

# Working Mothers and Nannies: Commercialization of Childcare and Modifications in the Gender Contract (A Sociological Essay)<sup>1</sup>

*Elena Zdravomyslova, European University in St. Petersburg and Center of Independent Sociological Studies, St. Petersburg, Russia*

## Abstract

The commercialization of domestic care, in particular paid care for small children, strengthens the informal employment market in Russia. To study the emergence and expansion of the strongly gender-marked sector of domestic work, in-depth interviews were conducted with 11 nannies and 41 employers from 2004 to 2006 in St. Petersburg. The author differentiates between two models of domestic childcare that are currently in demand: nannies of the more “patriarchal” (traditional) type and babysitters. Part of the paper is devoted to the problem of building up a relation of trust between the nanny and the parents (usually the mother). The informal nature of their contract, centered around the well-being of the child, conceals the fact that this form of paid domestic work actually contributes to the deepening of social inequality. The author also explores the consequences of the commercialization of childcare for the changes in the gender contract of the “working mother” and the changing role of the grandmother in contemporary Russian society.

**Keywords:** Childcare, Gender Contract, Paid Domestic Work, St. Petersburg

Having learned that we had finished a project dedicated to studying paid domestic labor, Natasha, a young mother, turned to me with a request: “Could you please advise me on how to find a good nanny. I need a nanny urgently!”

It turned out, however, that it was not quite so easy to give that kind of advice. Natasha’s question made me cast a more pragmatic glance on the results of our investigation.

Prior to offering advice, one has to clarify the unique life circumstances of each young mother. The strategy for hiring a nanny depends on the age of the child and on the needs and resources of the family as a whole and of the young mother herself. Natasha’s baby boy is four months old. He is heavy—the young mother has a strained back, for she has to constantly carry an eight-kilogram (18-pound) baby. The young parents do not have much money, and the acquaintances are few and far between. As far as the grandmother is concerned, she also gets tired, as taking care of an infant is hard physical and emotional work. In this particular case, they need a nanny to go for a walk with the baby, two to three hours daily. The nanny has to be agile and healthy, and preferably has to live in the vicinity. It is clear that the mother wants to get the most reliable and the least costly of all possible nannies. Actually, she needs not a patriarchal

nanny (see below for a definition) but a babysitter, not a quasi-family member who would be a substitute for the grandmother—let alone the mother—but a young woman who would manage a certain set of tasks specified beforehand.

Taking into account the personal circumstances of the young lady, I recommended to Natalia that she try looking for a babysitter on her own. She should not apply to any hiring agency. There are convincing arguments against this route: lack of control on the part of the agency over the employees they recommend, overpriced services ... Our investigation demonstrated that Internet searches are rather effective, especially in the mailing-list networks connected with acquaintances (students, young researchers, people with common interests). The cheapest variant would be a babysitter from the ranks of migrants or students.

This story illustrates the changes in gender relations in modern Russian society, which are happening due to the commercialization of domestic care, in particular paid care for small children. Commercialization of domestic labor presupposes the development of the female segment of the informal employment market. Let us analyze the rules according to which the informal gender-marked segment of the domestic labor market is reproduced and let us consider how it is linked with the gender changes in Russian society in general.

The materials of the investigation at hand are 11 in-depth focused interviews with nannies and 41 interviews with their employers, which were conducted with the female residents of St. Petersburg over the period 2004 to 2006. The selection was targeted. The methods of respondents search was a “snowball” method via Internet newsgroups, and we controlled for economic and demographic characteristics. The female employers were subdivided into several groups that would correspond with three different types of family organization: working single mothers with children, working mothers in a full-fledged nuclear family, and married mothers who do not work. All the employers (with the exception of the only man in our sample) were representatives of the middle class; with higher education (sometimes two diplomas and a further professional qualification training on top of that); household income over US\$300 per person; employment in the private sector, occupying the positions of professional managers, experts, or smaller business owners. Age bracket: 28 to 40 (with two exceptions); number of children: one to two, aged 13 and younger. Our subjects were almost exclusively women, and this is not a coincidence: Russia is still characterized by the reproduction of *gender role division*, whereby women are recognized as experts in the sphere of everyday life. Apart from this, paid childcare represents a gender-marked, namely female, segment of the labor market. In the present article we will take into consideration only the experiences of educated working mothers (both married and not married) who resort to the services of paid nannies.<sup>2</sup> The main issue touched upon by the in-depth focused interviews was the organization of relations between young working mothers (i.e., employers) and nannies (i.e., representatives of the subgroup of the service class of paid domestic workers in the making). The key question is this: under what kinds of conditions is the informal contract being reproduced, and why are the employers as well as the employed interested in it? The second key question is the following: how does the commercialization of childcare affect gender relations in Russia?

The structure of this article is as follows. First and foremost, we are going to take up the major gender categories, which will help us analyze the relations between domestic workers and their employers. Then we will present the results of our empirical studies. In the concluding part we will assess the consequences of the commercialization of childcare for the changes in the gender contract of the “working mother” in contemporary Russian society.

### **The Soviet Gender Contract and Its Disintegration**

Analyzing the empirical-studies data, we take the concept of gender contract as the foundation of our analysis. The main issue of the gender contract is the question of how social reproduction in the society is organized—who is responsible for the organization of everyday life (Temkina and Rotkirch 2002). Numerous studies confirm that the Soviet gender contract hinged on the institutional support of the female role as *working mother*, proscribed by both the state and society. Parenting was predominantly marked as motherhood. Among the social institutions providing for the support of this contract were state institutions catering to children—daycare centers for infants, kindergartens, after-school clubs, Pioneers’ and schoolchildren’s clubs, recreation camps, and the like. If parents had the opportunity, they resorted to the assistance of older relatives, who, as per the model of the extended family, made their contributions to the child’s upbringing, even when the representatives of the older generation lived separately from the rest of the family. In the process, the gender typing of domestic care was being reproduced. A significant contribution to childcare was made by grandmothers. This is closely related to the fact that women retire earlier than men, as well as to the fact that they treat the age-related familial roles more seriously and ardently, taking them as a part of their identity (cf. Semenova 1996). Friendships and neighborhood networks were also involved in the upbringing of children. These, as our empirical studies show, were for the most part female matrifocal networks, which support gender differentiation in society. In the privileged groups, there were rare cases of hired domestic labor for childcare and household chores (live-out or live-in nannies-cum-charwomen). Due to economic and ideological factors, paid domestic labor in the childcare sector, though it did take place, was a shadow phenomenon, practiced rarely and in a fragmentary fashion.

### ***Comparison with the Soviet Gender Paradigm: Where Are You, Grandmas and Daycare Centers?***

The gender-contract model described above was part of the daily experience of Soviet citizens and crystallized as a collective generational memory, creating that conceptual background which defines the horizon of understanding the ongoing changes and provides a frame of reference for comparisons. Remembering those who took care of them as children, our respondents name (apart from their parents) their grandmothers and grandfathers, and at times their elder sisters. Almost always, daycare centers and kindergartens are mentioned, and occasionally nannies are remembered. In their recollections, the nostalgic tones—for the most

part when recalling carefree relationships with grandmothers and grandfathers—go hand in hand with pragmatic assessments of the new prospects in childcare. These contrasting juxtapositions of the present and the past make evident a significant change in the gender contract of post-Soviet society. What we have in mind is not so much the complete replacement of institutions that support the balancing of paid professional work and parenthood, but rather a change in the rules of the game, so to speak, according to which the practical aspects of everyday life and childcare organization are structured. A 25-year-old woman reminisces:

Since I was three years old I lived at my grandma's or great-grandma's in the Dnepropetrovsk region in the Ukraine ... I went to ... a great number of various kindergartens. Then I went to school. In summer I was, as a rule, handed over to [one of my] grandmas. And otherwise, well, my parents picked me up themselves. And, well, the neighbors in the communal apartment were also ... pretty actively engaged in my upbringing, yes, in some first years of school. Well, it was like picking me up from the music school or, like, waiting somewhere at the swimming pool, you know, or meeting me and feeding me soup at home. So, well, it was just small, stopgap things by way of helping out ... (Woman aged 25 with son aged 4)

Another respondent joins in:

No, there was no nanny. I had a mother, a father, kindergarten from the first year of my life, daycare center. In those times kindergartens were a routine, and at 7 pm the parents picked you up. ... And that's it. Well, of course, if shopping was needed there were grandmas. And on the weekend also grandmas. In summer there were camps. ... Certainly no one had any such problems in the past. Life was different from now. There were no such jobs where you had to work late into the night. The work schedule was strictly defined—at six, at seven, everyone was at home, sitting there quietly (laughing). (Woman aged 35 with a daughter aged 4)

There were nannies then, too, however—according to one of our respondents:

Nannies during the Soviet regime and nannies now—these are two different statuses. During Soviet times the nannies were traditional—they were all Arina Rodionovnas.<sup>3</sup> They were all from rural areas. All lived in the house and were family members. Some were young, some were old, but until their own personal life was settled, they lived with the family. (Nanny, 56, retiree)

Nannies were migrants from villages or women with limited citizen rights,<sup>4</sup> and they often lived with the family, trying to manage the various domestic chores and having the status

of poor domestics or very meagerly paid employees. These were patriarchal nannies, and such a model of childcare is still preserved in many people's minds, despite the pressure exerted by market mechanisms and the professionalization of paid domestic labor.

The commercialization of domestic childcare is the product of changes in inter-generational relations, too. Here one of the significant parameters is the crisis of the grandmother's role within the family. This phenomenon is accompanied by several circumstances. One of them is the continuing nuclearization of urban-middle class families. As intergenerational contacts dwindle, young mothers prefer to organize their daily lives on their own, and they live separately and try to be financially and emotionally independent from the older generation. A lot of our respondents prefer making use of nannies' services because relying on grandmothers' help in domestic work presupposes the (tangible and symbolic) acknowledgment of their authority, and this is precisely what the young families are trying to avoid, striving to shake off the authority and power of the elders. A young mother comments:

Right, and then, again, with grandmothers it is more complicated, and with nannies it is easier. Right? I pay her a fee, I tell her that she should do this, and should not do that. Right? And grandmothers, well, they think that they need to teach you how to live, and that is why it would have been difficult for me even with my own mother in this respect. OK. And then, grandmothers, they also love to pamper, to be led by the nose [by the little ones] ... (Woman aged 32 with a son aged 4)

The representatives of the older generation in middle-class families, in turn, have also had a change in social status. They do not reflect on themselves in terms of a derivative status (dependency on their children): they are still full of vigor and entertain their own interests, which differ from the interests of their children and grandchildren. On the other hand, it is still characteristic of Russian society that mothers have children at a relatively young age, which means that the parents' generation continues working when their children start having children of their own. A working grandmother is not prepared to perform the childcare functions in their full spectrum. One of our respondents, a young mother, fully recognizes this fact:

The grandmother turned out to have a turbulent, as it were, working biography, which she was by no means going to sacrifice, not for a moment, and I was always [(laughing)] like a heroine mother<sup>5</sup> with this baby of mine wrapped in a towel, when I needed whatever. (Woman aged 40 with a daughter aged 6)

Economic transformation, the changes in Russian social politics, and the cultural legacy of gender socialization result in female retirees with grandmother's status continuing to work in the sphere of paid labor. This is important for them for a number of reasons. Economically speaking, it is important to continue working after reaching retirement age in order to make ends

meet and to provide for a tolerable existence for oneself. For professionals, the work itself and the status of an independent woman are of chief interest. In other words, the contract “working grandmother” becomes legitimate and replaces the late-Soviet contract “grandmother bringing up her grandchild.” The gender structuring of childcare as a whole changes, accordingly, and the labor of hired nannies is now in demand.

Grandmas and grandpas are all super-busy people nowadays ... So, as they are both working grandmothers, the only time when they are available is the weekend, so the weekends or some force-majeur circumstances, for instance our nanny is not babysitting in the evening if we need to go out somewhere with my husband, to the cinema, to the theater. —Woman aged 24 with a daughter aged 1 year and 8 months

Among the nannies in our sample, a significant number were representatives of a certain social category known as “the new poor,” whose socioeconomic position has substantially worsened as a result of market reforms and changes in social politics (Ovcharova and Prokofieva 2000). Unpaid labor of grandmothers has come to be supplanted by the paid labor of a nanny, who can also be someone’s grandmother at the same time.

The new gender contract also takes its shapes in line with changing functions of social networks and children’s institutions under the conditions of market relations. In the new situation friends, neighbors, etc., are to a much lesser degree prone to offer free assistance and exchange for favors. The commercialization of everyday life has its effect on the structure of mutual-help relationships.

As far as pre-school institutions are concerned, here one thing is obvious: daycare centers have virtually disappeared from common practice nowadays. Kindergartens remain, but they do not have enough available space; their services are no longer covered by the state budget and require significant parental payments. The number of various specialized commercial children’s institutions is growing, but they do not satisfy the growing demand regarding childcare, especially as concerns children of a younger age (see Rzhantsina 2007; Il’ina 2007; Gradskaia, in print).

In a word, the social institutions that in Soviet society catered to the balancing of the mother’s role and the working woman’s role no longer fulfill their functions to a full extent. Market relations and the stratification processes have led to the increase of demand in paid domestic female labor. On the other hand, the supply of this workforce is also being created: a whole group of unemployed females—students in search of temporary earnings, retirees still able to work, qualified employees of the budget sector in need of an additional source of income, etc.—all offer their cheap or not so cheap services to families of middle and upper classes with children.

### **Demand: The Difficult Life of Working Mothers**

The development of market relations in the Russian society makes the balancing of roles of working mothers more complicated: the time deficit, the intensification of labor, and the required constant professional development present significant hindrances to combining the maternal role with a professional occupation. Here is how young mothers employed in the private sector of the economy describe their “brave new life”:

I go to bed at half past one; that is normal. Sometimes later. Seldom, though. I do not manage to do anything about the house, so ... And when I have done everything with Masha, when she is in bed, you don't manage to do the ironing or the laundry, you know. But you have to. So I do it like this, with half-closed eyes ... (Woman aged 42 with a daughter aged 8)

Qualified working women employed in small businesses remark on hyperintensive work, irregular working hours, working overtime, and frequent business trips that are necessary for the successful functioning of the business. Time deficit, rush, lack of attention to children and other family members—these are the leitmotifs of their tales of this “crazy world.” “The syndrome of temporal deficit” is typical of both single mothers and full-fledged families with both parents working.

We are utterly unable to get anything done these days, this is it. We are so ... we have neither energy nor time for any kind of outings, because all the free time that we have at our disposal we spend trying to organize the everyday stuff. Our mother-in-law does not make any contributions to our daily life ... (Woman aged 25 with a son aged 4)

The difficulties in juggling work and daily domestic life were, of course, known to Soviet women as well. Irremediable dissatisfaction with the Soviet possibilities of the role balance in the 1960s has been excellently described in N. Baranskaia's novella *A Week Like Any Other Week* (Baranskaia 1969). Although nowadays the structure of time distribution for a middle-class working woman has changed and the consumer deficit has been surmounted, the persistent time deficit is still there, just like the need to make a living. Our respondents point out the connection of the new problems of role balance with the fact that the world of market relations can be demanding, and the cutthroat competition does not allow qualified working women to make use of maternity-leave benefits. They try to make time for intensive communication with children and relatives—time for the family and for themselves. And the more responsible the position and the more interesting the job is, the stronger this market pressure becomes. A smooth and uncontroversial juggling of roles is not feasible if a woman is career-oriented. A young family needs helpers, especially in those cases where a working mother is rearing a child on her own. Social politics with respect to family are reduced to monetary measures. The rules of the game

are dictated by the particular, “wild” Russian market, which cannot be called socially oriented, despite all the good intentions of the new demographic politics:

Well, what we have at work is ... a private business. Nobody welcomes sitting at home with children, nobody likes that. Even in state organizations they are not particularly keen on that. And in a private enterprise all the more, and in the position of the director? This is unacceptable. (Woman aged 32 with a son aged 3)

Whatever the personal preferences of the woman, the Russian market imposes its conditions: if you want to keep your job, you have to look for personal assistance in childcare, as the state is unlikely to help you.

For me, of course, my child is the priority, and not the job. I don't tell my boss this, though ... When we once talked about the new position, when he offered me the job, he said: “How would you manage the kid?” I told him that I have a nanny, and if the child falls ill I will sit through the acute phase, but once he is on the way to recovery, the nanny can easily take over, because I only write a plan ... the plan of administering the medication. (Manager aged 28 with a son aged 4)

It is not only the career orientation and the need to earn money that compel female representatives of educated classes to look for a nanny and to go back to work as soon as possible. Women with a high level of education who are oriented toward independent income and professional self-realization find it more and more difficult to confine their world to the domestic circle. Discussing her priorities, one respondent says:

It is possible throughout to sit at home with the child before schooling, then see him go to school, then have the second child, sit at home with the child again, and so on and so forth. But I am not quite happy with this scheme. I am constantly unnerved. I want to rely on myself ... That is why, when I have been three years ... when three years have passed, and higher education, it is such a curious thing, it leaves a peculiar imprint, so that with time it seems as if the brain goes stale. And three years will make it surely go stale. I didn't want that to happen. I got a strong desire to work. (Manager aged 28 with a son aged 4)

Another reason young mothers make their choice in favor of a nanny is that they feel deprived of their freedom, isolated, and confined in their domestic space. They suffer from the necessity to “sit with the child.” The researchers comment on the topophobia<sup>6</sup> of housewives confined against their will (Smirnova, in print). Summing up their feelings toward the end of their maternity leave, a mother says:



First, I already started preparing to go back to work; second, I already could not stomach sitting at home! (Woman aged 31 with a daughter aged 5)

In our data, there is no evidence that participation of the father in domestic concerns can substantially change the situation. Childcare still remains predominantly the sphere of female competence.

### **Paid Childcare: The Demand for an Informal Labor Contract**

Commercialization of domestic service occurs to a considerable extent within the framework of informal economy, though not only there (see Evdokimova 2004; Ovcharova and Prokofieva 2000). In our opinion, the very character of such work as domestic childcare propels this kind of occupation into the sphere of informal employment, where personalized emotionally charged relations between employees (nannies), their charges and objects of care (children), and employers (parents) develop (Ehrenreich et al. 2003; Anderson 2000; Gregson and Lowe 1994). Besides, domestic work hardly allows for rigid regulation and precise appraisal. Personalized care puts nannies and parents (mothers) into a dependency on the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. Among the circumstances that push the gender contract of the working mother into the sphere of informal economy, we will point out those which manifested themselves most explicitly in our study.

First, paid domestic labor is associated with trust and confidentiality. Second, there is a mutual benefit from informal employment for both employee and employer, i.e., the pragmatics of employment deformatization. Third, there are the cultural models or specifics of childcare defined by the cultural and historical context of Russia and affecting the supply and demand. In our opinion, the reproduced patriarchal model of the domestic nanny (Moor and Etkind 2004) furthers the development of the informal-relations market.

Let us first consider how trust in the relations between the nanny and the family is generated. Then let us look at the cultural parameters of the relations between employers and employees. After that, let us see how the benefits of informal employment are being assessed by both parties to the informal contract.

### ***Nannies' Work As Trust-Based Service***

The peculiarity of confidential service is that its results are not obvious and their appraisal is fraught with difficulties. Confidential services are provided by doctors (for it does not become immediately obvious how their prescriptions affect their clients' health), teachers (for it is not clear exactly how useful the knowledge acquired in the process of education will turn out to be), and, of course, nannies (for it is difficult to control their daily actions, and the significance of their work is exceptionally high for their employers). A confidential service presupposes the impossibility of full control over the quality of execution. It is necessary to rely

on the competence and the work ethic of the employee who offers this kind of service. Trust is necessary when one hands over control of one's child to a stranger, to grant an employee access into the private life of the family.

The significance of the trust factor is augmented by the significance of a nanny's work for the family. Children are often the focus of the family's world. The parents delegate their responsibility to a nanny, often treating the emergent and consolidating mutual bond between nanny and child with jealousy. The nanny is required to perform emotional work,<sup>7</sup> where it is difficult to make a distinction between this work and caring maternal attention, manifestations of parental love and tenderness.

Nannies themselves are aware of the specifics of their work and its emotional component; they describe their work as an "exchange of energies," "soul exchange," or "some kind of emotional exchange." This kind of work is difficult to convert into money. Not by accident, many of our nannies feel "embarrassed" to discuss the financial conditions of employment with their employers, and mothers understand that they pay little and have to compensate for this underpayment for emotional work via non-monetary rewards or symbolic acknowledgment. According to market conditions, nanny work is paid for similarly to a cleaning lady's work and is much cheaper than the labor of workers on a construction site who perform repair work or the labor of plumbers. As feminist research has showed, the logic of the market is not capable of appreciating the affective labor involved in childcare in full accordance with its significance for family and society (Hochschild 1983). As a rule, the pay given for the care reflects the skills and the knowledge but does not reflect the emotional work and the trusting admittance into private life (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003).

The significance of personal trust is intensified in connection with the issue of children's safety in public venues. Nannies perform the function of accompanying and protecting children up to early adolescence (i.e., up to the age of 12 or 13). Mothers articulate their anxiety regarding the physical safety of their children in a distinct way:

I am very afraid nowadays; Masha [the daughter] has never left home alone so far. Never went to a bakery, which I myself did at her age just like that. At some moment my mother, without consulting her head, said to the child: "What do you think you are doing? They will snatch you and put into a bag, like a rabbit!"  
(Woman aged 42 with a daughter aged 8)

The significance of trust in "nanny-and-family" relations is underscored by folktales about the hazards associated with nannies and cleaning women who abuse the lack of control. "Scary stories about nannies"—a commonplace among the compiled narratives—circulate in the maternal community, pointing to the symbolic significance of a child for a family, appealing to caution, to careful selection of personnel, highlighting the fragile nature of trust, insisting on the necessity of organized control over the nanny's work. A young mother says:

My other friends who have a few children also have been telling all kinds of scary stories about nannies. About how they installed bugs and recorded the nannies in the parents' absence at home. About how nannies watched TV and screamed at the children while the parents were not at home. That is, I had already been scared by that problem. That is why I instantly wanted for the nanny to be a good one. So that we have no need of bugs and other equipment, so that we could trust her right away. (Woman aged 31 with a daughter aged 4)

Thus childcare work presupposes a special significance of trust in the relations between employers and the employees. This aspect of interaction is considered by both parties of the contract. Employers devise special strategies to establish trust during the process of a search for a nanny and during the control of her actions (those will be investigated below). In this process they go off of some cultural models of childcare.

### *Nannies and Babysitters: Similarities and Differences*

Commercialization of childcare is not a gender-neutral or culturally indifferent phenomenon. The demand for confidential service is based on a somewhat idealized image of a nanny, on the cultural models of nonparental domestic childcare. First and foremost, a nanny's work is, by all means, female work. Gender socialization, which presupposes the development of skills for care and nurturing, makes women suitable for this kind of labor. The present studies allow us to distinguish between two types of nannies, since both employees and parents in their stories reveal different cultural models of childcare and are oriented toward different modes of relations between nanny, child, and parents. The first type is represented by the so-called traditional or patriarchal nannies. They become quasi-family members, no matter their age, and they fulfill quasi-familial roles (analogous to the roles of a grandmother, elder sister, or aunt), sometimes even supplanting the mother as to the degree of the child's affection. This type of nanny spends the whole day with the child (up to 12 hours) and sometimes she even lives in the family (all day long) and becomes part of the family's everyday life. The scope of her tasks is not defined and tends to increase over time. Such a nanny may perform several functions: cleaning the house, cooking the food, childcare, caring for sick and elderly residents. This cultural model is traditional in the sense that it is to be discovered in the cultural memory of the Soviet and pre-Soviet periods. It is patriarchal in that corresponds to an extended patriarchal family with a distinct hierarchy and role division according to gender and age. At present, this model is also in demand for childcare in the case of small children. It presupposes unconditional trust toward domestic personnel that is not subject to doubt. References to grandmother-like qualities, to the image of the serf nanny of Pushkin, Arina Rodionovna—these are the indicators of this model being in demand. A young mother says:

Actually I had an image [in my head] ... I wanted to find a grandmother [laughing]. Not a grandmother in the sense of an old woman, but a replacement for my mother or mother-in-law, both of whom we left in S. It seemed to me that, you know, for this age it would be a perfect variant. The child doesn't need any special upbringing, I can do this stuff myself. What I need is that the child is loved, is pampered; there is no need for special upbringing, the main point is to feed her, play with her. This was my main goal ... until the child turns three.  
(Woman aged 31 with a daughter aged 4)

Despite the attractiveness of the patriarchal model, the tendencies of domestic-care commercialization affect it destructively. Parents have difficulty finding a nanny they can trust. They think of complicated trial procedures and control the actions of their employed nannies in their absence. Scary stories about nannies are evidence of the destruction of the patriarchal model. Another more up-to-date model competes with it: babysitters. These paid domestic workers are oriented toward fulfilling strictly defined tasks (going for a walk, feeding, playing, occupations geared toward developing a child), and their relationship with the family is rather alienated—it does not presuppose a more in-depth involvement in the everyday routines of the family and presupposes emotional investments to a much lesser degree. Young temporary domestic employees recruited from among migrants or students tend to represent more strongly the second model. This model gives evidence of the professionalization of domestic hired labor, but at the same time it constantly compromises the unconditional nature of a trust-based relationship.

Basically the two models described above coexist and interfere; they can be separated only analytically. Both types of childcare workers possess some common traits. They must meet the requirements of the special demand childcare requires as a trust-based service.

The requirements that nannies have to face vary according to many circumstances and factors. However, in all cases what is required is the unconditional love for children, reliability, and good health. Among other requirements, our respondents named the following: cleanliness, tidiness, experience in bringing up children, kindness, sociability, honesty, zest, and sense of responsibility. There are requirements made for physical features: “a nanny has to look happy” and not evoke pity. Personality traits are especially appreciated: the nanny, no matter the age, has to be a “cheerful and jolly person.” In a word, the list of requirements is long and extensive, but virtually all of them concern the personality traits of nannies; the qualification characteristics take second place:

Of course, [the nanny] must be decent, kind, intellectual, literate, by all means clean, yes, though ... I am the one who cooks meals for the child, for the most part, she only has to serve them afterwards. Well, in a word, she has to be household-smart in these ways. Because there is no one else in the apartment besides her and the child, and her task is not that she should keep the household—

nobody requires that of her—but that there is no mess. We come home from work tired, and the child has to be bathed, fed, and put to bed, so these are the variants.  
(Female manager aged 28 with a son aged 4)

The key characteristic of a nanny is, if one were to use an emic category, “the commonality of energy flows” (*obshchnost' energetiki*) of the nanny and the child. Education and good manners are also included in the requirements. Some qualities are to be proved with pertinent papers and documents during the interview. The living conditions and health conditions of the nanny are checked. Demanding parents make copies of passports, ask for a paper proving the nanny went through a health check, and ask for references. But lots of employers use the old methods and base their decisions on their own intuition and on word of mouth from their friends and acquaintances, and they establish a trial period for the nannies. The tendency is obviously for a more instrumental approach to take hold, but at present, in most cases, the traditional methods of judging suitability dominate: the trial-and-error method and personalized trust, consolidated by personal observations and the verbal recommendations of the closer circle of friends.

### ***Searching for a Nanny***

Our study shows that the process of searching for a nanny is time-consuming and requires complex logistics. Our respondents, the majority of whom are quite well adjusted to life in St. Petersburg, took up to five months on average to find a nanny. Very seldom did the mothers find the “right” nanny on the first try. They conducted large-scale “casting,” including telephone interviews and personal interviews.

A significant number of our respondents when hiring nannies refuse to use the services of agencies, preferring to search within the frame of the informal employment market. In our opinion, this is connected not only with the peculiarity of targeted selection, but is also an expression of a demand for the patriarchal type of nanny. Agencies are normally employed for searches by more well-to-do people looking for family tutors or childminders, who have a specialized set of requirements in nannies, and also those who look for a babysitter rather than for the more patriarchal type of nanny.

The formal market for domestic services evokes suspicion on the part of women who buy childcare. Let us adduce the arguments of our respondents. The first argument is the exaggerated price for the service, which does not relate well to the qualifications of nannies whom the agencies then send. The second argument is the insufficiency of formal guarantees of employee control, which are necessary to ensure personal trust while delegating childcare. The third argument lies in the general institutional distrust toward private firms:

I would never take a nanny from some ... from any public institution. First, because of my general suspicion of institutions, and second, because I know how this system works as regards domestic help, and if I can experiment with my own

apartment, it's one thing, but experimenting with a child—this is ... And simply, you never know what you are being sent, and when, on the other hand, you find people through your acquaintances, you have some kind of guarantee, that you can call someone and say: "You must be kidding!" or like, "This is my relative, this is a person I have known 150 years. I have worked with her all my life." This is a reference, isn't it? (Woman aged 42 with a daughter aged 8)

The fourth argument is the impossibility of guaranteeing emotional attachment to a child via formal channels:

Through the agency generally, very often, how to put it ... I am not saying that they don't check their people, but somehow they are always very mercenary. Well, to an extent that, I don't know, I don't feel good about it. I have a feeling that they are prepared to, I don't know, simply strangle themselves for a penny. I don't know how many times I searched through an agency, I always had to decline their offers. I called them so many times ... But I didn't ever feel like [it is the right choice], and that's the end of it. (Woman aged 29 with a son aged 2)

So refusal to use the formal channels of nanny selection seems to us to be a part of distrust toward market services. This distrust increases when it is about purchasing a service that presupposes emotional work with regard to the most precious thing—one's own child. A young mother, hiring a nanny, delegates to her a part of her parental responsibilities connected with the world of parental feelings. On the contrary, agencies are actively contacted in the case of hiring cleaners or babysitters, who perform a specific set of tasks that do not presuppose a holistic emotional involvement, and with whom integration into the private life of the family remains fragmented. The choice in favor of informal contract has far-reaching consequences, for nannies as well as for mothers, to say nothing of society at large. The gender contract today, in fact, requires the development of an *informal* market of social services.

We have singled out several main variants of the "shadow" nanny search. A widely spread variant presents a traditional mobilization of strong and weak networks: friends, neighbors, colleagues, acquaintances with common interests. For instance, the search can be implemented via the everyday communication of young mothers among themselves:

Well, there is, basically, always a kind of mommy get-together, when they first walk around together with their baby carriages, then go for a walk with children together ... That is, they are not friends. And the nannies usually circulate in the same circle. (Man aged 38 with a son aged 1 year and 6 months)

Another variant is the search for a service via specialized children's institutions, which are a peculiar informal labor-market exchange for childcare, as their qualified personnel needs

secondary employment due to the insufficiency of earnings in the budget sphere. Kindergartens, schools, and general-profile hospitals provide professional workers in the domestic sphere.

Yet another variant would be the initiative search through “published service offers.” As one respondent says, resorting to metaphors:

Nannies “hang on lamp posts”! In newspapers. We called, and we always hit some kind of unsuitable nannies. And we found our nanny by way of some very strange method. That is, we found an advertisement about a school for educators, nannies, and parents. And I say, “Let’s call them, maybe they have a nanny.” Great. I called, and this woman just happened to know a nanny. (Woman aged 25 with a son aged 2)

Today’s mothers actively use the World Wide Web to communicate with mothers of the same class and to search for services. As one respondent says, “one can find anything on the Internet; you just have to have the time”:

www.littleone.ru—there is a newsgroup forum there, it is just for the case when middle-class parents who can afford to spend a certain amount of time on the Internet, and it is discussed there, that is, the issue of nanny choice. Well, they discuss there all issues from pregnancy planning and ending with teenage problems, but one of the issues is the nannies ... We communicate there. And they have the middle and the higher level there, at least people who have Internet access, who have children and who are concerned with the problem of nanny search. (Woman aged 29 with a son aged 2)

The recruiting of nannies at present is becoming more and more standardized. In this case, the employers frequently act as proper businesswomen selecting qualified personnel for their enterprise. They appraise the candidates according to a number of criteria, they ensure the control takes place, and they set up a trial period.

First I appoint a meeting in the office—it begins with a preliminary conversation. Only then do I go to their place with the child, to see how they live. What they have in their home, how clean it is there, who they are themselves. And also to make sure that they really live at the address they gave. Well, of course, this is natural. At the beginning we set up secret cameras by all means, in order to check how they communicate with the child. Well, then everything is all right, we already know everything. We know if everything is all right. Maybe she hurt the child or something like that ... I also cannot just entrust the child to anyone I do not know. (Woman aged 29 with a son aged 2)

The main trial is the personal contact between the child and the potential nanny, which is carried out in the presence of the parents. A father tells his story—the only male who gave us an interview:

We invited her to our place (our home), accordingly, and spent the whole day with her. She was sitting on our sofa. Whereby it was evident that she is used to this procedure; she was sitting, asking questions about the proceedings. At once she made a remark: “Well, the level of education is not quite what you expect, I suppose.” Well, I just kept silent, tactfully. We looked at the documents, of course. The main thing we paid attention to—priority number one—how she treats the child and how the child takes to her. Communication is crucial. If the child wants to be taken into her arms, if he sings songs, asks her to read a book, then everything is, so to speak, normal. (Man aged 38 with a son aged 1 year and 6 months)

It is not easy to choose a nanny—one looks absolutely inappropriate, another is impolite and comes late, another speaks incorrectly, the child does not favor the fourth, the fifth cannot cope with the agile and mobile child. At some point, after a few failures and glitches, the task is accomplished. If the employers are happy and have found at last the one they were looking for, then we will hear that their child has a “very good nanny,” it is “a stroke of luck,” and the parents appreciate her very much. The amount of transactional expense that has accumulated during the hiring process translates into the symbolic appraisal of the nanny that eventually has been found.

The contract drawn up between the young parents (mostly the mother) and the nanny is usually of an informal character. On the basis of the data we collected, let us consider why this kind of contract is beneficial for both parties that have made the verbal agreement.

### *Advantages and Traps of the Informal Contract*

Not all nannies opt for the informal contract. There are professional babysitters, that is, nannies who have acquired certificates confirming their professional expertise as well as reference letters from previous workplaces, certified with stamps and signatures and registered in domestic-personnel agencies. Many of them hold the opinion that the formal contract protects them from the despotism of their employers.

However, many patriarchal nannies, babysitters, and employers prefer the informal contract. It is difficult to give the quantitative estimate of the extent of this phenomenon, as it is all about shadow employment and about a certain cultural pattern in demand, which includes a readiness to enter informal relations.

There are a lot of reasons that induce a nanny to prefer the informal contract. This is the case when she regards her employment as a short-term, side job: as an addition to her pension, student scholarship, or main job. Sometimes the informal contract is the only way to earn money



for migrants who are faced with the difficulties involved in the process of formalization of their citizenship status in Russia. Russian-speaking migrants from Russia's neighboring states constitute a more and more visible segment of the informal domestic-labor market. There are many more of those among female janitors, but also among nannies their number is on the rise. If a nanny is in a situation where her private circumstances (e.g., her state of health or her family situation) can force her to quit a job on short notice, she will also prefer an informal contract, which is easy to terminate. Our data contain a story about the favorite nanny of four-year-old Sasha, whom the girl used to call "Grandma," and who left the employers' family having given notice only shortly beforehand, saying she was not going to continue working for them, as her son had suddenly fallen ill. Having breached the verbal agreement, the nanny does not forfeit anything in such cases. All the expenses of the informal contract are carried by the family. Such cases of forced termination of contract were frequently registered in the narratives of our respondents, and such terminations create great difficulties for employers.

The conditions of the informal contract are distinguished by explicit peculiarities. They are flexible, they are being constantly adjusted taking into account the changing circumstances of the parties, they are easily reformulated, they presuppose the possibility of mutual concessions from the very start. The subjects of negotiations are, as a rule, the working hours and the schedule, the specific content, as well as the volume and the method of payment (hourly, daily, "salary-wise," or other). We asked a young mother: "How do you pay the nanny?" The answer was:

Twice a month. She established this mode. That is, she said that it would be convenient for her to get the money every two weeks, and she herself writes down the number of hours. I never checked. First, partly because of my absent-mindedness, and second, she is kind of a person I know, so how would I check the hours she has worked? And indeed there has never been an occasion that she ... that is, she is so ... very decent. She writes down every five minutes. (Woman aged 25 with a son aged 4)

The negotiable character of payment in the sphere of informal employment is an advantage for the employer as well. She would pay an informal nanny less than in the case of the official contract drawn up by an agency. In some cases nannies are offered symbolic bonuses (similar to tips) or vacation money. There are cases where employers delay the payment of nanny labor because of a delay in receiving their own paycheck. In these cases the personalized quasi-familial character of their relations allows them to avoid conflict linked to delays in payment.

Virtually all our respondents point out that the work of an informal nanny is cheap labor. One constantly hears remarks like "I did not pay her a lot," "this is extremely cheap in the town here," or "we paid the minimum."<sup>8</sup> Our mothers say this in an apologetic tone. They try to compensate for low pay and confirm the symbolic value of the paid childcare by regularly giving presents. On holidays and birthdays, the parents do not forget to give their good wishes to those

on whom the well-being of their children and their whole family depends. It happens that they set the table in order to celebrate the birthday of their favorite nanny.

Well, for example, when she had, like, her birthday, Masha and I set the table and celebrated with her, you know.

(Interviewer:) And what did you give her?

Well, I don't remember that well ... some perfume, yes, perfume. Well, whatever one usually gives. I don't remember. Perfume, I think, perfume. The last time it was perfume for sure. Well, we did not invite anyone, just simply for her ... I realized that she appreciated that, and as Masha was attached to her, I was prepared to arrange whatever was possible, even sing and dance, if necessary.

(Woman aged 42 with a daughter aged 8)

Employers often grant nannies favors of an informal character using their own resources. This is how the mechanism of informal barter works (Ledeneva 2001). Nannies can get annual registration (a residency permit), "almost new" clothes and things, assistance in obtaining legal papers, access to a reliable doctor, or teachers for their grandchildren, children, etc. All this is taken as a manifestation of a responsible attitude of employers toward employees who are devoid of the advantages of social guarantees. One employer comments:

I just have a responsibility as an employer regarding this person ... that is, for instance, if I do not use her services for a month running, I realize that I have to make up for something. Well, and if she has some problems ... There have been a few occasions when her relatives fell ill or she wanted to go somewhere very much ... I try to coordinate that and adjust to that, because I have a feeling that she depends on me. (Woman aged 42 with a daughter aged 8)

To sum up, the advantages of informal hiring have been articulated by both nannies and working mothers.

### **Managing Social Distance and the Issue of Exploitation**

The relations between nannies and mothers are the relations of control dialectics (Giddens 2003:498), whereby the power advantages are on the employer's side; however, the nanny also possesses certain resources that allow her to influence contractual conditions. Since the dominance of the employer over the hired domestic worker is obvious, it is the influence of the nanny that should be elaborated on in more detail. Paid childcare in itself presupposes some control over the object of that care. In other words, the nanny is responsible for the child and controls his or her well-being. The nanny's influence grows thanks both to her gaining access to

the domestic space and to the status of the child in the modern child-centered middle-class family.

The power of the employer manifests itself in not only defining the contractual conditions but also at the initial trial stage of trying to exercise direct control over the execution of domestic work. Our respondents (not all of them, of course, but those who occupy higher positions on the professional-economic ladder and take their nannies “from the outside”) set up hidden cameras and recorders to record the actions of a nanny. Control is carried out also by telephone during the working day. Especially significant is the control at the initial stage, when personalized trust has not been established yet and the nanny has not become a family member yet. This is how one employer describes the nanny control tactics:

Well, we tried at the beginning, as it were, to set up a recorder and to listen ... But then they very quickly went out for a walk and there was nothing special in our absence, not anything criminal, the other way round—she was somehow very affectionate. And then we, as it were, stopped ... Well, we trust her, so to speak, if I were to be honest with you. It was at the very beginning that we were very afraid; I was afraid, for instance, that something would go wrong, would go wrong with my child, and now, basically ... (Woman aged 32 with a son aged 3)

The social distance is distinctly felt by both hired workers and employers. For both parties it is especially significant how this inequality manifests itself on the level of everyday face-to-face interaction. Impoliteness vs. politeness, “feudal” relationships between domestic servants and utterly impudent masters vs. friendly and nearly familial relationship between employees and employers—this is the range of unequal relationship descriptions supplied by our respondents. The very character of domestic work rules out a distant relationship between employer and employee, which would be typical of other—extra-domestic—kinds of employment.

Our respondents regard social inequality through the prism of “relationship culture” between domestic workers and their employers. Many mothers hire domestic help for the first time. Many of today’s nannies, in turn, have never worked directly “with people” (*v liudiakh*, which means “in private households”):

Problems ... well, I know that there are loads of problems at the moment ... when people are hired, they keep them at arm’s length. That is, on the one hand they should not hurt a person, and on the other hand they have to keep him/her at a distance and not come any closer. This is very difficult, and can be done only intuitively. (Woman aged 40 with a son aged 9)

Mothers (employers) comment on the complexities of establishing the rules of communication with their hired workers, i.e., with women who are placed into economic and

psychological dependency on them and to whom they have granted access into their domestic world. This is especially typical of relationships with nannies of the more patriarchal type. The gender aspect—inequality between *women*—makes the participants of this interaction especially sensitive to the mechanisms of maintaining social distance.

The informal contract often provokes exploitation, whether objective or of the type subjectively felt by the employees. The interaction takes place in the domestic space—basically without witnesses who could in case of abuse protect the employee or represent his/her interests. However, not only the “conscience” of the employer but also the trusting character of childcare saves the nanny from abuse on the part of employers. Mothers are fully aware of the fact that the nanny’s disgruntlement can reflect on her interaction with the child:

When it is about your child, one can blackmail seriously enough, because I will not refuse or decline in this situation, I will not say no [if the nanny asks for a pay raise, for example]. There has been such a moment, but it is rather an inner conflict, it never got to be expressed on the outside. That is ... I always paid a bit more anyway. Because she sits with my child—this was my consideration, basically it is hard, it is hard anyway. (Woman aged 29 with a daughter aged 2 years and 6 months)

While employers express assurance that nannies possess resources associated with the access to their private life and make an issue of social distance management, nannies demonstrate extreme sensitivity toward manifestations of inequality in interaction. It is specifically a demonstration of disrespect, not just a breach of the clauses of the verbal agreement, that they regard as abuse or exploitation. In answer to the question of which family they would never consider working for, they describe families where parents are in conflict, have altercations, treat employees disrespectfully, or “treat them like servants.”

In a number of cases, sensitivity as regards inequality is aggravated by the fact that nannies are women who, age-wise, could be the employers’ mothers. In such cases, the effect of status inconsistency is observed: a nanny of a more advanced age expects respect toward her age and at the same time turns out to be in a position of subordination as a hired worker (almost a servant).

Sometimes nannies are retirees with a higher education and high professional status. In these cases, the effect of status inconsistency also manifests itself in nannies’ hypersensitivity to the style of their interaction with employers.

Structurally, any shadow employment can be described by means of a category of exploitation, but the subject of exploitation is not necessarily one of the two parties involved, but the socioeconomic system. Employees and employers of the labor-market segment do not pay taxes; the track record of informal nannies is not registered anywhere, and hence does not play a role in pension premiums in any way; they cannot count on officially granted paid vacation time or on sick-leave payment via social security funds.

Besides, there exist cultural premises for exploitation, in this case manifested in the absence of established and fixed norms of relationship and interaction in the sphere of domestic labor, aggravated by the usually informal character of agreement. A reflection-prone employer points out:

The fact is that we have, over a number of generations ... lost the culture of interaction between the provider of services and the recipient ... And when I had these, you know, two women, I instantly realized that two terrible problems crop up: the first is not to get involved in a friendly relationship with the people who work for you, and the second is not to ... well, roughly speaking, not to place oneself into the typecast role of "I am rich and I am the king of the jungle here, and you are dirt on my feet," and so on. And maintaining that balance is very difficult ... (Woman aged 40 with a daughter aged 9)

Parties to a shadow contract are fully aware of the fuzzy line between inequality and exploitation. But nannies continue working anyway: work in the informal economy sector is the only possibility for them to earn money, since that kind of labor gives them the additional source of income that provides for financial independence and a decent standard of living. When employers compensate for the structural exploitation by way of non-monetary benefits, workers do not acknowledge the fact that they are objects of exploitation.

However, there are situations in which nannies feel like domestic proletariat. According to our information, subjective acknowledgment of exploitation is more frequently observed in those cases where the patriarchal nanny lives in the family rather than just working on a come-and-go basis. It is in this case that the distinct borderline between the working time and free time of a nanny does not exist. The nanny works virtually the entire time she is in the house, and often she combines the functions of childcare giver, companion to the mistress of the house, and cleaning woman.

Another variant of exploitation acknowledgment occurs when employers do not show proper respect and gratitude, which childcare is supposed to generate. The market holds nanny labor in low esteem, despite its symbolic value. That is why this labor requires, by way of compensation, some symbolic acknowledgment and appreciation, in the form of thanks, small presents, and quasi-familial treatment. If the symbolic appreciation is not provided, the nanny is prone to think she is being exploited.

If the nanny feels a constant petty control by employers, she also feels she is being exploited. With surprising consistency, our respondent nannies emphasize that they like working in those families in which they "feel comfortable and cozy," where they feel "free," where their actions and movements are not restricted by the thorough demonstrative control of their employers.

Especially sensitive to exploitation relations are nannies who previously had been employed in professional occupations of qualified labor. They feel deprived not only by their

employers but also by the system as such. They are sure that if “the society were fair,” then they, post-Soviet retirees and professionals of the budget sphere, would not have to work “with people” in private households.

Among other exploitation factors nannies name, first and foremost is the breach of the verbal work agreement: occasions of payment delays, noncompliance by mothers with the temporal conditions of the agreement (coming late, unreasonable payment delays), and an increase in the workload. Below, a nanny enumerates cases of her employer’s negligent attitude:

And when you suddenly hear such absurd things, you think: how on earth is that possible? Such things! ... Well, that is, there is a heap of things ... Well, for example ... Well, I came to work only for five hours, and when I left, the whole day had passed. Well, how is that possible? And on top of that also, for example, impudent treatment. A person works and is not paid for that ... And someone screams at you, or says, for instance, “You can wash the floors today, and tomorrow clean the windows. You have nothing to do—see? The child is asleep!”  
(Nanny aged 57, retiree)

Therefore, although (according to economic criteria) domestic labor of the informally contracted nanny falls under the category of exploitation, both nannies and employers are far from recognizing that. This lack of “awareness” is connected with the special character of paid childcare, which presupposes a high level of emotional investment and a possibility of exerting control. Nannies love those whom they take care of. The work that is infused with such value for them as well as for their employers is not associated with exploitation as a concept. Nannies often confess: “I love this child as if he were my own. Of course, I do not get much money for taking care of him, but they [the parents] can’t pay more.” Love and trusting relations are reconsidered as exploitation only in the case of an obvious breach of the informal rules of interaction. Nannies receive symbolic appreciation that makes them take to the family in question. Thus, for instance, a cut of fabric is bought for a nanny, a stay in the hospital is paid for, connections are used to register her officially as an invalid. Nannies become, as it were, family members. But this is it, precisely: “as it were.” They occupy a position of “poor relatives” or, as one of our respondents puts it, “younger female friends”:

Our nanny is already our friend. That is, she can simply call us up, inquire how are things, for example, over the holidays; she has given birth to a baby and then I, for instance, take her out to a restaurant, or something like that. Well, these are a kind of friendlier relations. Our nanny is already our friend. (Woman aged 29 with a daughter aged 5)

Nanny labor is characterized by a high degree of autonomy. The informal character of employment presupposes possibilities for modification of hiring conditions. In the process, the

nanny has a chance to terminate the contractual relations at any time and has no formal obligations toward the family. The family depends on the nanny to a great extent. A good nanny is well appreciated, the parents try to attach her to the family by a stronger bond, to entangle her into the mutual obligation of quasi-familial character, to do everything possible to make her a patriarchal nanny, if only in terms of trust. Thus, in the work of the nanny, the dilemma of family member vs. hired worker is reproduced.

## **Conclusion**

Summing it up, the socioeconomic transformations in Russia result in certain modifications of the gender contract. There are no radical changes: the main type of contract continues to be “the working mother,” and social reproduction remains the sphere of female competence. However, market changes led to changes in the institutional support for working mothers. The present-day Russian version of the “working mother” gender contract is maintained with the help of many institutions. One of its peculiarities is the commercialization of domestic care. Domestic labor geared toward child rearing—nanny labor—is highly in demand. To a significant extent, the demand for paid domestic childcare is satisfied by the informal labor market. Both nannies and young mothers show interest in the informal contract. This is associated with the negotiable character of all the hiring conditions, with the possibility of unconditional termination of the verbal agreement, as well as with the significance of personalized trust-based relations. The two main models in demand in the service market now are nannies of the patriarchal (traditional) type and babysitters. Despite the differences existing between these models of childcare, both of them presuppose a high degree of deformatization of relations between employers and domestic personnel. The informal character of the agreement presupposes the symbolic acknowledgment of the significance of domestic childcare by way of bonuses, presents, and favors. Due to the symbolic forms of reward, the nannies mostly do not perceive their work as exploitation, though structurally it undoubtedly turns out as such. On the level of interaction, nannies and mothers entertain relations of control based on mutual trust. Such relations are regarded by nannies as exploitation if employers trespass against the unspoken norms of respectful interaction and treat nannies as if they themselves were landed gentry and nannies their serfs. Mothers and nannies through their relations reproduce the female world of care. But in the process, the gender stratification is aggravated, which brings about a divide between women belonging to different social classes. Under the conditions of an undeveloped social state, the partial emancipation from domestic work of middle-class working mothers is possible only at the expense of the reproduction of *class* inequality.

## **Notes**

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<sup>1</sup> The article was written on the basis of the data collected for the project “New Daily Routine” (2004-2006, financially supported by the Finnish Academy of Sciences).

Many of the ideas in this article were discussed during the project seminars at the European University of St. Petersburg and in Helsinki, for which I thank all the participants. I am especially grateful to A. Temkina and A. Rotkirch for their comments. The results of the project are presented in the book *Novyi byt v sovremennoi Rossii: gendernye issledovaniia povsednevnosti* [New Daily Routine in Modern Russia: Gender Studies of Daily Life] (Zdravomyslova et al. 2009).

<sup>2</sup> It is noteworthy that the housewife contract also presupposes the use of hired domestic labor (for cleaning, etc.), but here we will leave this variant of the social organization of family routine out of the scope of our analysis.

<sup>3</sup> Arina Rodionovna was a serf woman and the nanny of the poet A.S. Pushkin (1799-1837), the most well-known of Russian poets. The mythologized image of this nanny—loyal to the poet, supporting his family with her loving care and attention, inspiring him to write many of his well-known poems—is broadly used in Russian discourse.

<sup>4</sup> In Soviet times, limitation of citizen rights (*ogranichenie grazhdanskikh prav*) entailed the absence of an official residency permit or registration (*propiska*) for the city or region. Without *propiska*, finding a job in the city or region was legally not possible.

<sup>5</sup> The neologism “heroine mother” refers to an honorary title institutionalized in 1944, which was granted to Soviet women who gave birth to and brought up ten and more children. In this case, however, this term is a metaphor illustrating the complexities of balancing the multitude of working mothers’ duties.

<sup>6</sup> “Topophobia” stands for the anxiety caused by space; in this case what is meant is the persistent desire to break the boundaries of the domestic space.

<sup>7</sup> Work that has management of emotions at its center is described Arley Hochschild as “managed heart” activity (Hochschild 1983).

<sup>8</sup> At the time of fieldwork in St. Petersburg, the labor of a cheap informal nanny without special qualifications was rated as 40-60 rubles per hour. To compare: according to the State Statistics Committee of the Russian Federation, the average monthly *earned* salary in Russia for the first half of 2007 was 14,988 rubles around St. Petersburg, and 12,493 rubles in Russia at large ([www.obzorzarplat.ru/stats/view/?id=1172](http://www.obzorzarplat.ru/stats/view/?id=1172)). This evidences a relatively high rate of domestic paid labor.

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### **About the Author**

Elena Zdravomyslova is Doctor of Sociology, Professor at the European University at St. Petersburg, Russia. She also works as project coordinator in the Centre for Independent Social Research in St. Petersburg. Her research interests include gender relations in the Russian society, sociology of care, civic activism in post-Soviet Russia.