of household labor with increasing responsibility as they reach adolescence.<sup>97</sup>

93. William Taylor noted the kinds of employers' requests he perceived crossed the line from paid childcare to parenting activities.

My mother took care of these kids. I think the girl and I were the same ages, and I used to go over once in a while. This woman (employer) just kind of turned over her house to my mother and she ran it. This woman kind of depended on her (mother) for all these little things in life that we normally take care of. But she (mother) just kind of took over the house, took over the kid. She (employer) would say look, "could you take the kid out"—I don't remember the kid's name—"and get clothes, school clothes." So then my mother would get in the car and they'd go out and she'd buy her school clothes for the year. She (employer) would leave them money to buy school clothes for the year.

*Id.* at 159-60.

94. Edward Miller concluded his mother parenting role in their lives: "She [mother] actually raised their kids. And she knew more about what was going on in their lives than they [employers] did." *Id.* at 159.

95. See ANDERSON, *supra* note 40, at 30; ROLLINS, *supra* note 43, at 190.

96. See FREDERICK ELKIN & GERALD HANDEL, *THE CHILD AND SOCIETY, THE PROCESS OF SOCIALIZATION* 256-59 (1984).

97. Unlike upper- and middle-class children, these children were expected to engage in household tasks. For the most part, age was the major determining factor in the amount of

The following accounts illustrate how children learn about privilege. Edward Miller's image of the employer's son clinging to his mother as he cried and the knowledge that he was allowed to express such ownership over his mother was a powerful message of class and race domination, as well as privilege.

I remember going with my father, I guess I must of been four years old, because I could actually physically stand up on the seat, back then they didn't have car seats and seat belts and all of that, so I would drive with him standing up on the seat, the front seat of this forty-seven Chevy we had and we went over to the house where my mother worked, the white family that my mother worked for and 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 down right anger because I had been taught never to cry when my mother left because that was something she had to do. So I had already been trained not to express that kind of emotion, "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. My father had gone to pick my mother up from work and she was trying to excuse herself from the little brat and he was crying his eyes out. And I am sitting there watching this and I couldn't cry, I wasn't suppose to cry. So that was the first hint of caste and class differences, and culture and all that.<sup>98</sup>

Recounting the complaints her mother made about an employer's child, Linda Duran learned parents' different class expectations and the extra work that privilege meant for her mother:

They're too submissive, you know, the kids run wild. One kid has a room full of stuffed animals. Evidently they're all over the dresser and the bed and the floor and this angers her because she's got to pick them up to dust underneath it and that sort of thing. "The kid's too damn old to be having all this stuff in there anyway" and "I don't understand why they have to have so many." "The kid is twelve and why do they have teddy bears." She decided that the kid's not growing up fast enough. So she does talk about it, usually when it affects her work somehow.<sup>99</sup>

work they did; and secondly, was gender. Gender was reported to shape the allocation of tasks in families in cases where the oldest child was female; gender was less a factor in families where the eldest child was a son or when all the children were male. The presence of another adult family member, a father or relative, also affected the redistribution of household chores. Of course, all of this was dependent on the number of hours mothers spent away from home and the family's financial means. See Romero, *supra* note 14, at 159.

98. Interview on file with author.

99. Hays includes a contrasting quote describing intensive mothering:

Why do many professional-class employed women seem to find it necessary to take the kids to swimming and judo and dancing and tumbling classes, not to mention orthodontists and psychiatrists and attention-deficit specialists? . . . Why must a "good" mother be careful to "negotiate" with her child, refraining from demands for

Domestic service is a source of knowledge for the workers' children to learn the folkways, mores, norms, values, and racial etiquette of class, gender, whiteness, and citizenship.<sup>100</sup> Rituals and practices of deference that characterize servitude are powerful tools of instruction to teach privilege. Answering evening telephone calls from the employers exposes children to the linguistic deference common in domestic service:<sup>101</sup> e.g., referring to the workers by their first names while formally addressing employers;<sup>102</sup> domestics referred to as "girl," "my girl,"<sup>103</sup> or Maria;<sup>104</sup> and the angloization of first names for easier pronunciation.<sup>105</sup> Workers' children experienced spatial deference when they accompanied their mothers to work as helpers or as domestics themselves.<sup>106</sup> They are frequently the recipients of employers' practice of "gift-giving" of old clothes and other discarded items.<sup>107</sup> The nonreciprocal nature of the interaction and the quality of the exchange is an important lesson in privilege.<sup>108</sup>

obedience to absolute set of rules? Why must she avoid spanking a disobedient child and instead feel the need to explain, in detail, the issues at hand? Why does she consider it important to be consciously and constantly attentive to the child's wishes?

HAYS, *supra* note 34, at 6.

100. The following quotes are examples of the sources of knowledge and messages conveyed to domestics' children:

I heard stories of how older people, high school age, interacted with her. The younger children were more like she was a babysitter and they basically had to do what she said. And I think she had more control over them because she took them out of their environment and put them in her house. But the high schoolers I think were a lot more rude to her thinking that she didn't have any power over them.

As they got older their attitude became exceedingly patronizing. That is what I couldn't handle. That was the thing I couldn't handle. . . . And their attitude is just very patronizing. When they really owe her a lot for all she did and sacrificed for them. But I don't know, I guess I don't know how else I would expect them to act. Just a little more respectful that's all.

One of my mom's friends who is young, in her twenties, worked for an employer who had a son around her age. He made a lot of sexual advances at her and one night when she had to work late, tried to get her to sleep with him. She told his parents and they said it wasn't true, basically said she was lying, and they fired her.

Romero, *supra* note 14, at 160.

101. *See id.*

102. *See id.* at 163.

103. *See id.*; *see also* ROLLINS, *supra* note 43, at 194.

104. *See* Romero, *supra* note 14, at 164.

105. *See id.*

106. Mothers' low wages frequently resulted in enlisting children into the labor force at an early age. Since many work arrangements are part of the underground economy, child labor restrictions are rarely enforced. *See id.*

107. *See generally* ROLLINS, *supra* note 43, at 190-94. *See also* ROMERO, *supra* note 50, at 109.

108. The following quote suggests that the child had ambivalent feelings about the old clothes but understood the stigma attached to the practice in domestic service.

I know that a lot of these people [employers] you know as time went by didn't want their clothes anymore. They would want to throw them away. And sometimes

The systems of gifts and favors that shapes the personalism of the intimate relationship into a strategy of oppression<sup>109</sup> is brought home to the domestics' children when mothers feel obligated to comply with every employer request.<sup>110</sup>

In summary, I found that while the adult children of private household workers did not necessarily understand the class and racial stratification, they learned their place in it. Experiences with employers, their children, the peculiar customs and rituals of deference, and low wages found in domestic service accentuated the significance of class and race in their lives.

she'd (mother) ask for them. After a while they were just given to her. And I wore some of those clothes. Especially when Alice (live-in employer) wasn't paying my mom. And my mom was doing day work. I think that was part of her way to supplement the cost of things that I needed.

I (laugh) had to wear that garbage. That happened quite a bit, hand-me-downs, old clothes, second-hand presents, you could tell that they were things that, ash trays and stuff, that they probably got from their rich relatives and couldn't use them so they rewrapped them and gave them to my mom. My mom would bring that stuff home. . . . You know we did pick through those clothes to see what we could use because we damn sure needed them but it wasn't anything that we were proud of, even back then we had pride, we knew where it was coming from. . . . Salvation Army stuff like that, it wasn't no buffalo exchange where it was kind of neat you know like after the sixties to wear these Annie Halls stuff and you know and to have the kind of worn clothes to identify with the down trodden you know, we were not romanticizing being poor. Not at all. No. That stuff was second-hand. We knew it was second-hand. It was worn. It had the smell of someone else's sweat in it no matter how many times you washed it and you didn't—it was a statement about your class. It was a statement about your economic level and it was a statement about who was keeping you there and so we weren't at all happy about it at all.

Romero, *supra* note 14, at 164-65.

109. See ROMERO, *supra* note 50, at 123.

110. While many of the interviewees recognized that domestic service offered employment in a labor market that held limited options for their mothers and attributed employers' generosity for their additional clothing and opportunity, they still felt strongly that their mothers were frequently manipulated. For instance, in the following account, Alex Conrad describes how the employer pressured his mother to work on the holidays by implying she owes a debt.

This judge [employer] I mentioned, he was instrumental in our lives, my brother got a scholarship to college because he pulled strings. My brother's very bright, but it helped that he could pull some strings. But years later, this woman—the judge was dead—this woman [judge's wife] would call my mother and say, “would you come out on Saturday and work.” One time she called, it happened that we were home for the holidays and I got angry and my brothers got angry and, “No. We don't want you to go.” And this woman would invoke, “after all the judge did for you.” Our response was, “tell her that your son the college professor and your son the lawyer said that we want you home for the holidays and not going out cleaning her house.” There was this real tension between just the fact that we felt that early on, but we could play her elitist games now and argue back. My mother felt obligation and she felt bad for this woman.

Romero, *supra* note 14, at 164.

#### IV. WORK, FAMILY, AND CAPITALISM: REPRODUCING THE AMERICAN FAMILY

Affordable childcare remains a private and family problem rather than a public issue requiring a public solution. Upper-middle-class families can afford the personalized service to augment the limited childcare options. As long as the discussions about reproductive labor remain outside the public arena and are characterized as “a battle between the sexes,” our conceptualization of work and family conflict remains stagnant. By contrasting motherhood and childhood in the employer and employee family, the divisions of work and family are revealed as social issues that transcend the purely personal. Both employer and employee families have childcare needs but their purchasing power present completely different options placing the children of domestics at an enormous disadvantage. Stories of domestic service told by workers’ children accentuate the unequal distribution of reproductive labor at the societal level. Social scientists have restricted their analysis to the family unit which does not capture the ramifications that poorly paid domestic labor and childcare have on other sectors of society, particularly the workers’ families. Maintaining the ideal American family depicted in Norman Rockwell drawings, and later updated with two career families and “Take Your Daughter to Work Day,” exist because certain groups pay the price. Caring for children is not priceless in our society but usually relies on the cheapest labor available.<sup>111</sup> Immigration policies and declining welfare benefits assure professionals of a ready pool of low-wage workers.

By hiring private household workers and nannies as substitute mothers under inferior working conditions, employers are purchasing services crucial to both the reproduction of their families and to the social reproduction of privilege. Rather than challenging the everyday rituals that affirm patriarchy in the home, such as the gendered division of household labor, the work is simply shifted to a poorly paid female employee. The system of privileges available to employers and employees determines childrearing and socialization while reproducing class differences. When immigrant mothers employed as live-in nannies are restricted to the most basic “mothering” agenda of sending money home to house, feed, and

111. See Roberts, *supra* note 22, at 70-75 (arguing that welfare and immigration policies ensure a pool of low-wage workers limited to domestic service).

clothe their children, while they simultaneously sell their labor as caregivers to middle-class women engaged in intensive mothering, “quality” time and activities enhancing cognitive development becomes a privilege, not a right. Childcare policies and programs that are not inclusive of all mothers, regardless of class, race, or citizenship, maintain a system of privileges that relies on subordination.