ABSTRACT: This article examines the case of Filipina women that substitute for Filipina migrant workers. Through semi-structured interviews in the Philippines this study draws attention to the experiences of the ‘stand-in’ women and demonstrates how the organisation of care in the transnational families is based on a system whereby female family members or friends are ascribed with a ‘natural’ responsibility to become social reproductive stand-ins for the migrated mothers. In the global transfer of social reproduction, hierarchies of women are maintained, based on intersectional power structures such as ethnicity, race, nationality, age, and class. But the stand-in women in the three-tier transfer of reproductive labour, or global care chain, do not always occupy one single position, but actually shift in time and place between ‘the middle’ and ‘the bottom’ of the hierarchy. Regardless of location, Filipina women remain under the burden of their gendered duties and whether working abroad as domestic workers or acting as local stand-ins, they have to take on both local and global social reproductive work. They become the breadwinner in their families, at the same time as they are ascribed natural responsibility for households and families, as wives, mothers and stand-ins ‘at home’.

KEYWORDS: social reproduction; migrant worker; stand-in women; substitute mothering; the Philippines

TITLE: THE NANNY’S NANNY
Filipina Migrant Workers and the ‘Stand-In’ Women at Home

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Gina\(^1\) gets up early in the morning to prepare breakfast. After breakfast the two boys she takes care of leave for school and Gina tends to the children’s disabled aunt. Then she goes to the market, prepares and serves lunch to the children and aunt and then she has a short rest. After her rest, she continues with the household chores and cares for the children and aunt until the evening. Gina is 65 years old, widowed, mother to nine children, has 31 grandchildren and lives in on the island of Mindoro in the Philippines. Gina functions as a full-time ‘stand-in’ to Emily, an Overseas Filipina Worker (OFW). Emily, a single mother with three children, has been working in the Middle East since her youngest son was eight-months-old. Gina used to be Emily’s nanny when Emily was a child and her mother was studying in Manila. Gina left her own children in the care of her husband and oldest daughters so that she could go work as a ‘live-in’ \textit{yaya}\(^2\) in Emily’s parents’ house. Gina’s children are now grown up, and she once again lives in Emily’s house and takes care of her family. For this work she is paid US$ 37 a month. Gina tries to save some of this money for the future, when she will be too old to work any more.

Several previous studies have documented the lives of migrant women in foreign countries, their relations with their employers and families and the obstacles related to translocality. As pointed out by Romero (1992) and Lan (2003), studies of the gendered division of housework and paid domestic work across racial and class lines have mostly focused on white women’s unpaid housework and coloured women’s domestic service. Very little attention has been given to the many women left behind to care for the migrated women’s families and households. Therefore, the aim of this study has been to fill in this theoretical gap and to draw attention to, and make visible, the lives and experiences of women in the Philippines that are engaged in social reproduction as substitutes for Overseas Filipina Workers.

THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL REPRODUCTION

Social reproduction is an important starting point for understanding the transformations of everyday life that stem from, and contribute to, the increasing volume of interaction and flows across international borders. In recent years feminist researchers have analysed reproductive labour as a phenomenon in which asymmetrical, intersectional relations connected to gender,

\(^1\) Like all names used in this article Gina is a pseudonym.
\(^2\) Tagalong for babysitter or nanny.
ethnicity, race, culture, class and citizenship are structured and sustained (Willis & Yeoh, 2000). Biological reproduction comprises elements such as childbirth and breast feeding, while social reproduction comprises activities more connected to the household, such as caring, cleaning and cooking (Hensall-Momsen, 2004). Colen (1995) defines the concept of reproductive labour as the physical, mental and emotional bearing, raising and socialising of children, in addition to the maintenance of households and people (from infancy to old age). Reproductive labour is, according to Colen, experienced, valued and rewarded differently, due to inequalities in access to material and social resources, in particular in historical and cultural contexts. Domestic work is defined by Raghuram (1999) as domestic labour in an employer’s house in return for wages, while Lan (2003) defines domestic labour as the labour activities that sustain the daily maintenance of a household. Housework involves doing the same tasks, but in your own home. While the tasks performed are often the same, the social relations regulating the performance of these tasks differ (Raghuram, 1999). Lan (2003:189) views unpaid household labour and paid domestic work as “…structural continuities that characterise the feminisation of domestic labour across the public and the private spheres…” Hensall-Momsen (1999) argues that social reproduction differs from production in respect to how it is valued. Work with social reproduction has a practical value that fulfils family needs, whilst productive work often generates a money value and a cash income. Relations in the reproductive sphere are as important as those in the productive spheres, when it comes to the hierarchies of order and subordination that sustain patriarchal gender relations. This is especially relevant in today’s global economic order, which has resulted in a major restructuring of the international labour force (Hensall-Momsen, 2004).

Every year millions of women leave the global South to take on household duties and care work as substitutes for women in the global North. These women satisfy a global demand for cheap labour, and fill a deficit in the global North, while creating a deficit in the global South (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003). Giddens (2003) argues that an increasing proportion of the global migration flow is comprised of women and several researchers (Hensall-Momsen, 1999; Mills, 2003) refer to a feminisation of migration, as these days half of the world’s 120 million migrants are women. Baylis & Smith (2005) claim that the feminisation is most pronounced in

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3 Molina (1997) argues that the concept of ‘race’ is a social construction. I use the concept to make visible how ‘race’ has created a social order that is characterised by discrimination and social injustice between the imagined black and the imagined white, even though there are no such biological differences.

4 Connell (2003) suggests that the concepts ‘global South’ and ‘global North’ can be used to make visible a system with historical origins in global dominance based on colonialism and imperialism.
South and Southeast Asia, where between 1.0 and 1.7 million women cross national borders to work. Willis & Yeoh (2000) point out that women in national and international labour migration mostly find employment in domestic care or sex work. This market for reproductive work is seen by some researchers (Hensall-Momsen 1999; Ehrenreich & Hochschild 2002; Parreñas, 2001) as trade in women. Although most of the migration is voluntary the women are in effect forced to seek this solution as a strategy for survival and to be able to provide for the basic needs of their families. Nicola Yeates (2005) explains that this process, referred to as ‘global care chains’, is usually initiated by a woman in a rich country choosing paid employment and thus finding herself unable to fulfil her ‘domestic duties’. In order to solve this dilemma she purchases another woman’s labour. The employee tends to be drawn from a poorer household, either locally or from abroad, and is often herself a mother that has migrated to take up paid domestic labour to be able to support her family back home. Her absence creates a need for another woman to substitute for her, and the value ascribed to the labour decreases and often becomes unpaid at the end of the chain. According to international data, in 2003, 44 per cent of the population in the Philippines existed on US$2 or less a day. Furthermore, the Philippines have one of the highest levels of income inequality in Asia, with the poorest 20 per cent of the population accounting for only 5 per cent of total income or consumption (http://www.ausaid.gov.au). The Philippines is a major country of origin of labour migration and Filipina women constitute over 70 percent of the 1.062.567 $^5$ Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) currently working in 197 different countries. According to the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) families of OFWs received a total of US$ 12.76 billions in total in remittances. Two-thirds of the female labour migrants are domestic workers, paid by individuals or families to provide childcare, elderly care and/or cleaning services in private homes (Parreñas, 2001). In this article I illustrate the care chain through an interview study with Filipina women that substitute for Overseas Filipina Workers. These women have been described by previous researchers as being ‘at the end’ of the chain, or ‘at the bottom’ of the transfer of reproductive labour. There are at least two important questions to address: What does social reproduction substitution entail for the woman who is ‘left at home’? And could the ‘stand-ins’ be described as being at the end of the chain or at the bottom of the global transfer of reproductive labour?

DATA AND METHOD

The empirical material and the primary data for this study were collected during a Minor Field Study, MFS, in the Philippines sponsored by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida. The study was conducted in October - December 2007 with local guidance from the non-governmental organisation Center for Migrant Advocacy (CMA)\(^6\), based in Manila. Participants for the interviews were chosen and contacted through the broad local contact network represented by the CMA. Strategic selection was employed and all except for one of the interviewees have previously been in contact with the CMA. The reasons for their contact with the CMA differed, but they were all connected to problems associated with their own labour migration, or that of relatives or friends. The secondary data and the theoretical framework were based on a bachelor thesis research overview of transnational female work migration\(^7\) and other relevant literature and studies connected to the subject. My research was based on eight semi-structured interviews with women who considered themselves to be engaged in social reproduction substitution for an Overseas Filipina Worker in the Philippines. Of the eight women interviewed, seven were related to the female OFW through kinship. Four of the women were stand-ins for their daughters or granddaughters. Of the other four women, one was the OFW’s cousin, one was the OFW’s sister, one was a good friend to the OFW and one woman was a distant relative and used to be the OFW’s nanny. The women were between 32 and 75 years old and all of them had children of their own. Five of the women were married, two were widowed and one was separated. One of the women had a university degree and the other seven women had reached the sixth grade in high school. One woman worked in a small shop and one woman had a part-time job selling goods on commission. The other six women described themselves as full-time housewives or living-in care workers. Seven of the interviews were carried out in different parts of Manila and one interview took place in Puerto Galera, Mindoro. Five of the interviews were carried out in Tagalong and interpreted to English by CMA employees. Three interviews were conducted in English. The place and length of the interviews varied. Some were several hours and others 30-minutes long. Some interviews took place in the interviewee’s home, and others in different public locations. The interview situations also varied. In some cases there were family members, neighbours or friends involved or listening in to the interviews. This and the

\(^6\) Center for Migrant Advocacy (CMA) is an advocacy group that promotes the rights and interests of overseas Filipinos and their families. The centre works to help improve the economic, social and political conditions of migrant Filipino families everywhere through policy advocacy, information dissemination, networking, capability-building, and direct assistance (Information pamphlet, CMA, 2007).

\(^7\) Bäck,H. (2007) Transnationell kvinnlig arbetsmigration i en global kontext. Östersund: Mittuniversitetet
participation of an interpreter could have influenced the conversation with the informants concerned. The fact that all the participants except for one were contacted through the CMA and had connections with the organisation could have affected the conclusions of the study. The small number of interviews and the process of selection used means that no generalisations can be made from the study. Instead, the focus has been on describing and drawing attention to the respondents’ personal experiences concerning social reproduction substitution.

In this study where I, a white, Western, female university student, write about and ‘study’ women in the global South, there is a need for reflexivity and to question my own position. The information collected was undeniably affected by my own class and race position. Mohanty (2006) claims that many (Western) feminist researchers view ‘the third world woman’ as a single, monolithic subject and women in the Global South are often pictured and constructed to be a homogeneous ‘powerless’ group that are victims of different socioeconomic and patriarchal systems. This phenomenon is related to colonialism and results in research in which women of ‘the third world’ are classified into specific categories defined by feminists in the USA or Europe (Mohanty, 2006). The hegemony in the feminist discourse signifies that power relations between women, based on global inequality, ‘race’ or ethnicity, are made invisible through a normative understanding of femininity and a ‘universal sisterhood’ (de los Reyes & Mulinari, 2005). Women are not a coherent category for analysis, and women in the global South do not all have the same problems, needs or interests. In this study I acknowledge that women have a subordinate position to men in many cases in different local contexts, but there is no universal explanation to the subordinate position of women. The specific and local often has a universal significance, but the universal should not be used to erase the specific or particular aspects of a situation. This study, and the statement on which it is built, is local and specific but is still related in many ways to national, international and global political, economical and social structures. The globalisation of today brings the world and the communities in it closer together through interdependent, discursive and material regimes. The lives of women, regardless of where we happen to live, are connected but they are not the same (Mohanty, 2006).
SOCIAL REPRODUCTION AND THE STAND-IN WOMEN AT HOME

As a basis for the analysis, I begin by reviewing relevant literature concerning the meaning of ‘family’ in the context of female labour migration. In her article examining the complexity of feminised domestic labour in the context of global migration, Lan (2003) argues that the ‘ideal Filipino family’ consists of a male breadwinner and a female housekeeper, and that housework and childcare are predominantly considered to be women’s duties. Furthermore, Parreñas (2001) claims that Filipino families are traditionally nuclear in structure and that the persistence of family ties has been a constant in Filipino life throughout periods of social change. Asis, Huang & Yeoh (2004) observe that the family in the Philippines is a source of emotional, economic, material and social support for the individual and in return, individual members strive to promote the interests of the family. Today over 38.5 million Filipinos, nearly half the population, are supported by the earnings of OFWs and many families have become transnational in structure (Center for Migrant Advocacy, CMA, 2006). Asis, Huang & Yeoh (2004) describe the transnational family as a family in which core members are residents in two or more nation states but who continue to share strong ties of collective welfare and unity. Their study shows that although migration makes it impossible for the family to live together all the time, it does not diminish the importance of being or the desire to be a ‘family’. The authors also argue that there is a social expectation that sees women as responsible for the family, whether the family lives in a single location or is spread out transnationally in more than one country.

Transnational mothers and the ‘natural’ stand-in

As shown in previous studies (Pappas- Deluca, 1999; Parreñas, 2001; Lindio- McGovern, 2003), it is unusual for fathers to step in to take over household work and childcare when the mother migrates to work abroad. Only two of the OFW children in this study lived in the same household as their father, and five of the children did not see their father regularly or at all. The stand-in women explained that the reason for the absence of the fathers was either his work or that “…it is not a common that fathers care for their children or homes...”. Hanna, who took care of her friend’s son, said that:

It [that females act as substitutes for the female OFW] is common. Because if someone goes abroad they need someone to take care of the family. The husband is maybe working, so he can’t do it.

Frances, who takes care of her two-year-old grandchild, explains:
When my daughter says to me that she will go, I say no problem I will take care of the child. My daughter loves me very much and I love her and I take care of my kids and her kid. The father has no work. He took care of her for two months, but then he gave her back to me. He takes her for vacations. He does not want to live here; he lives with his mother in another town.

As a consequence of the failure of the male non-migrant to take up the social reproductive work left by the female OFW’s, migrant mothers have to leave their children behind under the care of local women. Seven of the stand-in women were related through kinship to the female OFW’s and the interviewees mainly saw caring for the OFW’s children as a “…natural thing to do” In some cases this was the only solution, as there was no-one else who could care for the OFW’s children, but several women also emphasised the importance of taking care of members of the family, because relatives were seen as the most emotionally suitable people to take care of the children and the OFW’s households. All the women interviewed in my study took care of the children of migrant mothers and they often viewed this caring as the main responsibility in their ‘substitution’. All of the stand-ins described their relationship with the children ‘left behind with them’ as good and four of the respondents described the relationship to the OFW’s children as “…like a mother to them…” So just as women are expected to bear responsibility for the family, the female relatives and friends are seen as the ‘natural reproductive stand-ins’ for the OFW mothers.

When the Filipina women migrate to work as domestics overseas, usually to take over another woman’s unpaid social reproductive labour, they become transnational breadwinners, but still remain burdened by their gendered duties as mothers and wives back home. Their transnational mothering is in strong contrast to the “epoxy glue” view of motherhood, in the light of which the transnational family fails to meet the expectations of the ideological concept of ‘the traditional Filipino family’ (Hondagneu-Sotel & Avila, 1997). Some parts of the Filipino society, in addition to this, consider transnational households to be ‘broken homes’, as the organisation of these households diverges from traditional expectations of spouses and children living together. The former president of the Philippines declared that overseas employment was

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8 Care work is persistently designated as women’s natural calling (Cheng, 2004) and ideals like motherhood or domesticity are made out to be natural abilities, although they are in fact historical and social constructions (Mohanty, 2006).

9 The “epoxy glue view” sees motherhood as biologically predetermined and fixed, although it is in fact historically and socially constructed. Even feminist discussions generally assume that mothers, by definition, will reside with their children (Hondagneu-Sotel & Avila, 2000).
only morally acceptable when it was undertaken by single, childless women; a position that is reinforced by the media. Reports in the press tend to vilify migrant mothers, and suggest that their children are abandoned and that they face more profound problems than the children of migrant fathers. These children have also been presented as a burden to society at large, and it has been suggested that they will have more problems than other children (Parreñas, 2001). One of the respondents, Carina, opposes this generalisation and explains:

You can’t make a closed statement that if the children’s mother or parents are overseas, they will have problems. That is often the public opinion. We [Carina and her nephew] had a good relationship. But I am very strict so if he broke the rules he had to sleep outside. I always emphasised, if I would not take care of him who will? Tondo is a very crowded place and not so many go to school. I had to guide him and tell him about the importance of money and the way it is earned.

The organisation of caring labour in the households of women OFWs is based on female family members or friends and their ability to act as ‘stand-ins’, and take over the social reproductive work of the female OFW. They are also having an important role in preserving the picture of the ‘good women and mother’. As Carina suggests, the OFW children’s well-being depends on how well the stand-in woman handles the substitute mothering and caring of the OFW household. This statement is supported by a study made by the Scalabrini Migration Center concerning the effects of parental absence on migrant workers’ children. The study indicates that the majority of the children investigated do not have any ‘special problems’ that could be connected to the care provided by the extended kin acting as substitute mothers or fathers (Parreñas, 2001).

Carina also used to work as a domestic worker in a private home in Kuala Lumpur. After two years she returned to the Philippines and eventually became a stand-in for her sister, caring for her nephew. Carina relinquished the financial gains of her domestic labour in Malaysia, but received emotional rewards and social recognition by becoming an unpaid stand-in for an OFW mother, taking care of her nephew, ‘engaging in a labour of love’ and supporting the family. Carina’s sister went to Dubai to work as a live-in domestic worker. She earned money, but lost the emotional value of caring for her son and risked being viewed as a mother who has abandoned her child and left behind a ‘broken family’. In the narratives of Carina and her sister the social recognition connected to the unpaid ‘labour of love’ becomes visible. Lan (2003)
refers to the way in which unpaid labour from female kin is often considered to be a ‘labour of love’, whose emotional value is related to the ideals of womanhood, such as the cult of domesticity and intensive motherhood.

Although most of the interviewed women state that they understand and support the migration of the OFW they are acting as substitute for, one woman made it clear that she would not go overseas herself and “…sacrifice my children to take care of others...”. This statement was an example of the noticeable ambiguity among the stand-in women regarding the OFW’s reasons for leaving. Some of the women assumed that this was the only solution for the other woman to support and provide for her family, while others only agreed to the OFW’s decision if it was based on certain conditions. One condition presented was that there should be no other option, for example that there was not a husband or other male that could go instead. If the mother had to go overseas, her ambition and reason for leaving should merely be to work and send remittances to the family, not to obtain any personal gratification. Anna says:

Baby needs the money for the children’s education. She thinks that the money that her husband earns is not enough for them to live well and to put the children in school. That’s why she makes sacrifices and has left to work. Baby needs this job for the future of the family. This is the fourth time she went abroad. But before she lived as a ‘one day millionaire’ and didn’t save any money. But this time she knows. She is near retirement age and she wants to ensure the future of her family. She has learned from her previous mistakes.

In Anna’s narrative it becomes visible that as long as Baby, when working overseas, puts the family at home and their needs first, Anna sees her migration as socially legitimate. However, at the same time as the women working overseas as domestic or care workers do not fit the ‘ideal picture’ of a woman and/or a mother in the Philippines, they provide a substitute for women’s unpaid social reproductive labour in economically richer countries (Cheng, 2004; Lan, 2003; Lindio- McGovern, 2003; Parreñas, 2000, 2001; Yeoh & Huang, 1999). They present a solution to women’s double burden and the unequal division of labour in households located in the global North (Parreñas, 2000, 2001). Migrant Filipina domestic workers leave a system of gender stratification in the Philippines, and often enter another one in the receiving country. In both countries they confront societies with similar gender ideologies concerning the division of labour in the family, i.e. that social reproductive labour is the responsibility of women.
The constraints imposed upon women and girls by the mutual responsibilities of caring labour contribute to stratification and inequality, and the reliance on family-based networks places additional constraints on women (Mattingly, 2001). In a report on Filipina women, the low proportion of females in the paid and formal labour economy in the Philippines is seen to be strongly connected to the gendered division of labour (NCRFW & CIDA, 2004). This division of labour prevents many women from participating in paid work as their social reproduction ‘duties’ tie them to the care of the household and children. The responsibility for OFW’s children and the absence of public childcare also hinders the stand-in women from participating in the paid productive labour force, but amongst these women there are various arrangements regarding compensation. Of the stand-ins interviewed, six had the OFW children living with them in their household, three stated that they only received remittances that covered the actual living expenses of the OFW’s children and two said that they did not receive any money at all. Carina says:

I used the remittances for the kid’s education. I was not paid. In the Filipino culture we are not very specific when it comes to paying the ones that take care of our children. Mostly it is for the household expenses, not for you.

Beonce acted as a substitute parent for her three grandsons while her daughter Bonnie was in Malaysia and Dubai. Bonnie had to run away from her employers and did not receive any salary while abroad. Beonce says:

I washed clothes, made food, and took them [the three grand children] to school and so on. It was hard because of my age and because we did not have enough money. We had enough to eat every day but Bonnie did not send any money home. The eldest grandson had health problems. I could not afford to pay for his costs. It was very difficult to take him to the doctor and to buy medicine.

For the five unpaid stand-in women, the substitution involved an increased labour burden without any financial compensation. Some of the women interviewed did not approve of other families who employed a domestic worker or yaya to fill in for the OFW mother. This is clear in Beonce’s comments:

Frankly speaking most of the people working only want the salary and do not really care about the work. It is better if I do everything because of love, care, and concern. Other people do not care.
Hanna and Anna, did not have the OFW’s children living with them, but were responsible for the children and the maintenance of the migrant’s family household. They saw the stand-in work as something that benefited them personally. Anna, who was caring for both her own family and household and her cousin’s two children and their home, explains that:

Before I did nothing; I was a full-time housewife taking care of the children, my husband and the house. I had nothing to do when my children had grown up and Baby and her husband needed me for the job. I’m given 2,500 pesos each month for the work. And I have some free time so if the children do not need me anymore I can go to my house and do something.

For Anna this could have been one of the few paid employment opportunities open to her, as gender has been identified as an important factor behind social exclusion, in view of the traditional division of labour in the country (NCRFW & CIDA, 2004). Working in her cousin’s house offered a good opportunity for her to make some money for herself, and it gave her greater financial independence. Hanna took care of her friend’s son while she was working as a live-in domestic in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Hanna received a salary every three weeks and she describes labour migration as positive because she was able to support her own family through the payments from the OFW. Both Hanna and Anna changed their work status when they become paid domestic workers instead of being only unpaid home workers in their own household sphere. They were able to use the system of labour migration as a way to minimise financial uncertainties and to keep themselves and their families out of poverty. However, only three of the eight women received a monthly salary for their care work. Moreover, the average salary of the substitute women was PHP 2000 (approximately US$ 47) per month. Gina, who worked as a live-in housekeeper hired by a single mother in Saudi Arabia, comments on the salary she received:

My work is very cheap. Only 1500 pesos a month. I receive 10 000 every month for expenses, like electricity, school costs, food and my salary. But everything is very expensive. It would be better if it was a little bit more.

For Anna, Hanna and Gina the migration of their relatives and friend did mean a small financial income, but it also involved them in a relation of greater dependence. The paid stand-in becomes dependent on the decisions made by the OFW, and the OFW and her family becomes dependent on the goodwill and care offered by the stand-in woman. The financial gains vary, but a common experience of the domestic OFW’s and their stand-ins is that they earn less than their employers, because the strategy of paying for domestic work is based on
service workers earning significantly less than the people that employ them. The global economic care chains have consequences for the stand-in women ‘at home’ and the women who care for OFW’s children may gain financial benefits or only an increased labour burden in connection with the reproductive work that is ascribed to her as a woman. At the same time this low-cost reproductive labour provided by the stand-in should be viewed as a vital constituent in the global market economy, when they as, both paid and unpaid, stand-ins subsidise the export of female labour. The stand-ins are thereby a vital economic factor, as through providing free or cheap childcare more women can leave their homes to seek domestic work in other countries.

THE POSITION OF THE STAND-IN

In the transfer of reproductive activities, hierarchies of women persist, based on power structures such as ethnicity, race, nationality, age, and especially class. De los Reyes & Mulinari (2005) discuss the fact that women from economically poorer parts of the world take over the “low status work” previously undertaken by Western women in the global North, and become the new working class. The progress of women from certain social and economic sections is connected to the constant and more profound exploitation of other women. This creates certain groups of women who strive for gender equality and ‘other’, subordinated women that provide domestic services and care work.

Transgenerational processes

The global system of social reproduction is built on exploitive relations and categorisation based on gender, class and race/ethnicity. This categorisation is not something temporary. The subordinate position of certain groups persists throughout their lifetime and continues to the next generation (De los Reyes & Mulinari, 2005). My interviews with the stand-in women showed that several of them had worked overseas and now their daughters had become OFWs. This transgenerational process is illustrated in the narrative of Frances:

Yes, I was an OFW from 1983-84. When I became a widow this was my only option. When I was overseas my mother took care of my children that were 7, 10 and 12-years-old. I worked as a chambermaid, and took care of the house for the stewardess. It was good a job but very hard to be away from the children. And now my daughter is in Jordan working as a live-in domestic worker. She left one year ago and she will be away for one more. She has to save money for the education of her daughter. She will do this as long as it takes. As for me, I don’t like her to leave. She asked me what I thought about her leaving to make money for her
daughter. I said OK, but take care of yourself. And I worry because she is beautiful and only 22 years old.

When asked about their opinions concerning the OFW women’s reasons for migrating, the women interviewed all gave the same reason: to support their children and families. Several of the stand-ins saw a link between high unemployment, high prices of food, school and living costs and the widespread female labour migration from the Philippines. Most of the income earned by the women OFWs only covers day-to-day expenses which prevents the OFWs and their families from investing in more income-generating resources or savings. Without access to the productive labour force in the Philippines, women migrants continue in their employment abroad. Elin tells us:

My daughter is abroad for the third time and her three children live with me. I have been doing this for 10 years, since the youngest boy was born. I don’t know how long this will go on.

As seen in Elin’s narrative, female labour migration has become a kind of long term solution for the families in this study, a cycle that also continues across generations, when the adult children cannot cover the costs of reproducing their own families.

**Variable hierarchies and the three-tier transfer**

In her study *Servants of Globalization- Women, Migration and Domestic Work*, Parreñas (2001) extends the discussion about the class and racial division of social reproductive labour to an international level and includes the division of labour that she calls the ‘international transfer of care-taking’. This refers to the three-tier transfer of reproductive labour among sending and receiving countries of migration, in which a class of privileged women buy the low-wage services of a migrant female Filipina domestic worker, at the same time as the Filipina domestic worker purchases the even lower waged services of a poorer women at home in the Philippines. In Parreñas’ (2001) study, migrant Filipina domestic workers tend to have more resources and belong to a more comfortable class stratum than the domestic workers in the Philippines. Although most of the women have reached a high level of educational attainment, Parreñas argues that the women migrate and enter domestic work because they earn higher wages as domestic workers in post-industrial nations than as professional workers in the Philippines. In my study, both the women OFWs and their stand-ins seem to belong to a poorer class stratum. Facts supporting this are that they all stated financial difficulties in supporting
their families, only one of the women had reached a higher educational level than the sixth grade and there was no significant difference between the educational background of the OFWs and the women standing in for them. As mentioned earlier, not all of the OFWs in this study managed to send home remittances, and if they did the money mostly paid for their children’s day to day expenses. All the interviewees in Parreñas’ (2001) study provided financial assistance to their families and a substantial proportion of the migrant mothers also employed non-family members to take care of their children. The amount earned abroad by the women OFWs connected to this study, as well as their countries of destination, differed from those in Parreñas’ study. The women in this study said that the OFW they were standing in for worked in Asia or the Middle East and earned approximately US$ 200 to 400 a month. In Parreñas study the women worked as live-in domestic workers and/or care providers in the US or Italy and earned between US$ 722- 1750 a month. This comparison illustrates that the destination as well as the amount of money earned overseas by women OFWs seems to vary in accordance with their economic and social status in the Philippines.

Parreñas’ (2001) conclusions, that the women in the bottom of the three-tier transfer usually cannot afford to go abroad to work themselves, is partly contradicted by the women interviewed in my study. The stand-in women and the OFWs in this study all belong to a ‘financially poor’ community but still managed to become OFWs. These findings indicate that poorer women also migrate overseas to work, but they do this with even less financial gains then the well-educated migrant female Filipina domestic workers interviewed by Parreñas. Beonce explained how her daughter Bonnie was able to pay for the expenses involved in going overseas through salary deduction:

You can fly now, pay later. The agency and the employer keep the salary until all expenses have been paid back. It’s hard because you don’t have any salary for three months. And since she [Bonnie] had to run away and broke the contract, she did not have any salary at all.

The system of salary deduction puts these OFW women in an even more vulnerable position then their women counterparts from higher economic classes, but it does enable financially poor women to work overseas. This is made possible because the Philippine government actively promotes labour migration, and there are agencies that subsidise the poorer women in the country so that they too can participate in the labour migration process (Lindio- McGovern, 2003). This is in turn closely connected to the global economic system, in which social
reproductive work is connected to the constant flow of economic and human resources that benefit both labour exporting and labour importing countries.

During my interviews with the women stand-ins I found that it was in fact hard to distinguish the three groups of women described in Parreñas’ (2001) important study, and that it was not so easy to define or draw clear boundaries between them. To illustrate these findings I will expand the concept of the three-tier transfer to include a phenomenon in which the women described as being ‘in the middle’ and ‘in the bottom’ of this hierarchy of care-taking actually switch places with each other. One such example is the case of Carina, who was previously a migrant domestic worker, was now acting as a stand-in to a migrant domestic worker, and was soon to become a migrant domestic worker again:

I was a stand-in for my sister. I took care of her now 14-year-old son while she was in Saudi Arabia and Dubai. When I worked in Malaysia as a live-in domestic, I was still like a parent to him. I sent money for food, medicine and so on. Since we are family, me and my sister make sacrifices to support each other. So I take care of her son and she takes care of my children when I go. We are looking after one another.

- Would you like to go overseas to work again?

Another chance? Of course I would, honestly. At my age it is hard to find another job and now I only have pay on a commission basis. I would like to go to make some savings. You see my kids are growing up and I am thinking about how to get money for their education. I ask my children to pray hard that I will not get sick. Because if I get sick? Very difficult for the family. And the assistance I get from the father is not enough. In January I will apply for a position as a room attendant in a hotel in the US. But I don’t know if I have enough experience of customer service and so on. And then it is really hard to get a visa. If I am going I will be there for two years on a contract basis. My sister will take care of my children. They will stay in the province. We have already discussed the situation. Of course I go overseas out of necessity. What is important is that you communicate with your children and make them understand that you are going for them.

Carina and her sister have both been working as domestic workers overseas and they also support each other’s children financially through remittances earned abroad. This illustrates the variable roles and positions held by the women OFWs and the stand-ins. Carina’s story also shows an example of how the labour migration is voluntary, but also is connected to more or less cogent ‘pull- and push’ factors. It also gives insight to the migration as a continuous long-time financial solution for transnational families.

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11 Ehrenreich & Hochschild (2003) suggest that the care deficit in the Global north pulls migrants from the Global south, while poverty pushes them.
CONCLUSION

This article illustrates the idea of the global care chain and the transfer of social reproductive labour by examining the case of Filipina women that substitute for Overseas Filipina Workers. Through semi-structured interviews with eight women, introduced to me by a local NGO, I have sought to fill in a theoretical gap, and to draw attention to and make visible the experiences of the stand-in women at home. Social reproduction substitution entails many different aspects and involves a variety of consequences for the stand-in women, a few of which are illustrated in this article. When the male non-migrant fails to take over the social reproductive work ‘left by’ the mother OFW, when she goes overseas usually to care for the families of others, she has to leave her children in the care of a local woman. The local women with their presumed ‘natural’ caring abilities, stemming from the ideals of womanhood and their kinship relationship to the OFW and her children, then compensate for the presumed ‘unnatural’ relationship between the mother OFW and her children. This article further extends our understanding of the complex and variable economic and social relations and networks that exist between the women stand-ins and the migrant workers. The study shows that the different strategies used by the OFW women in the care chain are influenced by their economic class. Well-educated women that migrate to work as domestic workers in Europe, Canada, Singapore, Hong Kong or USA hire care workers at home for lower wages than they earn themselves. Poorer OFW women, without higher education, put themselves in debt to be able to migrate to work in countries where the salaries of domestic workers are considerably lower. This makes the women unable to pay for caring labour, and in the absence of government assistance, they have to rely on the free or inexpensive labour of female family members and, occasionally, friends or neighbours. The responsibility for OFW’s children and the absence of public childcare hinders the stand-in women from participating in the paid productive labour force but they receive different forms of compensation for this extra social reproductive work. For some women the consequence is solely an increased labour burden, but for others their role as substitutes represent a greater financial independence and a way to keep them and their families out of poverty. For those women who receive no financial compensation, the unpaid ‘labour of love’ is rewarded with social recognition. There seems to be a contradiction between paid reproductive labour and the patriarchal ideal of the good and caring woman and mother, in which unpaid household labour has a higher moral value and is given more social recognition than paid domestic work.
This article further extends our understanding of the complex and variable economic and social relations and networks that exist between the women stand-ins and the migrant workers. The individual women shift between various positions but they all involve different forms of social reproductive labour and they work in these feminised occupations in both the local and the global labour markets. And although the complex, transgenerational, female networks of social reproduction function as a complement to the nuclear family in the Philippines, the same networks also sustain and support the global demand for cheap female social reproductive labour. When the women migrant workers return home, they sometimes become the local stand-in and take up the social reproductive work left by the same women that previously performed this service for them. This enables the previous stand-ins to go overseas to support their children and families. The female migration from the Philippines and the feminisation of waged labour links systems of gender inequality in both the exporting and importing countries to global capitalism, and as demonstrated in this study as well as in an number of others, social reproduction activities in one area today have concrete connections to social reproductive activities in another area. In this transfer of social reproductive activities, hierarchies of women are maintained, based on intersectional power structures such as ethnicity, race, nationality, age, and in particular class. The narratives in this study show that women who belong to a poorer class stratum, instead of holding one position in the three-tier transfer of social reproductive labour, actually shift between ‘the middle’ and ‘the bottom’ levels in this hierarchy. Regardless of location, Filipina women remain under the burden of their gendered duties. Whether working abroad as domestic workers or acting as local stand-ins, they have to take on both local and global social reproductive work when they become the main breadwinner in their families, at the same time as they are ascribed natural responsibility for households and families, as wives, mothers and stand-ins ‘at home’ in the Philippines.

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