beyond those "naturally" linked by blood and those whose marital coupling "naturally" issues in progeny.

40. Jeffrey Weeks, "Pretended Family Relationships," in *Against Nature: Essays on History, Sexuality, and Identity* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1991), p. 143.
41. For 1970s marriage cases, see *Lesbians, Gay Men, and the Law*.
42. Quoted in Jeffrey Weeks, "Pretended Family Relationships," p. 137.
43. Although courts are moving to the assumption that the mother's lesbianism per se is not a bar to her fitness as a parent, this did not prevent the Virginia Supreme Court in the recent case of *Bottoms v. Bottoms* from ruling that, even so, *active* lesbianism on the part of the mother could be a bar to her fitness.
44. John M. Finnis, "Law, Morality, and 'Sexual Orientation'," *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics, and Public Policy* 9 (1995), 11–39, p. 32.
45. Ibid., pp. 32–33.
46. U.S.C. #534, quoted in Robson, "Resisting the Family," p. 981 ftn. 16.
47. Justice White, in *Bowers v. Hardwick* argued that homosexual sodomy is not protected by the right to privacy because, in his view, the right to privacy protects the private sphere of family, marriage, and procreation and he opined that there was no connection between family, marriage, and procreation on the one hand, and homosexuality on the other.

11

Who Takes Care of the Maid's Children? Exploring the Costs of Domestic Service

Mary Romero

When I was presenting my research on college campuses, students, faculty, and administrators who are the adult children of private household workers sought me out to share their accounts of domestic service. Having never been confronted with the attitudes of their mother's employers in a public setting, they were almost always surprised and shocked to hear their colleagues or professors speak from the standpoint of employers of private household workers. Their initial reaction was a response to employers' paternalizing claims that workers received various hidden benefits from the occupation, such as the opportunities to learn English and the use of modern appliances, or the claims that their cleaning lady was just like "one of the family." Their next response was a recollection of the physically hard work of domestic service, the low pay, and the impact the occupation had on their families. Their stories provide the answer to the question: Who takes care of the maid's children when she is taking care of the mistress's children?

In my book *Maid in the U.S.A.*, I identified elements of paid and unpaid labor and explored the work experiences of Chicana private household workers, particularly the structure of domestic work as manual, mental, and emotional labor. I argued that the work became genderized and racialized through everyday interactions between employer and employee. An analysis of the structure of the work pointed to ways in which women employers shift the burdens of sexism onto women employees. However, the cost of maintaining the privileges of a middle-class, patriarchal lifestyle is

paid not only by private household workers. The women's families also pay a price. This essay explores the impact of domestic service on the workers' families.

I conducted seventeen interviews with persons affiliated with higher education whose mothers worked in domestic service.[1] All of the interviewees' mothers worked as day workers and four also had experience as live-in workers. Nine of the interviewees were women and eight were men. I interviewed six African Americans (four men and two women) and two Caribbean women. The others were Latino; six were Mexican American (five women and one man), and the others were either Salvadorean, Nicaraguan, or Costa Rican (all men). They ranged in age from their early twenties to mid–forties.

Exploring domestic service from the perspective of the workers' children provides insights into the hidden costs of maintaining the white, middle-class, patriarchal ideal of the American family; revealing the domino effects of domestic service on the workers' children. Before describing specific working conditions that affect private household workers' families, I will discuss arrangements workers made for their own child care and household labor.

Reproductive Labor in the Private Household Workers' Families

Like other mothers employed outside the home, private household workers are faced with the problem of child care. Unless older children or relatives are available, the worker has only two alternatives: leave them home alone, or take them to work. William Taylor, an African-American child in the 1950s in Cleveland explains:

> I remember going there [employer's house] and it was a fancy place. Kind of impressive and a lot of work. . . . I just tried to stay out of the way. I only went on days in which, you know, for some reason I couldn't go to school or was home alone.

Six of the interviewees who accompanied their mothers to work recall spending time with the employer and their family. Growing up in Pittsburgh in the '50s, Alex Conrad recalled that he and his brother spent time with his mother's employer participating in a children's television program:

> It was bizarre. This woman was an artist and had a kid's TV show. Saturday morning was her thing, she was one of the co-hosts, and just sort of took us in. We were in the studio audience for this show where she would sit and interview us. We did this kind of thing periodically. We must have done this three or four times. She would pick us up and take us places . . . bought us Christmas trees and it was sort of a fun relationship. I got to do some things that little black kids from the projects didn't get to do, because this white lady would come and take us places.

> And then suddenly it just sort of stopped and I never had any idea of what became of it. My mother's interpretation of it years later was that when we started getting a little more—because my mother was quite frugal and little things, would try to build on things—that suddenly this woman wasn't as interested in us when we weren't as needy. So it was almost as if little successes drove her away.

The interpretation of the employer's action suggests that Alex and her brother no longer functioned to enhance and affirm the employer's self-perception as kind and generous. This explanation is consistent with perceptions reported by other domestics.[2]

There were times when bringing children to work became part of the job. One African-American male and one Latina remembered when their mothers' employers requested that they bring their children to work to play with their children or grandchildren. Edward Miller grew up in South Carolina in the '40s and he recalled an employer who expected him to play with his youngest child. He felt the request reduced him to a toy for the employer's son:

> As a child I met the children of a couple that my mother was working for and the little boy, Danny, who was about, I guess I must of been about eight years old, and Danny was about six and a little spoiled brat, and he—I was his pickaninny and he just wanted to play with me. So anytime he would act up or demand what he wanted, my mother would call me or my father to come and get me, "Danny wants to play with you," so I would come over and I would play with the kid. Danny was the little brat who saw me as a huge big black toy, you know, to play with.

Growing up in Los Angeles in the '70s, Rosa Garcia's mother received similar requests to bring her daughter to work:

> They had a granddaughter and so they asked me to spend the night. The granddaughter asked me to spend the night and I did. And my mom was gonna pick me up the next day cause she had apartments to do in that building and stuff. . . . What a nightmare that was. I really don't know why she [granddaughter] got so mad at me. She was really mad at me. And when her sister came over I could hear them talking about me. So it was just waiting for my mother to pick me up. It was a horrible experience. Really bad.

Two male and one female interviewee were separated from their mothers for a period of time. Edward Miller's mother left their home in the South during an economic crisis to take a job as a live-in domestic in New York. His father was unemployed, and higher-paying domestic jobs in

New York were attractive enough to separate the family for a time. Ricardo Olivas, a Latino growing up in San Francisco in the '50s, was also separated from his mother while she took a live-in position. Although she was a single mother and her relatives had not yet immigrated to the United States, she was able to find affordable care in a boys' school for her two sons:

> When she lived as a maid we had to go to boarding school because she couldn't keep us . . . but we would come and stay occasionally with her.

Like many Caribbean children of live-in workers, Sophia Cliff was separated from her mother until Ms. Cliff received a green card and was able to bring her children to New York City. In Sophia's case, the separation lasted four years.

> I didn't see her [mother] at all because she couldn't travel. We didn't get to see her until she came that year in '89. When she left I had just turned twelve and when she came back, I was sixteen, going on seventeen. . . . I wrote her a lot and she wrote me back sometimes. She send like a lot of barrels and packages and clothes and money and all that stuff because my grandmother doesn't work so she had to send us money and stuff to take care of us.

Live-in conditions had the most drastic impact on the family, usually separating mother and child for months and even years. Day work was less disruptive and provided working mothers with some opportunity to care and nurture their own children.

More than half of the interviewees were cared for by relatives or siblings, particularly African Americans from the South and second-generation Chicanos who were more likely to live near relatives:

> I remember staying with neighbors, with my grandmothers for awhile, with other neighbors and stuff before I started first grade because my mother was working as a domestic. (Edward Miller)

> My uncle and my aunt came from Mexico to live and they moved into one of the back apartments. So I think that was a big help too for her [mother] cause my aunt would take care of my brother. When he'd come home from school she'd give him something to eat and stuff. So that helped out. So it sort of worked out kind of within the family. (Rosa Garcia)

Older children frequently were responsible for caring for their younger brothers and sisters:

> Basically I took care of the kids and stuff. So I was a very young mother myself. Because I was in second grade. I think Tomas [brother] must have been in kindergarten. He was still very young when she [mother] started working. And how it worked out was that we were in school most of the day and then we would get home like at three o'clock and she would get home like at five o'clock. So there was never long periods where she wasn't around. (Rosa Garcia)

If the children were old enough to go to school they frequently spent a few hours alone before their mothers returned from work. During this time, they were expected to contribute to housecleaning. Rosa Garcia described her work and how the allocation of tasks changed to include her father when her mother's work schedule extended into the evenings:

> I was responsible for all the housework. Except my sister Josephina and I would—we would draw little papers of who gets what [the household chores to do]. So she did that. But I did the cooking because she couldn't cook and stuff. And I was like the supervisor. Whatever she cleaned I had to make sure it was right because my mother, given what she does, was a perfectionist about it. And my father would do some of the cooking too occasionally, like if my mother would serve parties at night [and wasn't home to cook].

For Edward Miller, an African American growing up poor during the '50s in the South, the labor not only included housecleaning but also chopping wood:

> But that work had to be done and so you know you thought about it. I mean in class, when school was out at two o'clock, you went right home because you knew you had this work to be done. And of course if it wasn't done, if your parents came home, my mom came home at five, my dad at five-thirty, if this work wasn't done, you caught hell. I mean you got whippings. You actually got whippings so you knew the work that had to be done, the wood had to be chopped. The wood box had to be full.

Reproducing the gendered division of household labor was not limited to the separation between work in the house and outside the house, but extended to the allocation of workload and responsibility. Daughters were more likely to take over the majority of the housecleaning in their mothers' absence. The responsibility of domestic labor, child care, or cooking was never shifted to the male children; however, in several households, the oldest daughter was expected to take over the work and "be the mom." A similar account appears in Elaine Bell Kaplan's writings: "As the oldest daughter I acted as the substitute mother. At the age of 12, I was scolding and bossing my brothers and sisters."[3]

Unlike the employers' children, who were free to participate in after-school activities, most of the domestics' children had to return home and do housework or child care. Growing up in Arizona in the '50s, Antonia Zamora recalled the limitations housework had on her extracurricular activities:

> I tried it [to get involved with activities at school] one year in my eighth grade. And I got into what was our drill team, that's it. They were just starting up a drill team for girls and I tried it for a while but they [parents] kept saying you need to come home because this needs to be done and that has to be done and you can't stay after school to practice, blah, blah, blah. So I missed too many times so I finally dropped out. It wasn't worth it. And then I didn't get involved again with the school until I was in high school and I think I was in my sophomore year.

A recurring theme throughout the interviews was the relationship between the kind of parenting the children received and their mothers' paid housework and child care. Working conditions had an impact not only on the economic status of the employee's family, but also on social relationships within the family. Long workdays filled with strenuous labor resulted in household workers having fewer hours and less energy to mother their own children. Under these conditions, parenting becomes a privilege and is secondary to the basic need to provide financially for the child. Attending school meetings and activities, as well as spending "quality time" with the children, competes with the paid labor household workers do for employers and their families. The major factor was the time their mothers had to spend with them. As Edward Miller noted:

> 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.

Time spent with their mothers decreased with the demands made by employers, and parenting became a privilege. The feeling that they were competing with the employer and her children for their mothers' time remained long after childhood:

> When I go home now and I bump into some of these kids who knew my mother when she was [working]—you know—it's still a first name basis. Oh yes, Darlene, I know your mother, oh she raised me and all that you know. I want to say yeah she raised me too you know. (Edward Miller)

An employers' labor was transferred to the domestic's home in a variety of ways. The most common extension of the work was phone calls requesting advice or information about the whereabouts of employer's belongings. Having the worker do the ironing in her own home not only extended the length of the working day but shifted the cost of equipment and electricity. Workers sometimes cared for employers' children in their homes, especially when the employers left town for the weekend. Requests to do cooking also blurred divisions between work and family. Sal Lujan remembers 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 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 at home.

Although Sal viewed sixty dollars as a lot of money, he did not calculate the value of his mother's time or the expense for providing cooking utensils and equipment.

A few of the interviewees had firsthand experience doing paid housework. Some began working with their mothers as children and continued as adolescents during vacations and summers. Antonia Zamora described the tasks her mother assigned her and the precautions taken:

> I would go with her maybe during the summer. I would go with her maybe an afternoon or a full day. But I still had to stay in an area of the house where the valuables were not there. Like in the kitchen or in the family room or something like that. And yes, I would help clean up a little bit. Like dusting, those kinds of things. But that's basically all. I couldn't roam around the house. I remember that. I couldn't roam around the house. And I had to stay confined to certain areas.

Rosa Garcia recalled that working with her mother in Los Angeles was one way to earn extra money.

> But then I did it pretty consistently during Christmas vacations. And my sister and I, Josephina, the second oldest, would fight about whose turn it was to work with my mom because that's how we would make our Christmas money to buy people gifts.

Male children were more likely to be hired by the employers to mow the lawn and to do other yard work. William Taylor was employed to do yard work in Cleveland in the '50s.

> I used to go and do yard work for people. I wasn't good at it so it didn't last for long. They used to say, "Well your son if he wants to work, he can come over on the weekend and cut the grass," and stuff like that. I did that three or four times. I didn't like it and I didn't want to do it. . . . I remember going to these big houses and the grass—the yards were too large and too much work. I didn't want to do it. I was about in the seventh and eighth grade I remember, doing it.

After leaving home, some found themselves occasionally working with their mothers in order to have more time for family activities. For instance, Luis Chavez described working with his mother while on leave from the Army in the early '80s.

> I went with her to help her clean so we could get it done faster because I wanted to spend more time with her. So I didn't get paid or anything.

All of the interviewees voiced a dislike of domestic service. As Gloria Salas stated:

> It was boring and it was, it really is a lonely job. And when I was younger in junior high I used to go a lot more than I did in high school. And my mom would tell me, "Oh, just dust." Because she never had me do anything harsh, never. Like the worst I did I think was maybe mop the kitchen floor and vacuum. But all she had me do was dusting. And I never liked it because it was hard work and sometimes the employers would be at home.

Luis Chavez felt the stigma of serving others, and attempted to protect his dignity:

> I went into the house. I just detached myself from whose house it was. I didn't put a face to any of the people there. I just followed her instructions as to what she wanted done and did it. Get it out of the way and get out of the house.

Three of the interviewees recalled replacing their mothers' labor when necessary. For instance, Antonia Zamora filled in as a live-in when her mother was called home to nurse her grandfather. Her experiences are typical of situations reported by live-in workers:[4]

> My grandfather got sick during the time when she [mother] was in Malibu [working]. And I graduated and I had to take her place for the next two weeks. It was very lonely [laughs] because all I did was take care of the kids. I didn't have to cook. I mostly took care of the kids. I cleaned up. It was lonely because I didn't have anybody to pal around with or anyone to really talk to. I talked with them once in a while. And there wasn't a daily conversation. You know mostly it was dealing with the children. And that's basically all there was.

Child care and cleaning were not the only kind of labor the children replaced. The two Latino interviewees who grew up in live-in situations in Los Angeles performed emotional labor for the employer. For example, Jim Trevino described the companionship he provided the employer in his mother's absence:

> I think to a large extent I filled a lot of the companion role. She had some boyfriends and sometimes she'd break up and she'd feel really bad. And she likes to go out and she had no one to go out with so I'd go out with her. To movies and stuff. She'd feel bad. She wanted to talk to somebody. She was in therapy from the time I was a teenager on. But sometimes she just wanted to talk to somebody else and she could talk to me a lot. And I'm sure she talked to my mother also when I was away to school [college] or something like that.

Through the paid and unpaid physical and emotional labor that household workers' children did for employers, they served in the reproduction of the middle-class family. The children were ascribed the same status as their mothers, and were treated as a source of cheap labor for housecleaning, yard work, baby-sitting, and companionship. The interaction not only reproduced the gendered relationships in the "American family," but also class and race relations.

Rituals and Everyday Practices in Domestic Service

Almost all of the interviewees expressed discomfort with the interaction their mothers had with the employers' children. They reported that their mothers spent an enormous amount of time with the employers' children and participated in activities they considered parenting, and thus crossed the bounds of paid child care. As Edward Miller concluded:

> She [mother] actually raised their kids. And she knew more about what was going on in their lives than they did.

William Taylor similarly perceived the employer's requests crossing the line into parenting.

> 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.

Conflicts between the worker and her children frequently resulted when the employer increased the amount of child care, sometimes requesting her do the child care in her own home. Luis Chavez recalled that the employer's children occasionally spent the night:

> And now it's taken a strange twist. During football season the admiral [employer] flies in his children for a big football party and while they're at the football games, all of his children's children, the young kids, are at the house and my mother's there baby-sitting them. Still to this day.

Interviewees were concerned with the respect that employers' adolescent children showed when interacting with their mothers:

> I heard stories of how older people, high school age interacted with her. The younger children were more like she was a baby-sitter 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. (Luis Chavez)

> 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. (Edward Miller)

Domestics' children were keenly aware that the behavior their mothers tolerated from the employers' children was not allowed in their own families:

> When the Smiths [employers] weren't home Richard and Jane, Barbara, and Ted [children] would get stoned in their room and my mother would come upstairs and she knew that they were getting high. She smelled the house and she came and said, "Open the windows! Air out the room! And don't leave the house." It was like my mother knew she wasn't going to change them or change the habits or anything. My mother cleaned around their pot. They had a shoe box under the bed with their pot and paper and all the stuff. My mother took it out and cleaned around it and put it back. She never threw it away. Or she'd find it in Ted's pants and she'd go and put where it was suppose to go [in the shoe box under the bed]. . . . I couldn't understand why she just accepted their rules and stuff. (Teresa Guiterrez)

Recognizing the double standard in child-rearing pointed to their mothers' inability to act according to their own values. The experience served to socialize the children to the appropriate behavior within each class and the interpersonal class relationships.

For the most part, employers' children were merely characters in their mothers' stories, but some interviewees remembered meeting the employers' children. Frequently the encounters occurred when the employer drove their mother home or when they were with their fathers picking their mothers up from work. Edward Miller described awkward encounters with the white children his mother was paid to care for:

> No we didn't speak. It was like . . . we wanted to . . . we just didn't know what to say or . . . if we did we would be crossing some invisible boundary that we weren't supposed to. So whether they were boys or girls my age, . . . we just kind of stared at each other and that was it you know. No expression. No smile, no ugly faces. Nothing. Just a kind of look like we were both aliens from another planet. And we could see each other but we couldn't understand each other.

The mothers' interaction with the employers' children served to teach her children class differences. Class distinctions were not limited to material possessions but included the privilege of having constant caring and nurturing, and the "deprivation" of not having someone else pick up after you. Recounting her mother's complaints about the employer's child, Linda Duran pointed to the different class expectations that middle-class parents hold and the extra work those expectations 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 [mother] 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 [the employers children], usually when it affects her work somehow.

Edward Miller told a disturbing story of seeing the employer's son clinging to his mother as she tried to leave work.

> I remember going with my father, I guess I must have 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 downright 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 use 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.

The children of private household workers may not understand the class and racial hierarchy, but they clearly learned their place in it, as well as their parents' place.

The most common type of interaction between domestics' children and employers was nightly telephone calls. Employers and their families called the workers to inquire about misplaced household items, to renegotiate verbal work contracts, to ask advice and to arrange additional hours. For instance, William Taylor knew the range of phone calls his mother received from employers:

> I remember a lot of the younger women that she would work for would call her for child care—help—"look my baby is this, what do I do?" And so I mean it was kind of like "you're the only person I know that can tell me these things." I remember those kinds of calls. There would be on occasion, as I say . . . someone would call and complain.

Mariah Thomas's mother received similar calls:

> The second couple [my mother worked for], when the woman [employer] got pregnant, she kept on calling my mother. "What should I do? What should I eat? da da da da" to the point where my mom just had to say, "Well it's kinda late, do you mind?" When she [employer] was pregnant she went into a panic. She was calling like eleven, twelve o'clock at night. But usually they [employers] called before eight.

Teresa Gutierrez recalled even the employer's children calling her mother:

> I remember when I was younger, Tommy the [employer's] only son, wore glasses and he used to lose his glasses all the time. He used to call my mother to find out if she knew where his glasses were. I am talking—like ten o'clock at night, after my mother had already gone home and four hours after she had left and Tommy is looking for his glasses. There are many times the [employer] misplaced something. They are completely dependent on my mother!

Intrusion on family life was not the only criticism the children had with the phone calls. They frequently heard employers treat their mothers as inferiors. The accounts provide first-hand knowledge of how linguistic deference dominates the occupation:

> They [employers] were very rude. They were just nasty over the phone. "Well where is she?" One woman in particular, I can't even remember what her name is but my mom would just say, "Oh, she's just crabby. She doesn't mean anything by it." We [siblings] couldn't stand her. I think in fact my little sister told one of these old ladies off one time. I was already gone. I had already moved out of the house. But I think she did that. It's like they owned her or something. It's strange. That they could call at any hour and be you know nasty and demand you know to know where she is. It was horrible. (Rosa Garcia)

In phone calls children learned that the employer referred to their mother by her first name while the employer was always "Mrs." A child growing up in Pittsburgh in the '50s, raised to refer to adults as Mr. and Mrs., Alex Conrad was shocked to hear the employer's son refer to his mother in a familiar manner:

> I can remember my reaction of calling my mother at one job she was on and a kid answered the phone and I asked for Mrs. Conrad. I heard this kid, who had to be my age, call my mother by her first name.[5]

Elizabeth Carter grew up in New York in the '50s and heard her mother treated as inferior:

> I don't remember them [employer] calling her Mrs. Carter at all. It was always Jessie and she was always the girl. I remember her saying she didn't like that when they called her the girl or my girl—that's the sense of attachment that they tried to make out of it.

Latino children learned that employers changed their mothers' names for their convenience. Some employers anglicized names:

> This is such a joke with my sister. We'd always say, "Is Molly home?" It's Amalia [mother's name]. But of course they can't pronounce it so they call her Molly. (Rosa Garcia)

Gloria Salas noted the common employer practice of referring to all Latina domestic workers as Maria.

> Judith [employer] would call Mom Maria. My mom would always say, "My name is Laura, not Maria." And I remember one time I went to go help at Judith's place and she goes, "Maria, how's school?" And I immediately told her, "My name's Gloria, not Maria."

Phone calls revealed other aspects of the relationship, exposing manipulative aspects of the interpersonal dynamics in the employee-employer relationship. For instance, Alex Conrad was present when an employer called his mother to request that she work on the holidays. The employer pressured Alex's mother by implying she owed her 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 [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 brother got angry and said, "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.

The most widely practiced ritual in domestic service is giving discarded items to employees. All but one interviewee had memories of their mothers bringing home old clothes, furniture, books or leftover food. Several interviewees, like Jim Trevino, noted the importance of the old clothes during periods of economic crisis.

> 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 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. (Jim Trevino)

In the following quote, Edward Miller captures the reality of needing the clothes, while recognizing the symbolism of old clothes from employers who paid low wages and no benefits:

> I had to wear that garbage [laugh]. That happened quite a bit, hand-me-downs, old clothes, secondhand presents. You could tell that they were things—ashtrays 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. 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 Hall stuff, and to have the kind of worn clothes to identify with the downtrodden. We were not romanticizing being poor. Not at all. No. That stuff was secondhand. We knew it was secondhand. It was worn. It had the smell of someone else's sweat in it no matter how many times you washed it. 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.

Hidden Costs of Reproducing Families

The experiences of the domestics' children raise several issues affecting families in middle-class as well as working-poor households with mothers employed outside their homes. The time children and mothers share together during the week may average as little as two or three hours a day; and during the week, as well as the weekend, some of this time is filled with mothers doing cooking, laundry, cleaning, shopping, and other family chores. In both classes, a child may be expected to help her or his mothers in her "double day"; and the work is frequently accomplished without the assistance of paternal labor. Affordable child care is a problem for all employed mothers, particularly for women working full-time, or overtime, or having long commutes. Arranging family schedules around an eight- to ten-hour workday and a four- to five-hour schoolday, with doctor appointments and school activities is a challenge for working mothers in manufacturing, service, and professional occupations. Middle-class working mothers may even take their children to work with them or arrange for them to be hired for the summer. However, domestic labor and child care are shaped by the economic status of the family, resulting in significant

differences that reproduce the different class positions of working-poor and middle-class families.

While not all middle-class families hire private household workers, their purchasing power alters the fundamental nature of the employed mothers' "double day," as well as the quality of work that her children do. For example, laundry is drastically different when a family owns a washer and dryer, has dress shirts washed and ironed and dress clothes dry cleaned at the cleaners. The task is qualitatively altered if the employed mother has to take clothes to the laundromat or washes clothes by hand. Asking children to help with the laundry may also not involve the same experience. Removing the clothes from the dryer and folding them while watching TV or doing homework at home is different from waiting in a crowded laundromat for the next available dryer. The different options available for preparing meals similarly illustrate how family purchasing power shapes the work. Unlike employed mothers among the working poor, middle-class employed mothers have a wide variety of options that range from cooking a meal from scratch, to using prepackaged food, buying take-out, or eating at a restaurant.

Child care options are also significantly different. The quantity and quality of licensed and unlicensed day care facilities and home care arrangements are largely determined by the parent's income. More centrally and often overlooked, middle-class neighborhoods are specifically constructed with recreational facilities that are safe and available; poor neighborhoods are not. In middle-class neighborhoods, there are parks and bike paths, school yards are safe and supervised after hours, and it is easier for neighbors to "keep an eye on" the children. Middle-class parents have the disposable income to purchase a wide range of educational and social activities, such as lessons (tennis, swimming, piano, dancing), clubs, and associations. Low-income families do not have the money to afford these educational and social activities. Leaving older children in charge of their younger siblings for a few hours in the afternoon is an option used by many working mothers regardless of class; however, the decision to do so in a high crime area is more likely to be made because the family has no other options. For the working poor these are not cost-benefit decisions but rather zero-sum games.

Although an increasing number of middle-class families are hiring private household workers to clean their house two to four times a month, many middle-class families choose not to spend their disposable income in this way. Families not purchasing cleaning services must distribute the household labor, and this includes the children. Based on resources and the value system of the family, children may even "earn" an allowance for their contribution. The inclusion of children in the division of household labor is sometimes used as a lesson to teach responsibility. However, middle-class families are not likely to assign cooking, cleaning, or child care duties *at the expense of* school or other educational and sport activities. Nor are their work demands likely to jeopardize middle-class notions of childhood. When families depend on the reproductive labor of children, issues surrounding the division of labor are not optional and may indeed take priority over extracurricular activities.

The options of having children help with housework, and the related issue of "taking the children to work," are central in my analysis. They reveal cleavages and critical symbolic differences between working mothers in white-collar positions or the professions who ask their daughters to pitch in and help do the vacuuming, dusting, and scrubbing the kitchen floors, and working mothers who clean and scrub houses for a living. Daughters of domestics see their mothers' labor and perceive domestic work as a real possibility in their own life. Simultaneously, they are deeply aware of the shame and stigma attached to the occupation. For these working mothers, "taking their daughters to work" carries very different messages from working mothers employed as secretaries, much less college faculty, lawyers, or managers. For the latter, colleagues welcome the children and encourage them to follow in their mother's footsteps. Daughters of the middle class are unlikely to observe their mothers on their hands and knees scrubbing someone else's floor, much less being patronized or treated as inferior. In these ways "taking our daughters to work" has multiple and contradictory meanings; it assists in the reproduction of class relations. It is an empowering event for some, and a ritual of degradation for others. Children's memories of their mothers' employment forces us to look more closely at the impact that parental working conditions have in shaping, limiting, and creating options for doing the everyday work of maintaining the family.

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Notes

1. While the sample is not necessarily representative of the children of private household workers, interviews with adults who have experienced social mobility capture the "view from inside" as well as a "view from both sides." For a more detailed description of the experiences of a child "living in" with her mother, see Romero, "Cuentos From a Maid's Daughter: Stories of Socialization and Cultural Resistance," *Latino Studies Journal* 4, No. 3 (1993), 11–22. "Life as the Maid's Daughter: An Exploration of the Everyday Boundaries of Race, Class and Gender," in *Feminisms in the Academy*, ed. Domna C. Stanton and Abigail J. Steward (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), pp. 157–179.
2. See Shellee Colen, "With Respect and Feelings: Voices of West Indian Domestic Workers in New York City," in *All American Women: Lines That Divide and Ties That Bind*, ed. Johnetta B. Cole (New York: Free Press, 1986), pp. 46–70; Judith Rollins, *Between Women* (Philadelphia: Temple University

Press, 1985); Mary Romero, *Maid in the U.S.A.* (New York, Routledge, 1992); Julia Wrigley, *Other People's Children* (New York: Basic Books, 1995); Bonnie Thornton Dill, *Across the Boundaries of Race and Class: An Exploration of Work and Family among Black Female Domestic Servants* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994); Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Issei, Nisei, War Bride* (Philadelphia:Temple University Press, 1986).

3. Jacklyn Cock also comments on the mother-daughter relationship among domestics and the pressure placed on the female children to assume the responsibility. She notes that this frequently forced the eldest female child to "relinquish the opportunity of going to school and stay home." *Maids and Madams: A Study in the Politics of Exploitation* (Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1980).
4. See Grace Chang, "Undocumented Latinas: The New 'Employable Mothers'," in *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency*, ed. Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Grace Chang, and Linda Rennie Forcey (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 259–286; Colen, "With Respect and Feelings"; Romero, *Maid in the U.S.A.*; Wrigley, *Other People's Children.*
5. In her study of domestics and employers in the South, Susan Tucker interviewed several daughters. Martha Calvert, the daughter of a domestic worker, recounted a story similar to Alex Conrad's. "I couldn't understand why some woman that called my mamma—and I could tell by her voice, she got to be younger than my mother—called Mama by her first name. I got a spanking in the first grade for that—because I corrected a white lady that called my mama Joanne. I told her, 'You sound the age of one of my sisters, so I think my mother's name is Mrs. Perdue to you.'" *Telling Memories among Southern Women: Domestic Workers and Their Employers in the Segregated South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), p. 39.

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