

Commodification of domestic labour, the culture of servitude and the making of the Chilean nation

Rosario Fernández

© Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden GmbH, ein Teil von Springer Nature 2018

Abstract The objective of this article is to analyse the current dynamics of commodification of care and domestic labour in Chile from a feminist perspective. Drawing on interviews with upper-class employers in Santiago and a review of the new domestic labour law and the state programme *Chile Cuida* (Chile Cares), this article argues that the commodification of domestic labour is intensified today in a neoliberal context, where colonial and modern modes of labour organisation and subjectivities co-exist. With the continuity of a *culture of servitude*, paid domestic labour enables the Chilean State to portray itself as modern and gender-friendly and upper-class women can become *modern women* while maintaining patriarchal and racist arrangements within homes and the nation and without disassembling the traditional racial bond between nation and family in modern Chilean democracy.

Keywords Paid domestic labour · Chile · Culture of servitude · Democracy

Kommodifizierung von häuslicher Arbeit, Dienstbarkeitskultur und die Entstehung einer chilenischen Nation

Zusammenfassung Das Hauptziel dieses Artikels ist die Analyse von aktuellen Dynamiken der Kommodifizierung von Pflege und häuslicher Arbeit in Chile aus einer feministischen Perspektive. Ausgehend von Interviews mit Angestellten aus der Oberschicht in Santiago und einer Begutachtung des neuen häuslichen Arbeitsgesetzes und des staatlichen Programms *Chile Cuida* (Chile pflegt) argumentiert der Artikel, dass die Kommodifizierung von häuslicher Arbeit heute im neoliberalen Kontext stärker geworden ist, wo koloniale und moderne Formen der Arbeitsorganisation und Subjektivitäten gleichzeitig bestehen. Gerade mit dem Fortbestehen einer

R. Fernández (✉)
57 Cornwall Road, London, N15 5AX, UK
E-Mail: larosariofernandez@gmail.com

Kultur der Dienstbarkeit (*culture of servitude*) aufgrund von bezahlter häuslicher Arbeit kann sich der chilenische Staat als modern und genderfreundlich darstellen. Zudem können Frauen aus der Oberschicht *moderne Frauen* werden, während patriarchale und rassistische Strukturen zu Hause und in der Nation weiterbestehen.

Auf diese Weise präsentieren sich der Staat und Familien aus der Oberschicht als modern und genderfreundlich, ohne die traditionelle rassistische Verknüpfung zwischen Nation und Familie in einer modernen Demokratie aufzulösen.

Schlüsselwörter Bezahlte häusliche Arbeit · Chile · Dienstbarkeitskultur · Demokratie

1 Introduction

The organisation of care and domestic labour in Chile follows a liberal and informal model, in accordance with its post-dictatorship (1973–1989) neoliberal tendency. In the mid 20th century the State tried—but was not always able—to provide essential care, health and educational services. Today there is a strong privatisation of state services and family-based strategies (Arriagada and Todaro 2012). Even with new initiatives such as the National Care System—focused only on the poorest—the Chilean care system is moving even closer to the commodification of care and domestic labour, particularly through the continuing privatisation and familiarisation of these activities. Chilean families from different social classes manage their care or domestic needs mainly through private networks and market-based institutions, either with the help of a family member, by paying a private institution, or by employing a domestic worker (Arriagada and Todaro 2012).

To understand the familial and privatised character of the care system, we need to know how care services have been defined in the last 50 years. Pinochet's dictatorship created a civic-military alliance between bourgeois sectors and the *military family*. While in the beginning the modernisation project did not have a clear direction regarding economic policies, in the late 1970s young Chilean students—who had studied economics at the School of Chicago with Milton Friedman—became part of the military government and introduced neoliberal reforms within the State, which meant the reduction of the State's role in the economy and gave the market free access to different areas, such as health and care services. Universal welfare policies were replaced with policies focused on the poorest population, and many basic rights such as health and education were privatised (Ruiz and Boccardo 2014). For care services, the regime organised middle-class women to extend their roles as mothers and wives towards poor women, teaching them how to clean and care for their children through institutions such as CEMA (Mothers' Centres).

It was thought the end of dictatorship would significantly change the conditions inherited from it. However, new governments were committed to maintaining the social and economic policies of the regime, partly because of the negotiated character of the transition, and partly because of their allegiances with the ideas of the free market and the small state. Furthermore, as well as deepening most of the reforms introduced during the dictatorship, the new democratic governments also

introduced more progressive policies regarding women's rights and gender, generating contradiction. Economic policies that focused on gender equality, such as the Equal Opportunities Programme (created in 2000), included improvements to women's access to the labour market while at the same time still relying mainly on family-based strategies and the naturalisation of care work as women's work for the care of children and the elderly. In Bachelet's first (2006–2010) and second (2014–2018) periods, she enhanced gender equality as a structural scheme of her political programme, but introduced conflictive legislations regarding domestic labour (such as the New Domestic Labour Law and *Chile Cuida* [Chile Cares] programme, analysed in this article), reproducing an unequal access to care services. Lower-class women not qualified as *poor enough* are encouraged to work and become small entrepreneurs. They do not have access to state-based care facilities, such as nurseries, whilst middle- and upper-class families use private strategies, such as paid domestic labour or paid nurseries. In all cases, women are encouraged to work outside their homes while the sexual, class and racial division of domestic labour is not questioned but rather maintained.

However, being a 'family matter' is also intertwined with colonial legacies of feminisation and racialisation that devalue domestic labour as non-labour (Gutiérrez 2010). The commodification of domestic labour is gendered and racialized; both families and the State continue to articulate these activities as *women's duties*, and *racialised women's labour*. This helps society avoid addressing the patriarchal and racial organisation of care and domestic labour (Cox 2011). What has been termed as *care crisis* (Arriagada and Todaro 2012)—the product of more middle- and upper-class women accessing the labour market¹, an ageing population and the lack of State care services—reveals a crisis of traditional gender relations within homes: domestic labour is still seen as a responsibility of women, reproducing a patriarchal organisation of the nation. Specifically, the fact that more middle- and upper-class women are accessing the labour market—without necessarily questioning the sexual division of labour within their homes—means that paid domestic labour becomes a key strategy for these families. Their access to work is then indissolubly linked with the incorporation of indigenous, rural and migrant girls and women into their homes as domestic workers (Goldsmith 1990), allowing women employers to reproduce their class ideologies related to mothering and childcare (Cox 2011), and retaining male privileges.

Many upper-class families in Chile prefer to employ a domestic worker as they believe their homes are the best place for the care of their loved ones (Fernández 2017)—following the neoliberal tendency of doing what is 'best for the children' (Cox 2011). This desire depends upon finding a way of managing this space with the help of paid domestic workers. However, as Romero (1999) has shown in the case of the US and Staab and Mahler (2005) in the Chilean case, the *servant problem* or the *nanny problem* emerges—upper-class employers' perceptions regarding the difficulties of finding authentic *good workers*, those who know their subordinated place and perform their duties with grace. According to employers interviewed in

¹ The activity rate of women over 15 years old in the richest quintile reached 38.9% in 1990 and rose to 68.6% in 2015 (CASEN 1990, 2015).

these studies, domestic workers today *are not like they used to be*—they tend to know too much about their rights and are not willing to do everything that is expected of them (work long hours for less salary, perform activities that today are seen as beyond their responsibilities such as cleaning windows). The *servant problem* makes evident that employers require not only paid domestic labour, but a specific domestic worker, one based on a colonial nostalgic desire for the figure of the *servant* (Camus and de la O Martínez 2014)—reinvented today in ‘modern’ terms. Employers not only prefer subordinated workers but they also want efficiency, proactiveness and a culinary expert (Fernández 2017).

Chilean employers’ perceptions are affected by the legal framework that both grants and endangers migrants’ rights, as Gutiérrez and others (2014) show for the European case. Migration Law 1,094 was created in 1975 under Pinochet’s dictatorship, inspired by thoughts of national security. It was created to protect Chileans from external *dangers*, which in that period meant the possible influence of communist and anarchist ideas into the public and political domain. Under this law, regular migrants are allowed to enter Chile either as tourists or workers, needing a formal invitation from an employer for the latter. As workers, migrants are entitled to the same rights as Chilean workers. However, the law itself creates such conditions that migrant workers are at the mercy of employers’ practices. Many domestic workers enter with a tourist visa, which they can subsequently change to a ‘subject to contract’ visa, to later obtain a residence permit. To apply for residency, workers must have a working contract with the same employer for at least two years and have the last 12 pension contributions (paid by employers). This need to stay with the same employer², and have them be willing to pay their contributions, puts domestic workers in a vulnerable position where their labour rights and negotiating capacities may be ‘put on hold’ or postponed in order to obtain residency. Thus, as in the case of the UK (Anderson 2014), legal framework reinforces the notion of domestic migrant workers as servants, rather than workers with rights, contributing to employers’ devalued perceptions towards migrants and to their process of othering.

As Camus and de la O Martínez (2014) suggest in the case of Guadalajara, the *culture of servitude* constitutes a colonial legacy that understands relations of subordination between employers and workers as part of the hegemonic order, reproduced in everyday practices and emotionally embedded. This article focuses on the ways in which both the State and upper-class families in Santiago reproduce this *culture of servitude* through the commodification of paid domestic labour. Hiring migrant and working-class women allows upper-class families to perform their class and racial *authority*, tensioning traditional and modern definitions of family.

The article is divided into three sections. First, providing a description of the feminisation and racialisation of domestic labour—understanding these as colonial legacies that not only refer to the fact that domestic workers are mainly women from racialised groups, but also that a form of colonial subordination is transmitted (Gutiérrez 2010) through the *culture of servitude*, and visible in public policies and

² Workers are allowed to change but must inform the Migration Office and apply for a new visa with the new employer within 30 days. If migrant workers take longer than 30 days they may end in an irregular situation.

legislations. Second, drawing on the analysis of qualitative interviews of employers taken in 2014, it is suggested that the *culture of servitude* is recreated in discourses and practices within homes, where paid domestic labour becomes the condition of possibility for upper-class women to perform modern gender subjectivities. Third, the relationship between the *culture of servitude* and the Chilean democracy is interrogated. It is argued that the reproduction of the *culture of servitude* cohabits with, and even enables, modern versions of the Chilean neoliberal democracy and of *Chilean happy families*. The maintenance of this culture makes it possible for the Chilean State to portray itself as modern and gender-friendly, and for upper-class women to become *modern women*, while maintaining patriarchal and racist arrangements within homes and the nation.

2 Domestic labour and the culture of servitude

In the 1970s and 1980s Marxist feminism in the USA and in Europe insisted on the value of reproductive labour within the capitalist mode of production, both for the reproduction of care services not fully provided by the State or the market and of abled labour power for the maintenance of capitalism. During this same period, black feminists were making visible the racial bias of (white) feminism, suggesting that domestic labour did not affect all women in the same way, revealing historical racial and ethnic structures within reproductive labour (Glenn 1992). Socialist and Marxist feminists in Latin America, and in Chile in particular, discussed the relevance of colonial legacies and the racialisation and feminisation of low-waged reproductive labour. *Muchachas no More* (Chaney and García Castro 1989) was the first book that gathered studies on paid domestic labour in Latin America, and testimonies of domestic workers and activists. This key text not only shed light on the economic value of this labour, but also revealed its value in terms of production of class and racial status amongst Latin American elites. *Servitude*, as in the case of the USA and Europe in the 19th century, was key for the reproduction of power in 20th century in Latin America. Gutiérrez (2010) argues that this labour is devalued due to its cultural prediction as feminised and racialised. This devaluation is explained more by its cultural codification than by its practical reproductive labour: *servitude* becomes a cultural prediction of domestic labour. According to Gutiérrez (2010), these legacies are made visible in migration policies and in intimate relationships within households.

In recent years, interest on the intimate and ambiguous relationships between employers and workers, and the ideological reproduction of gendered, racial and class distinctions, became an important focus of regional (Canevaro 2014) and international studies (Gutiérrez and Brites 2014) that understood the impossibility of separating intimate spaces from the public domain. These studies suggest that intimate relations both form and inform publicly available discourses on gender, migration and difference, and construct the value of paid domestic labour. Camus and de la O Martínez (2014) use the notion of the *culture of servitude* to suggest domination/subordination relationships between employers and domestic workers continue today: a racial and ethnic colonial legacy that is re-enacted in everyday

practices and cohabits with more modern labour relations and notions regarding motherhood and labour rights. It is a nostalgic ideal: the continuity of this colonial legacy does not mean colonial relations exist today as they did in the past, or even that in colonial periods subordination was fully accomplished. Workers before and now challenge these relations and resist them within private households. As Canevaro (2014) has shown in the case of Buenos Aires, and Stefoni and Fernández (2011) in the Chilean case, workers negotiate working conditions, manage to obtain visa permits, and tension power relations through everyday practices and within employer/worker relationships. However, though never fully achieved, the reproductive power of the *culture of servitude* has the intention of maintaining hegemonic power relations.

The *culture of servitude* is the set of domination/subordination relationships that are part of the provision of personal service and domestic labour, updated for modern times. Domestic service is an activity performed mainly by racialised and indigenous women. Gendered and racialised division of work in the modern/colonial system is materialised in private households with relations of subordination.

Legacies of colonial order are felt in everyday encounters within households and hierarchal subjectivities are constructed. Indigenous, rural and black women became defined as the servants of those in charge of the civilising project: the upper classes. In the 19th century, in Chile, upper-class women were called as mothers to become the bearers of the new nation; but in the first half of the 20th century the medicalisation of motherhood became a crucial node for a new biopolitics and control of a growing urban population, and provided upper-class women a special status: the norm to be emulated by working-class women in terms of the correct way of making a home (Illanes 2006). Later, in the second half of the 20th century, upper-class women were again called to help order a society in crisis, with the emergence of socialism and later within Pinochet's dictatorship (1973–1989). The upper-class family figure became a key image-ideology (Oyarzún 2000) for needed social cohesion and lower-class women were again called to *serve* these families and the nation. This relation between women, family and nation was unchanged by subsequent democratic governments (1990–today) and intensified, with new *modern* demands of women's autonomy and social rights. Today, care and domestic labour is still portrayed as *women's duties*, but is transferred from middle- and upper-class women to working-class, migrant and racialised women—seen as natural servants of privileged homes.

While upper-class women and families have been the bearers of the nation, *other women* were their servants. In Chile, as in other part of the region (Chaney and García Castro 1989; Durin et al. 2014), domestic workers have historically come from poor, indigenous and rural communities (Stefoni and Fernández 2011). While in the 1940s domestic workers were mainly internal migrants with rural and/or indigenous backgrounds, from the 1990s regional migrants also became a new labour force, especially in the case of Peruvian women. Domestic labour is now the third most important economic activity for Chilean women (12.2% work as domestic workers, CASEN 2015), and the most important activity for Peruvian women (more than 70% are domestic workers, Arriagada and Todaro 2012).

The fact that domestic workers have been either internal or regional migrants hints towards the predominance of a colonial legacy, which reproduced social hierarchies, based on gender, race, ethnicity and class, and enabled the lifestyles and the construction of racial status of the elite. This legacy enables the *culture of servitude* to continue but also to be translated into modern forms of domestic labour and institutionalised in legal frameworks. As Gutiérrez (2010) and Anderson (2014) have shown, structural forms of oppression are reinforced by legislation. In Chile, it was only in 2015 that the new domestic labour law (N°20.786, 2014) fully came into force. Domestic workers' unions had been campaigning for several years, a long struggle, and this law was an achievement of their political negotiations in parliament. One of their main objectives was that the law defined them as *trabajadoras de casa particular* (private household workers), to challenge the common use of the name *nanas*—a pejorative form used to refer to domestic workers and that, according to the unions, invisibilised their condition as workers. *Nana* is a modern way of referring to the figure of the servant: a woman who is completely available for the needs of families. It gives continuity to the *culture of servitude*.

The highlights of this new law were, among others, related to salary, contract and working hours. Domestic workers' salary was finally brought in line with minimum wage—previously they were entitled to only 75% of it. Working hours were also limited from 72 to 45. So, until this law, domestic workers were legally available for employers' needs 72 h per week and only entitled to 75% of the minimum wage. Although an advance for workers' rights, the new law barely defines ways in which such rights are to be enforced. As an example, it stipulated that workers who live where they work should get 12 h of rest per day, however, the number of working hours per day was not defined, leaving the possibility for women to be asked to work for the resting 12 h. This shows the limitations of and resistance within the Chilean society and amongst parliament members—who are mainly employers—to define the amount of hours live-in workers should do; preserving the idea that workers are eternally available for employers' needs (Anderson 2014). This condition of constant availability is an enclave of the *culture of servitude*, a way of maintaining domination/subordination relationships between employers and workers, and for middle- and upper-class families to perform their lifestyle without questioning the patriarchal organisation of society. Through this deficient law the state gives continuity to the *culture of servitude*, promoting the exploitation of working-class women, naturalising the constant availability of workers, and enabling patriarchal family models in a *modern democracy*.

The State programme *Chile Cuida y Respiro* (Chile Cares and Breaths) began in 2016 as a pilot version with low-income families. It aims to provide care for elderly people in a situation of moderate or severe dependency who are currently being cared for by family members in their homes. Trained carers 'relieve' women of their care labour, allowing them to have a few hours per week to either rest or work. However, as is evident in a public discourse given by the President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, having care provision is not a social right, but a help, a breath to rest and later return to their natural duties. "That is why it is called 'Chile cares and breaths'. It's a moment for them, a moment for them to do other work." (Bachelet 2016).

In addition, the women who receive this *help* are encouraged to take training courses to become carers themselves in other homes, in order to improve their family income. Women doing care work in their own homes may end up doing care work in other people's homes: an economic strategy to decrease national poverty by reproducing the notion that women only do care labour and that working-class women should do care work, rather than other economic activities, reproducing class, ethnic and racial difference between women.

"[Chile Cuida] ... becomes a source of training and employment for women ... But the most important of all is that it allows us to take one more step so that Chile is the more solidary country that we want, that country where no one is left behind." (Bachelet 2016).

Women's service labour in private households becomes attached to the reproduction of a nation based on solidarity. These women are emotionally compelled to become servants of the nation. Furthermore, with the *return to democracy* in 1990, gender and women's rights became a matter of economic development. To struggle against unemployment and poverty, governments invested in training and entrepreneurship opportunities for lower-class women. However, it is evident that with the new domestic labour law and social policies such as *Chile Cuida*, care and domestic needs continue to be portrayed as a matter for families and for working-class and racialised women. The Chilean democracy is still based on the understanding that working-class women are the *servants* of the nation.

3 Employers wanting servants

Private households also give continuity to the *culture of servitude* through the *nanny problem* and the nostalgic desire of upper-class employers for *good servants*. Drawing on interviews with upper-class women who employ live-in workers, performed in Santiago in 2014, this section interrogates the relationship between the desire for servants and living a *modern life*. These 20 in-depth interviews were performed in the homes of women of the richest percentile. They all had children under 15 years old, lived in Las Condes, Lo Barnechea and Providencia (all upper-class boroughs of Santiago) and hired live-in workers. They were sourced initially via personal networks and subsequently through contacts from the women already interviewed. The conversations focused on their family history with paid domestic labour, their current situations with workers, and their expectations towards their relationships. Although performed before the legal changes brought about by the new Domestic Labour Law and the *Chile Cuida* programme, the interviews are informed by and reflect the political debate around domestic workers' rights: between 2013 and 2014 these institutional changes were highly present and debated on national television and in newspapers—many employers knew these changes were coming.

In the interviews it became clear that employers' demands for paid domestic labour involved not only a need for care provision, but also *help* to live a *modern gender lifestyle*—one which enables upper-class women to work, be independent and manage their time but without fully challenging the patriarchal order of their homes. Employers declared a great desire to have a *happy family*, which meant

having *good and happy* children, a husband in work, and a beautiful house, while at the same time having a professional life and free time for themselves. In order to organise all these requirements, employers felt that *having* a domestic worker was a necessity.

“For me it is super important to develop professionally, not so much to be the superwoman in the office but I like to play a good role there, I like to be perceived as a responsible woman or someone who achieves the goals she sets. Inside the house it’s the same, I like success. I love when visitors tell me that my children are the most loving, I feel I am accomplishing ... but without Carmen that would be impossible.” (Rosa, 39 years).

It is not workers, but *nanas* that are desired. The emergence of the *nanny problem* (Staab and Mahler 2005) is a nostalgic demand for *good nanas*: those rural migrants that today Latin American migrants re-enact as modern servants, those who know their subordinated place and enable upper-class families to naturalise their class status. The *nanny problem* is how the *culture of servitude* becomes real.

“It has changed a lot, what was once a nana to what it is now. Formerly they were like almost servants, my grandmother would ring a little bell to call them, not today, today it’s more relaxed. More than being lighter today there are more rights ... they have too many rights” (Rosalba, 36 years).

“It’s no use to me if [workers] are too picky, if they are too demanding, because if they can’t come to my house then my entire organisation goes upside down. I need a nana that is always available, one that doesn’t demand too much.” (Valentina, 35 years).

Their demand is not only for submissive *nanas*, but also for an authentic affective performance of obliging devotion and Chilean women *know their rights too much*. Peruvian and Filipino workers are the new authentic servants—due to their natural willingness to serve and indulge employers’ needs, and their loving attitude towards children. A *nanas’ origin* (racial, ethnic and national) becomes her certificate as *good domestic worker*, a perception informed by the migration regime (Anderson 2014).

“[A worker needs to] be docile, in the sense that [you would say something and you will receive a good answer ... Also she has to be ... I think it’s a matter of character. Of respect.” (Constanza, 45 years).

“I have had Peruvian nanas who have been far the best ... in the treatment, super professionals with their job ... they cook amazingly, they are loving, great with children, make their job contented and happy.” (Carolina, 32 years).

The demand for *good nanas* materialises in the request for affective labour (Gutiérrez 2010) in their everyday activities: cleaning the toilet with a good face, smiling at employers, showing genuine affection for children. Phrases like “the Peruvian nana is more loving”, or “the Filipina nana prepares exquisite cuisine, ideal for the guests” appeared in the interviews with employers. The otherness of immigrant women—filtered by the host society, and influenced by migration regimes and by state legislations and programmes—is commodified and converted into servitude. The demand for migrant workers reflects the search for new forms of racial and class differentiation that simultaneously makes possible the re-establishment of employers’ superiority, privilege, and the right to be served. Furthermore, employers

create *modern* ways in which to articulate their past privileges through an affective economy. Similar to the European case (Gutiérrez 2010), the demand for migrant workers becomes a way in which the *culture of servitude* benefits upper-class families in Santiago, enabling them to have a *happy family* by maintaining traditional status.

4 Conclusions: tensioning the Chilean democracy

According to Anderson (2014), in the British case it is through everyday intimate relations between employers and workers that national projects and consensus, such as *Britishness* and the normative figure of the family are reproduced. In the Chilean case, paid domestic labour represents a particular form of commodification of domestic labour, one that is based on the continuity of colonial legacies of racialisation and feminisation of servitude, and which enables upper-class women and families to reproduce their privileged lifestyles and live the modern gender promise of autonomy while having a *happy family*. This combination of modern and colonial organisation of upper-class households can be observed in the figure of the *Chilean happy family* (Fernández 2017). This figure has become a consensus—related to broader political and national projects of the Chilean modern democracy—and is desired in private households. It is a consensus related to a democracy that declares it stands for gender equality and labour rights, but continues to see working-class women and domestic workers as bodies in the service of care and domestic duties. It is a democracy that is both built upon and provides continuity to the culture of servitude.

A legacy that continues to haunt the figure of the *Chilean happy family* today is the notion that the aesthetic value of upper-class families is linked to ‘national unity’, something that Chilean feminists in the 1980s criticised. Further studies suggest that this aesthetic representation of the middle- and upper-class family was one that was bi-parental, white, and *well constituted*, and is the same aesthetic still promoted in media and advertising today (PNUD 2012). During the military coup and thereafter, upper classes, and the figure of the *Chilean happy family*, became the political subject of national stability and later of the *democratic transition* from the 1990s onwards.

During the most violent and brutal period of the military and civic dictatorship (1973–1989), feminist activists and theorists fought and campaigned for democracy. Their theme, *democracia en la nación y en la casa (y en la cama)* (democracy in the nation and at home [and in bed]), echoed feminist struggles in the Western world, making a direct relation between the ‘private’ and the political, between intimacy and the ‘public’ sphere. Making the political personal is, also, a reaction to the efforts made during the dictatorship by the political and economic elite of uniting the people with the national project, especially through the conflation between family and nation, a conflation which would supposedly allow social harmony in a moment of crisis. It is with this union that the coup promoted social cohesion by elevating the figure of the nuclear (heterosexual, white, middle-class) family, and defining it as guarantor of political and economic stability.

Nowadays, with the *democratic transition*, this notion of family not only continues, but is perfected by adding the figure of the *modern woman*, one that can manage being professional/worker, a housewife and a good mother. This figure was promoted, and represented as a key person in the new modern and neoliberal Chilean society (Castillo 2016), used by social policies within the new democratic governments, allowing them to define themselves as having modern gender equality ideals. The *Chilean happy family* is an ideal that circulates and promotes both traditional and modern definitions of the Chilean democracy, and is felt and desired by employers. Furthermore, this ideal gives continuity to the *culture of servitude* every time upper-class families employ domestic workers. Paid domestic labour allows and, at the same time, reveals the fragility of the *Chilean democracy*. It is the dichotomy of wanting to be a *modern country* without changing pre-modern relations of servitude. Today, *modern Chile* co-exists with a *culture of servitude*. Servitude is the condition for the *Chilean happy family*. While upper-class women and the State can be framed as modern, working-class and migrant women are compelled to become servants of the nation, reproducing racial, class and ethnic difference between women. Revealing this condition becomes a feminist strategy to destabilise the norm of the *Chilean happy family* in order to critically address the *Chilean promise* of being a modern democracy for everyone.

References

- Anderson, Bridget. 2014. Nations, migration and domestic labor: the case of the UK. *Women's Studies International Forum* 46:5–12.
- Arriagada, Irma, and Rosalba Todaro. 2012. *Cadenas globales de cuidado: el papel de las migrantes peruanas en la provisión de cuidados en Chile*. Santiago de Chile: ONU Mujeres.
- Bachelet, Michelle. 2016. Opening Discourse Programa Chile Crece Contigo. <https://prensa.presidencia.cl/discurso.aspx?id=57085>. Accessed 1 Mar 2016.
- Camus, Manuela, and O. de la Martínez. 2014. El encanto de la colonialidad tapatía. Notas sobre la cultura de la servidumbre. In *Trabajadoras en la sombra. Dimensiones del servicio doméstico latinoamericano*, ed. Séverine Durin, Eugenia O. de la María, and Santiago Bastos, 145–171. Mexico: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social.
- Canevaro, Santiago. 2014. Afectos, saberes y proximidades en la gestión del cuidado de niños. Empleadas y empleadoras del servicio doméstico en Buenos Aires. In *Trabajadoras en la Sombra. Dimensiones del servicio doméstico latinoamericano*, ed. Séverine Durin, Eugenia O. de la Martínez, and Santiago Bastos, 173–200. Mexico: Publicaciones de la Casa Chata.
- CASEN. 2009. *Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional*. Santiago de Chile: Ministerio de Desarrollo Social, Gobierno de Chile.
- CASEN. 2015. *Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional*. Santiago de Chile: Ministerio de Desarrollo Social, Gobierno de Chile.
- Castillo, Alejandra. 2016. *Disensos feministas*. Editorial Palinodia.
- Chaney, Elsa, and Mary García Castro. 1989. *Muchachas no more. Household workers in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Cox, Rosie. 2011. Competitive mothering and delegated care: class relationships in nanny and au pair employment. *Studies in the Maternal* 3(2):1–13.
- Durin, Séverine, Eugenia O. de la María, and Santiago Bastos (eds.). 2014. *Trabajadoras en la Sombra. Dimensiones del servicio doméstico latinoamericano*. Mexico: Publicaciones de la Casa Chata.
- Fernández, Rosario. 2017. Trabajo doméstico pagado: la “solución perfecta” para la “familia feliz” en Chile. In *(Des) Orden de género. Políticas y mercados del cuerpo en Chile*, ed. Jorge Pavez, 93–120. Santiago de Chile: CRANN Editores.
- Glenn, Evelyn. 1992. From servitude to service work: historical continuities in the racial division of paid reproductive labor. *Signs* 18(1):1–43.

- Goldsmith, Mary. 1990. El servicio doméstico y la migración femenina. In *Trabajo femenino y crisis en México. Tendencias y transformaciones actuales*, ed. Elia Ramírez, Helia Dávila, 257–275. Mexico: UAM.
- Gutiérrez, Encarnación. 2010. *Migration, domestic work and affect. A decolonial approach on value and the feminization of labor*. New York, London: Routledge Research in Gender and Society.
- Gutiérrez, Encarnación, and Jurema Brites. 2014. Feminization of labor: domestic work between regulation and intimacy. *Special Issue on Domestic Labour: Women's Studies International Forum* 46:1–4. Editorial.
- Illanes, María Angélica. 2006. *Cuerpo y sangre de la política. La construcción histórica de las visitadoras sociales (1887–1940)*. Santiago: LOM.
- Oyarzún, Kemy. 2000. La familia como ideologema. Género, globalización y cultura, Chile, 1989–1997. *Revista Chilena de Humanidades* 20:115–146.
- PNUD. 2012. *Bienestar subjetivo: el desafío de repensar el desarrollo*. Santiago: United Nations.
- Romero, Mary. 1999. Immigration, the servant problem, and the legacy of the domestic labor debate: “Where can you find good help these days!”. *University of Miami Law Review* 53:1045–1064.
- Ruiz, Carlos, and Giorgio Boccardo. 2014. *Los Chilenos Bajo el Neoliberalismo. Clases y Conflicto Social*. Santiago de Chile: Fundación Nodo XXI y Ediciones El Desconcierto.
- Staab, Silke, and Kristen Mahler. 2005. Nanny politics. The dilemmas of working women’s empowerment in Santiago, Chile. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 7(1):71–88.
- Stefoni, Carolina, and Rosario Fernández. 2011. Mujeres inmigrantes en el trabajo doméstico. Entre el servilismo y los derechos. In *Mujeres migrantes en Chile. ¿Mano de obra o trabajadoras con derechos?*, ed. Carolina Stefoni, 45–72. Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Universidad Alberto Hurtado.

Rosario Fernández PhD candidate and associate lecturer in the Sociology Department at Goldsmiths University of London. She holds a master’s degree in Philosophical Studies and a bachelor in Sociology from the University Alberto Hurtado in Chile. She is a founding member of the Chilean research group *Nation, Otherness and Desire*.