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Paying for Care

Edited by Anna Triandafyllidou
and Sabrina Marchetti

EMPLOYERS, AGENCIES AND IMMIGRATION

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Employers, Agencies and Immigration

Paying for Care

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From Anna to Patty who often teaches more than what books can say

*From Sabrina to the people in Reggio Emilia who opened their homes
and their hearts to me*

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Chapter 1

The Employers' Perspective on Paid Domestic and Care Work

Anna Triandafyllidou and Sabrina Marchetti

Employers of paid domestic workers and home-carers are not employers like any others. They are not entrepreneurs or company owners. Very often, they have not hired anyone else in the past, nor have they received any training in business management. For most of them, employment dynamics are totally new, seen from the position of employers since normally they are or have been also workers, and they are themselves hired by someone else. In some instances, they are not directly paying the people working in their households, but this is done through an agency of which they become 'customers'. A further complication is that in some cases they might not pay these workers out of their own income, as happens often in elderly care where the salary of the worker is generally covered by the pension and the savings of the care-receiver, but still there are those who hire the care-givers and manage their work.

The perspective of these kinds of employers, who they are, their expectations and their values, are the object of this book. We look at all kinds of typologies: employers of nannies and housekeepers, relatives of dependent elders who need a care-giver, host-parents of international au pairs and finally clients of agencies that provide home-cleaning and care services. The majority of them currently employ migrant workers, but we are also interested in those who choose instead to hire their co-nationals for these jobs. In so doing, we adopt a variety of approaches, from policy oriented to narrative analysis, and we highlight the difference between employers in various European contexts since the realities of these jobs might be different.

The aim of this book is thus to illustrate who are these employers, and what is the specificity of their perspectives on migrant domestic and care work in contemporary Europe. This brings an important contribution to the debate that has developed during the last 20 years in international academia. Several scholars have investigated the phenomenon taking place in the increasing number of households that employ migrants in order to perform tasks related to the care of the house, of children, elders and other dependent persons. This debate intertwines broad research fields such as those on welfare, ageing and family, on gender, race/ethnicity and inequality and finally on globalisation and migration regimes.

So far, this scholarship has emphasised the importance of the international division of reproductive labour and of the 'global care chains'. For instance,

scholars such as Rhacel Salazar Parreñas (2001, 2008), Bridget Anderson (2000), Pei Chia Lan (2006) and Nicole Constable (1997) who show how gender and ethnicity affect the formation of domestic work as a labour opportunity for Filipinas on a global scale. Along the same lines, Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild (2002) have argued that this system has brought migrant women to be seen as those who embody 'traditional' gendered skills. Maurizio Ambrosini in his most recent book (2013) has analysed the 'invisible welfare' that migrant domestic workers provide for families and which covers for the gaps created out of the ageing of society and a decline in welfare services. Scholars such as Eleonore Kofman (2012), Fiona Williams (2012), Nicola Yeates (2009), Raffaella Sarti (2007) and Helma Lutz (2011), together with Sigrid Metz-Gockel, Mirjana Morokvasic-Muller and A. Senganata Munst (2008), have shown how the interconnection between gender and migration regimes shapes the experience of workers in this specific labour sector, in Europe and beyond, especially in the case of undocumented workers (Triandafyllidou 2013). These studies also show the importance of the fact that more often than not both the employer and the employee are women. This creates important dynamics of inequality where class, ethnicity and gender become intertwined, while it may also trigger feelings of mutual understanding and solidarity in terms of 'common' gender roles that have to be performed in the family context.

However, we believe that within this debate, the 'demand side' of paid domestic and care work still requires further elaboration. In fact, we are interested in bringing new analysis to a debate that takes employers as the object of analysis per se and which has been already developed by authors such as Helma Lutz (2011), Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001), Claudia Alemani (2004), Bridget Anderson (2007), Lena Näre (2012) and Catrin Lundström (2012) in particular. Researching the standpoint of employers is very important in order to highlight the hierarchy between women employers and employees, as rooted in class and race/ethnicity inequalities of contemporary societies (see Cock 1989; Palmer 1989; Ray and Qayum 2009; Rollins 1985; Marchetti 2006). Importantly, employers talk about their competition with employees, especially for the case of employers of nannies and elderly carers, but also for those who worry about the possible seduction of their husbands from the side of the domestics (Lan 2006; Constable 1997). Finally, the perspective of employers is very important when talking about the transformation of welfare, families' needs and organisations (Vega Solis 2009).

It is by building on this debate that this book wants to offer the first edited volume, with intra-European comparisons, entirely devoted only to the figure of employers, with the aim to contribute not only to the specific debate on migrant domestic and care work, but also to understanding the response of middle-class European households to the changing intertwine between family life, the restructuring of welfare provision and the regulations pertaining to migrant work.

In the rest of this introduction, we elaborate on the debates that illustrate the context in which the experience of employers takes place. We focus on three main issues: the marketisation of care; the interconnection between family life

and homes becoming workplaces; and finally the relationship between policies on welfare and on migration in Europe. In conclusion, we will briefly outline the structure of the book and the contribution brought by the authors of the chapters.

The Care We Pay For

Before entering into the discussion on who are the employers, it is important to define what is the kind of work that they are buying from their employees. In other words, what is this 'care' that employers are willing to, although in different ways, pay for?

The employment of free or enslaved servants for care and cleaning chores goes back in history for a very long time (see Rollins 1985). Initially, however, masters did not actually 'pay' for the work of their servants but rather they provided them food and shelter. The monetarisation of care and domestic work is an increasing reality, as witnessed in the United States in the Seventeenth century (Hoerder 2014). This was the time in which slaves indeed started to be sold and therefore their workforce started to be something that employers needed to quantify. In other words, this is the time in which employers needed to assess the value of the care that they were buying, and thus also probably be more clear-minded about what they were actually buying.

The context in which employers live today is of course very different. In Europe, the monetarisation of domestic and care work has been in place since the nineteenth century (see Sarti 2007). Also, importantly, in countries like Italy, there has been a debate on remuneration for housewives, which takes into account their crucial role in the wellbeing of their families, something that had important repercussions on the valorisation of reproductive work in general (Repetto 2004).

Along these transformations, several attempts have been made to spell out what are the tasks that employers might expect their workers to perform. The recent ILO Convention n. 189 on the rights of domestic workers is only the last of these attempts in which a 'definition' of paid domestic work is provided by simply saying that domestic work 'means work performed in or for a household or households' (ILO 2011). Galotti (2009, p. 11) notes that it encompasses two broad areas of family care (whether for elderly or children) and household maintenance at large. The precise configuration of what domestic work means indeed varies from country to country.

In this volume, the emphasis is very much on the employer's attempt to buy something which goes beyond the performance of material chores, and which rather refers to their expectations and desires for the wellbeing of their households. This includes the cleaning and tidying of their living spaces, washing and ironing clothes, cooking meals, taking care of pets and plants as well as tending to children and assisting elderly family members. All these tasks equally affect the person that performs them as well as those who benefit from their accomplishment (Gutierrez-Rodriguez 2010). In other words, the buying of all this kind of work carries along an

important emotional dimension, which leads us to group them all together as ‘care’. Thus, as in the title of this book, we talk about ‘paying for care’ with reference to important stories that have to do with the monetarisation of all tasks that employers require from the people they employ, being this washing the dishes or playing with their children, for the wellbeing of their homes and their household members.

The relationship between domestic and care work and intimate life is of the utmost importance. Arlie Hochschild (2012) sees in the buying of care service a palpable example of what generally happens along the expansion of the service economy. She talks about the ‘outsourcing of the self’ to refer to a fundamental psychological dimension in employers’ choices and expectations (see Chapter 6 by Marchetti, this volume). Also Eileen Boris and Rhacel Parreñas (2010) devote particular attention to employment in the domestic and care work fields, in their volume on ‘intimate labours’. Viviane Zelizer (2010) talks about an ‘economy of care’ to refer to the specific market created by the delegation on others of tasks otherwise understood as intimate. Since this is a market based on the selling of ‘relational services’ (Cranford and Miller 2013), the figure of those who buy these services is more often seen as the one of ‘customers’, rather than, as we emphasise in this volume, of ‘employers’.

Homes as Workplaces

In the debate on migrant domestic work, the importance of homes as workplaces has been widely discussed. Brenda Yeoh and Shirlena Huang (1999) see homes where migrant domestic workers are employed as ‘contact zones’, while Janet Momsen (1999) talks about ‘culture-contact situations’. These scholars demonstrate how, in domestic and caring practices, employers are constantly negotiating with their employees and other members of their families’ shared notions about gender which find their spatial context in their homes.

The home is a very special place of employment where the boundaries between the private and public are continuously renegotiated (Davidoff 2003). Homes are very much shaped by national culture and identities. Alison Blunt and Robin Dowlings (2006) talk about homes where discourses and practices related to the nation are reproduced. In what they call ‘lived and metaphorical experiences of home’, people create a sense of identity which then calls for an analysis of the power relations which make of homes an ‘intensely political’ site.

It is in this ‘politicised’ domestic space that the relationship between migrant domestic workers and their employers evolves. Employers are seeking in the workers someone who is able to take up domestic and caring practices, such practices are regulated by hidden principles and organised along axes of power. The ‘home’ is the site where those practices take place and identities are shaped, contested and reshaped over time.

In the perspective of this relationship, the house is considered not simply as a ‘space’, but rather as a ‘place’, that is a specific location where subjects’ experience

takes shape. The difference between 'space' and 'place' is emphasised by Doreen Massey who defines a 'place' as the result of particular interactions and of the meeting of certain social relations, which occur in that specific location (Massey 1994). For this reason, when looking at the interactions between employers and employees in the domestic sphere, one should see a 'place' rather than a 'space' being a specific location where different forces interact. The domestic 'place' where these encounters take place, practically and metaphorically, reflects the structure of the 'social space', where different subjects occupy and take up different positions. In this view, the organisation of these houses as workplaces is crossed by boundaries separating the upper-class in opposition to the working-class, and the European citizens versus the migrant (often undocumented) worker.

The debate on 'homes' as workplaces is very intertwined with the one on the role of women inside their households and the transformation in their commitment towards cleaning tasks. Already in 1994, in their classic book *Servicing the Middle Class*, Nicky Gregson and Michelle Lowe acknowledge that:

In certain middle-class households cleaning is no longer being seen as a suitable use of middle-class women's time-space. ... Social transformations ... have restructured women's relations to the home in ways that have altered their traditional ties to domesticity (Gregson and Lowe 1994, p. 24).

We are talking here about the rejection of those commitments towards reproductive work which have to do with the maintenance of the homes themselves. Middle-class women are ready to dismiss the low-level abjected tasks (Kristeva 1980; Douglas 1979) in order to achieve the ideal of respectable women (Mosse 1985).

Bridget Anderson suggests the image of Dr Jekyll and Mrs Hyde to represent two women united by interdependent representations. The domestic workers represent physicality and dirtiness because of the tasks they accomplish, while the employers confirm their superiority regarding femininity and managerial skills (Anderson 2000). The European middle-class employers, in Anderson's view, take the role of organising domestic work: they carefully choose the best employee; they assign her the tasks to fulfil and give her instructions about the education of the children. Therefore, the employers succeed in being domestic without being dirty (Ibid.).

This new model of femininity is closely related to the emergence, in contemporary Europe, of a very interesting female figure. She has been called the new traditionalist model that, as Leslie says, corresponds to the woman that 'was searching for something to believe in and look what she found: her husband, her children, herself' (Leslie 1993, p. 308). In fact, employers place a lot of effort in taking care of their house and in their family, which likely aims at the reproduction of a traditional household.

Thus while the entrance of women in the paid work sector outside the home is ever increasing, the tensions and gaps that this leaves by the 'care gap' that it creates do not disappear. While they are filled by migrant domestic workers, the transition to a commodified care is not as smooth as it may seem from a simple economic

transaction perspective (the employer buys a service, the worker provides for the service, the need is addressed). This book emphasises the emotional and value tensions that this commodification of care creates for employers, particularly women, as well as on the new job arrangements that emerge out of the need to regulate the domestic work sector and help match offer with demand.

The issue is even more complicated in the case of elderly carers which individual families have to employ in order to compensate for the lack of public welfare provisions, as we will further discuss in the next section.

Welfare and Migration

The debate that has developed around care services and welfare has increasingly looked at four actors: the market, the state, the non-profit sector and the family (Kofman and Raghuram 2009). The employers whose experience we analyse in this volume belong to the first one of these four categories, covering the demand side of the private market of care services. However, they are also part of the last one of these four institutions, the family, since they are usually the relatives of those who are receiving the care services, especially in the case of care for elders, disabled and children. This book thus sheds light on the difficult positioning of employers as simultaneously market and family actors in the context of the changing welfare arrangements in contemporary Europe. The focus on these two dimensions, the market and the family, is very timely in relation to the evolution of national welfare towards privatisation and re-familiarisation, elements which are unsettling the borders between the different European welfare regimes as Esping-Andersen (1990, 1996) describes.

Care is probably the welfare sector which has been most privatised in Europe, in comparison to health, education, pension systems and so forth (Daly 2012; Ferrera 2005; Graziano, Jaquot and Palier 2011). The title of this book, *Paying for Care*, does reflect the condition of most European households that are asked to use their own family budget in order to purchase market-based services which were previously provided by public nurseries, rest homes and hospitals, or which were performed by members of the household itself (usually women). Once again, employers find themselves torn between the demands from family and the market when assessing the care which is needed and the resources available to afford it, they either buy care or mobilise their own time and energy to provide care. In other words, there is a very thin line separating the role of these employers as family care-givers or market-actors when they can afford to delegate this same caregiving to a paid worker. In this case, employers have to juggle meagre welfare allowances or service provisions for elderly or children with rising care needs (especially of the elderly as Europe's population is ageing), while women are increasingly engaged in full-time paid work outside the home.

Scholars explain how states have withdrawn from the field of personal care provision and have kept only a regulatory function. They are providing the

normative framework and the working regulations that allow private companies or individuals to offer their services inside the households.¹ The way European states are doing that changes greatly from country to country. In some countries there is a strong intervention by the state in supporting employers to buy the service thanks to a monetarisation of allowances for households with disabled and seriously ill members, or for households with young children. In some other cases, the state intervenes in supporting the functioning of the market by emphasising the role of agencies. This is the case, for example, of the voucher system in Belgium which is analysed in this volume by Beatriz Camargo (Chapter 8).

Another important field of state policies for the private market of care services has to do with the issue of migration. The 'paying for care' entails indeed the search for a cheap and flexible workforce which is frequent to find amongst migrants, women especially, who are increasingly leaving their countries in order to find occupation in this specific sector. The reasons behind these tendencies have been widely analysed by the scholarship on the international division of reproductive labour that we have presented at the beginning of this introduction. The experiences of migrant domestic and care workers illustrate the divarication of care commitments between women from different parts of the world with women in the wealthy countries delegating the more menial and heavy tasks to migrants coming from poorer regions. This is especially so for women migrating from Asia towards Europe, Northern America and the Middle East, as well as for Eastern Europeans going towards Western Europe. Many of these women have caring commitments themselves towards their children or elderly parents which they are delegating to others, as is characteristic of transnational households.

State policies may strongly influence the employment of migrants for care and domestic work (Ruhs and Anderson 2010). Next to sending countries, also some receiving countries in Europe have adopted a mechanism to channel migrants into this specific occupation. Italy is a very well-known example for this tendency. In their regular decrees setting the limits of yearly on-call migrants' quotas, the Italian government provides a preferential quota for domestic and care workers. Countries of origin receive different allocations of vacancies depending on the agreements that Italy has in place. Also, in the regularisation procedures for undocumented migrants which Italy has launched in recent years, domestic and care workers received preferential treatment, thus favouring what Lena Näre (2013) calls the transnational familism of the Italian care sector.

Other countries have strongly contrasted this tendency instead. They are reluctant to welcome foreigners in this sector and it is therefore almost impossible to receive a residence permit when you are a migrant doing domestic and care work (Triandafyllidou 2013). Sarah Van Walsum explains that the internal pushes that put the Netherlands in this tough position against migrant domestic workers was an attempt to preserve this sector for working-class Dutch women or long-time

1 On the difference between individual and organisation-based provision of care services across Europe, see Barbara Da Roit and Bernard Weicht (2013).

residents (Van Walsum 2011). In some of these countries, however, the demand for full-time paid domestic work has been channelled into the au pair scheme, which is increasingly popular amongst families with young children that do not have other resources for the employment of foreigner workers (see Cox 2007; Isaksen 2010). This scheme will be discussed in the last two chapters of this book on the basis of interviews with Norwegian and British host-parents of international au pairs by Guro Kristensen and Lenka Pelechova.

These few examples show the resilient role of the state in the provision of home-care and domestic services. This takes a particularly interesting shape in the case of former socialist countries where the rampant growth of private services is sometimes contrasted by institutional attempts to direct the demand-offer dynamics to promote the occupation of unemployed local women, as in the case of Slovenia which is discussed in this book (see Chapter 10).

Contents of the Book

The book is divided into three parts. The first part entails a comparative analysis of the subjectivities of the employers and of the dynamics of the employer-employee relationship in the home, taking into account the different needs of different types of families. The contributions included in this part adopt qualitative methodologies, borrowing from social anthropology, sociology and gender studies. They focus on the negotiations that take place in the employer-employee relationship and the power relations that are inherent, even if often invisible, at first glance.

In Chapter 2, Maurizio Ambrosini reflects on the nature of the employment relationship between contracts, emotions and mutual obligations in a country such as Italy with a large care deficit and an increasing elderly population. Ambrosini introduces the notion of 'care-managers' to typify the profile of people who employ migrant workers in order to take care of their elderly parents and speaks of an invisible welfare regime that emerges silently to cover for the gaps of the formal welfare system.

The two chapters that follow by Pilar Goñalons Pons (Chapter 3) and by Anna Kordasiewicz (Chapter 4) examine the intersection of class in the personal and gendered relationship that exists between the employer and the migrant domestic worker/care-provider. Different views of equality and gender roles in Spain and Poland provide for different contextual understandings of this relationship. The Spanish employers value the contribution of migrant domestic workers in making their career outside the home possible, while the Polish employers view the notion of equality as problematic and express a sense of 'guilt' in employing a domestic worker. Both chapters deal with the unresolved tension between family and work in everyday life within a contemporary context of changing gender roles and dynamics.

The following two chapters by Cristina Vega Solis (Chapter 5) and by Sabrina Marchetti (Chapter 6) introduce a new element in the analysis of the employer-employee relationship; notably when it is the elderly family member that is

being looked after. Vega Solis speaks about the dilemmas entailed in a triangular relationship between paid care-providers, care-recipients and families of the latter, from the perspective of the daughters of the care-recipients. Marchetti delves into the subjective perception of the work arrangement by the relatives of the care-receivers and the intertwining of the practical (working hours, full-time care) with the emotional concerns (that the service received will 'make mum happy'). The intimacy of the employer-employee relationship and the special nature of these 'care employers', as radically different from our usual understanding of the employer, come centre stage in these two chapters.

The second part of the book shifts the focus to the reorganisation of welfare and care arrangements that is currently taking place in several European countries in a combined effort to tackle informal work in the domestic and home-care sector, while also inventing mechanisms that match the labour supply and demand. These policies, often well-intentioned in their aim of providing a level playing field for employers and migrant domestic workers alike, only partly achieve their objectives. Indeed they are often faced with the contradiction between the personalised and intimate nature of domestic work and the need to create a professional profile and a job category for the benefit of both buyers and providers of the service. This part of the book starts with a discourse analysis of the debate around the Austrian reform of this sector, which has so far concealed the focus on the family or of the private individual as 'employer'. Bernhard Weicht (Chapter 7) shows how the policy discourse actually takes the Austrian citizen out of the equation of the employer-employee relationship.

Chapter 8 by Beatriz Camargo on Belgium scrutinises the 'voucher' system introduced in slightly different ways in the country with the aim of encouraging employers to declare their migrant domestic workers, pay the necessary welfare contributions and also receive tax relief when doing so. Chapter 9 by Adéla Souralová, instead, examines the Czech case looking at the emergence of job placement agencies in the paid childcare sector. Here the emphasis is less on the native or foreign nationality of the care worker but rather on the transformation of the employer-employee relationship within the sector. The placement agency emerges as the employer that guarantees a 'professional' service to the customer (the family) and holds all contacts with the employee (the care-provider).

Chapter 10, by Živa Humer and Majda Hrženjak, carries this issue further by looking at a concrete policy experiment that has taken place in Slovenia where the state has become the intermediary between the family as employer and the home-care worker/cleaner, subsidising this type of work as well as providing a concrete legal framework. While the aim of the intervention was to mobilise long-term unemployed women, the choice of the sector (notably that of domestic work) raises important issues on whether a state intervention is an appropriate policy measure in a sector that is characterised by intimate and individualised employment relationships.

Finally, the third section of the book concentrates on an emerging field in the wider area of migrant domestic and care work, looking at the transformation of the

au pair scheme in the UK and Norway. Lenka Pelechova, in Chapter 11, considers au pair employment in the UK, focusing on the perspective of the employers and their effort to balance work and family life while keeping some 'free time' for themselves. The case of au pairs is an interesting example of similar dynamics (like those at play in the case of migrant domestic workers more generally) as the boundary between employment and free time, the informality of the arrangement and the practical as well as emotional aspects of the work are, here too, closely intertwined. The same issue is taken up by Guro Korsnes Kristensen (Chapter 12) in her own qualitative study of Norwegian families' experiences with home-cleaning and au pairing, paying special attention to inequalities within the rather informal and flexible arrangements of domestic work, which is often converted into informal domestic labour. These chapters look at both the work-related issues such as: where does the au pair 'experience' stop and real domestic work begins, what is the difference between employing a home-cleaner and hosting an au pair and so on. The chapter also examines the value tensions that these families experience: their commitment to equality and to being 'foster parents'; for an au pair vs their actual need for help in cleaning and caring; and the practical arrangement of having an au pair helper or employing a home-cleaner.

In the concluding chapter (Chapter 13), Anna Triandafyllidou and Sabrina Marchetti draw upon the new findings emerging from the individual chapters to discuss two main issues. First, they consider views and conceptions of gender roles (within the family and between the employer and the worker) and related notions of family, care, domestic work, comparing among the different countries and identifying, if possible, national patterns. Second, they reflect on how the welfare systems of the different countries studied in this volume affect the role of employers and the related labour market and other policy arrangements. This concluding chapter thus provides for a combined welfare and gender-sensitive typology of the countries and the 'type of employers' studied here, which will have also a wider validity for making sense of domestic work and care arrangements in Europe today.

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