

### Short Paper #3: “Global Care Chains and Emotional Surplus Value”

Arlie Hochschild argues that traditional scholarship of globalization has failed to take into account linkages “between global trends and individual lives” (Hochschild 2000, 132). Building upon studies of globalization through the lens of gender, Hochschild specifically wishes to supplement existing literature by examining how globalization has affected the organization of caring labor.

Hochschild claims that globalization has created global care chains, described as “series of personal links between people across the globe based on the paid or unpaid work of caring” (131). These chains emerge of out a desire by carers — typically women in Third World countries — to combat domestic economic insecurity that global development entails (133). These carers migrate to another country to have access to more jobs and therefore more security. These women typically have another carer, whether it be family or otherwise, look after their own children back home (136). The First World mothers of their charges are typically professional women, pushed into a “male-career pattern” where caring labour is seen as an impediment to professional development (141). As such, at the top of these care chains are men, who may refuse to stay home or cannot make a family wage on their own.

While these chains entail the extraction of surplus labour value, they also entail the extraction of surplus emotional value. Instead of being extracted as a resource like labor, that the emotional labour carers typically have reserved for their children becomes displaced, diverted to their charges (135). This aspect of care goes unseen because care, like a commodity, becomes fetishized, seen as a thing in itself rather than part of a network of relations (135). Thus, carers are doubly exploited in these chains.

Hochschild states that we should view global care chains as “critical modernists,” being appreciative of the access to wages they bring to carers while simultaneously realizing their exploitative nature (142). Remedies to these negatives, she suggests, may include altering migration policies to allow carers to be with their children with them or subsidizing travel for carers to return home more frequently (143). Other possible solutions include increasing the value of caring labour by shifting cultural understandings around it, as well as involving men in the care of their children (143-44).

Hochschild posits that the critical modernist favors development in some form or another, and thus must focus on making the migration that comes along with global development humane. But does this not skirt the issue of global development being unstable and inhumane in the first place? Focusing on sustainable global economic development could help to eliminate issues of migrations of necessity and therefore the economic exploitation implicit in care chains. This alone would not solve issues of distribution in care labor, however, as negative cultural implications surrounding it would still be in place. Thus, a combination of encouraging men to participate in care labour, whether through policy or other cultural shifts, as well as movements towards sustainable economic development models, would get to the root of both issues: fallouts from development, as well as inequities in care labour.

[Word Count: 494]

#### Work Cited

Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 2000. “Global Care Chains and Emotional Surplus Value.” In Will Hutton and Anthony Giddens, ed. *On the Edge: Living With Global Capitalism*. London: Vintage, 130-146.