

## INTRODUCTION

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In the following pages we hope to excite readers with what can be learned about carework by studying it in relation to gender and globalization, about gender by studying the context of globalization and carework, and about globalization by looking through the lens of carework and gender.

### **WHO SHOULD READ THIS BOOK**

This book is for people interested in understanding the changing world around them. It will introduce you to dimensions of globalization that are typically neglected. This is also a book about gender inequalities. It will broaden your awareness of how global politics constrain gender relations, how global policies shape gender inequalities, and how the dynamics of globalization are changing the lives of women and men all over the world. And, finally, it is a book about the changing nature of labor, particularly of domestic work and the care of others, both paid and unpaid. If you have not thought much about these issues, what you are about to read will open your eyes to how fundamentally important they are. If you already have an interest in care or careworkers, you will like this book because it places and analyzes the current dimensions of this work within the broad context of the global political economy.

### **WHAT THIS BOOK HAS TO OFFER**

With this book as a guide, you can explore the relationships between globalization, carework, and gender through both theory and research. You will discover that

globalization is intimately connected with carework, and you will come to understand how this important connection serves to reinforce and perpetuate—and, under some conditions, promises to reduce—traditional inequalities between men and women, as well as between socioeconomic classes and racial-ethnic groups.

Most discussions of globalization have little to do with gender or with carework. Yet, multiple crises of care are developing in relation to globalization in locations all over the world: in developing countries, in developed countries, and in response to migration when women leave the former for the latter. Today, hundreds of thousands of women are living transnational lives. These include migrating mothers who live abroad as maids, housekeepers, babysitters, nannies, kitchen workers, sex workers, personal care attendants, and nurses. They contribute financial support not only to their own families but also to the economies of their home countries. The socially prescribed role of women as family caregivers puts them in a pivotal position. They are sought and recruited to fill gaps in care in affluent countries; while, at the same time, when they leave to go abroad, they create similar gaps in care in their own countries. Careworker migrations are leaving behind serious deficits of care that must be addressed—for example, patients and health-care systems in African countries that desperately need nurses; and children and elders in Mexico, Central America, Indonesia, the Caribbean, and the Philippines without mothers or daughters to care for them at home. In most cases, these deficits get attended to through alternative arrangements, but not without significant implications for the countries and the populations involved.

### **HOW THIS BOOK IS DEFINED**

Our approach offers a unique perspective on issues of globalization. We place women's lives at the center in order to see the new global dynamics from their vantage point. Doing this raises new and compelling questions: Why are women so prominent as workers in the new global marketplace? What are the political forces and interests that have made women central participants in globalization? What are the consequences of these developments—for women, for men, for children and other family members, for societies, and for international relations? Applying a woman-centered, feminist approach takes us into the realm of domestic labor and other forms of carework. Through this lens, we also gain new and compelling insights into globalization issues, such as migration, structural adjustment policies, and the changing context of citizenship rights. In short, our feminist perspective helps us uncover hidden aspects of globalization, such as the rise of

transnational families and new patterns of long-distance mothering. This serves to broaden our understanding of how globalization is changing our social institutions and our lives. A feminist perspective also means that we will be focusing attention on politics. Following in the tradition of feminist scholars such as Cynthia Enloe, our book will add an entire dimension to the study of international politics that otherwise would be missing. As Enloe recounts in the context of her own work, focusing on women gave her “an inkling of how relations between governments depend not only on capital and weaponry, but also on the control of women as symbols, consumers, workers and emotional comforters” (2000 xvii). In this book we hope to show how globalization depends not only on capital and information, but on the recruitment, participation, and, in some cases, the exploitation of women.

In order for us to begin, the two key concepts of “globalization” and “carework” require some clarification.

The idea of globalization is difficult to pinpoint. It is most commonly used in a business context to indicate the expansion of corporations and markets beyond the boundaries of nations to a worldwide or “global” scale. The idea of globalization also extends to the spreading influence of multilateral organizations, such as the World Bank and United Nations. Within these global networks, information and capital flow quickly; communication is immediate with instantaneous electronic links that bridge both geographic and cultural divides. Global connectedness, therefore, is a primary characteristic of globalization. But, the meaning of globalization goes beyond expanding institutions and communication networks. There is also a new global interdependence—in particular, the fact that political decisions, market transactions, labor shifts, and dramatic events in one part of the world more directly than ever before impact the other parts. To gain an adequate sociological understanding of human groups and societies today, globalization is a key concept. It obliges us to change our vantage point, to move from studying social policies, social institutions, and culture within country- or nation-specific frameworks to studying them as global systems. Specifically, for this book, taking a global perspective means looking at the organization of care labor in terms of worldwide rather than family- or country-specific patterns. It means seeing carework in relation to new and expanded global hierarchies of gender, class, nationality, and race-ethnicity. Where we used to think of local or national structures of gender, class, and racial stratification, we must now think of these inequalities as part of larger, global stratification systems.

We have deliberately chosen the term “carework” to refer to the multifaceted labor that produces the daily living conditions that make basic human health and

well-being possible. Carework includes home management, housekeeping, and related domestic tasks such as laundry, clothing repair, and meal preparation. It also includes the care of others—that is, nursing the sick, looking after and nurturing children, and assisting the disabled and elderly. The protective and restorative aspects of carework connect on a deep level to many human emotions. Accordingly, we expect carework and careworkers to express a personal, affective dimension—for example, to show love, kindness, or concern. This side of carework is underscored when such work is simply called “caring.” We decided to use the word “carework” because it acknowledges these multiple facets, especially the important emotional dimensions involved (i.e., care), coupled with the complexity and physical demands (i.e., work). The concept of carework also honors nearly 40 years of feminist research and scholarship that collectively show carework to be neither “natural” for women to do nor “essential” to their being. In contrast, carework has been linked historically and culturally to women and to femininity, and women have borne the brunt of carrying out this labor across the globe. It has also been systematically devalued. We see this as part of a process of gender struggle over attempts to subordinate women (overlapping with similar struggles based on class and racial-ethnic difference). Within our view, contemporary carework patterns are largely a result of social arrangements, historically rooted in culture and the political dynamics of gender relations.

### **HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED**

Our book offers a distinctive format in order to help readers through the complexity of issues and considerations that emerge when globalization is examined through the lens of gender and carework. First, we have organized the content of the book around a framing idea: that globalization produces “multiple crises of care.” This concept and the four specific crises it refers to are introduced in Part 1. They are intended to provide threads of continuity as readers move through the book and encounter each new conceptual and empirical element. Second, we have created a learning strategy that will bring out the full significance of this innovative material. We want to give our readers a strong conceptual basis for analyzing globalization and for understanding its particular significance for gender and carework. At the same time, we want these concepts not to hang suspended in abstraction, but rather to come alive in the situations of everyday actors in everyday life situations. Thus, our learning strategy is to stress the reciprocal utility of theory and research, guiding readers back and forth between the analytical realm of concepts and ideas and the empirical worlds of real groups and real people.

We carry out this learning strategy by dividing our book into four thematic parts. Part 1 introduces our “multiple crises of care” framework and sets the stage for the rest of the book. The remaining parts each focus on a primary theme that defines current scholarship at the intersection of globalization, carework, and gender: Part 2, “Transnational Migration: Citizenship, Social Control, and Carework”; Part 3, “Motherhood, Domestic Work, and Childcare in Global Perspective”; and Part 4, “Valuing Carework through Policy and Culture: Communities, States, and Supranational Institutions.”

Each part begins with an integrative essay that introduces readers to the particular theme as well as to the accompanying set of conceptual and research articles. Drawing on the analytic concepts and using the research studies for illustration and elaboration, we explain how the central ideas of the theme relate to the daily realities of gender and carework in a global context. A number of the excerpts have been taken from influential work in the scholarly literature. These selections are theoretical or conceptual and are intended to convey a key idea or particular analytic approach. Other excerpts have been taken from research studies. They are intended to illustrate and elaborate important problems and issues connected to the theme. To gain the full value of each part, we suggest that readers first read the integrative essay and then read the analytic excerpts and research examples.

In sum, our book draws on a wide range of recent work, particularly from feminist scholars, to offer readers a glimpse of the global challenges ahead. Traditional forms of family life and carework are colliding with worldwide economic pressures, in turn encouraging a myriad of changes for families and individuals. Multiple earner households, longer work hours, and transnational migration are just a few examples. Moreover, the international markets, multinational corporations, and supranational governance structures that attempt to organize and regulate these changes are increasingly reaching into the most intimate corners of domestic life. As these current trends continue to grow and develop, we hope the approach represented by this book will help readers to articulate the new ways of thinking that are required if we want to engage and understand our rapidly changing world.