To Serve and Not to Be a Servant a Case for Domestic Workers

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Accessibility
To Serve and Not to Be a Servant

A Case for Domestic Workers

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Abstract

The International Labour Organization estimates that there are 100 million domestic workers around the world. The majority of these domestic workers are women. Although they have an important presence around the world, domestic workers remained as a group of laborers with one of the worst exploitative working conditions. In fact, domestic work is associated more with slavery than to a formal profession that produces value which gives rise to a monetary compensation. Despite is lack of recognition, domestic workers are servers and not servants. In the words of Eliseo Orifece, in the movie La Vita è Bella, “You're serving. You're not a servant. Serving is a supreme art. God is the first servant. God serves men but he's not a servant to men.”

The purpose of this research is to study the possible reasons behind the regnant nature of domestic service as one of the main sources of employment for women locally and as migrants. This problematic will be frame in the context of Colombia. At the same time, a global perspective will be constantly developed in order to evolve into a global solution. The solution is the notion that domestic work needs to be professionalized since it is able to absorb an important number of women into the labor market. The evidence that will be provided, strongly suggests that domestic work is a needed profession that will likely increase as more women enter the labor market. The rationality is that in a world where governmental care services are shrinking, and men have a narrow participation in housework, middle and upper-class women to enter the labor force have to rely on other women to transfer their care and housework responsibilities.

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# Table of Contents

List of Figures and Graphs .................................................................................................................. 5

Chapter I. Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 6

Chapter II. Generalities of Domestic Work ....................................................................................... 11
  2.1. Domestic Work Increasing ........................................................................................................ 13
  2.2. The Stigma of Domestic Work .................................................................................................. 14
  2.3. Slavery

Chapter III. The Universality of Domestic Work ............................................................................... 17
  3.1. Domestic Work in Colombia ..................................................................................................... 19
  3.2. The Colombian Context ........................................................................................................... 20

Chapter IV. Domestic Work and Education ....................................................................................... 27
  4.1. Marianism and Education ........................................................................................................ 32
  4.2. Paternalism .................................................................................................................................. 34
  4.3. Catholicism and Education ....................................................................................................... 38
  4.4. Expansion of Education ............................................................................................................ 41
  4.5. Paternalism and Beauty Identity ................................................................................................. 44

Chapter V. Women in the Labor Force, Colombia ............................................................................. 48
  5.1. Sampling Error .......................................................................................................................... 53
  5.2. Domestic Work as an Apprenticeship ....................................................................................... 54

Chapter VI. Understanding Domestic Work ...................................................................................... 59
  6.1. Defining Domestic Work ........................................................................................................... 60
  6.2. A Feminist Theory on Domestic Work ....................................................................................... 61
  6.3. Employment Contract ............................................................................................................... 65
  6.4. Working Hours for Domestic Workers ...................................................................................... 68
  6.5. Part-Time Work for Domestic Workers ..................................................................................... 70

Chapter VII. “One of the Family” ...................................................................................................... 74
  7.1. Acts of Deference ....................................................................................................................... 76

Chapter VIII. A Male Oriented Society ............................................................................................ 83
  8.1. Transferring Care and Housework ........................................................................................... 85
  8.2. Racial and Class Relations ....................................................................................................... 90

Chapter IX. Horizontal Employment Mobility ................................................................................. 96

Chapter X. Domestic Workers on the Move ....................................................................................... 103
  10.1. Global Transfer of Care .......................................................................................................... 110
  10.2. The Value of Remittances .................................................................................................... 119

Chapter XI. Conclusion ....................................................................................................................... 127

Chapter XII. Bibliography .................................................................................................................. 133
List of Figures and Graphs

Figure 1. Number of female domestic workers and their share of employment in the Gulf Countries ............................................................ 13

Figure 2. Level of education of domestic workers in Colombia, Atlantico, and Barranquilla .................................................................................. 30

Figure 3. Age of domestic workers in Colombia, Atlantico, and Barranquilla .......................................................................................... 32

Figure 4. Number of women working in categories related to domestic work at the national level, Colombia .................................................................. 48

Figure 5. Number of women working in categories related to domestic work in the Department of Atlantico ............................................................... 49

Figure 6. Number of women working in categories related to domestic work in the city of Barranquilla ........................................................................... 52

Figure 7. Verbal and written contracts of domestic workers in Colombia, Atlantico and Barranquilla ................................................................. 66

Figure 8. Number of hours of work for domestic workers around the world .......... 70

Figure 9. Income for men and women in Colombia, Atlantico and Barranquilla in the year 2014 ......................................................................................... 88

Figure 10. Female salaries in comparison to men in professions related to domestic service in Colombia ........................................................................ 90

Graph I. Horizontal Employment Mobility for Domestic Workers .................................. 103
Chapter I
Introduction

It has been extensively speculated that prostitution is the oldest profession. Yet, for thousands of years and through different civilizations domestic service has been as present and pervasive as prostitution. Historically associated with slavery, low status, and low income domestic service has been one of the main sources of income for people, especially for women. For example, during Victorian England the London Area had 115,000 women between the ages of 15 and 20. Of these women, 40,000 worked as domestic servants\(^2\). Today, domestic service recurs worldwide. The International Labor Organization (ILO), estimates a number of 100 million domestic servants around the globe\(^3\). Surprisingly, domestic work is an understudy profession that through history has been relevant.

The purpose of this research is to study the possible reasons behind the regnant nature of domestic service as one of the main sources of employment for women locally and as migrants. This problematic will be frame in the context of Colombia. At the same time, a global perspective will be constantly developed in order to evolve into a global solution. The solution is the notion that domestic work needs to be professionalized since it is able to absorb an important number of women into the labor market. To do so, the dynamics linked to domestic work need to be understand in order to encourage more legal and societal protection for domestic workers. In this regard, the most important fact

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\(^3\) Maria Elena Valenzuela and Claudia Mora, *Trabajo Doméstico : Un largo Camino Hacia el Trabajo Decente* (Santiago: International Labour Organization, 2009) 9.
is to acknowledge that *to serve does not mean to be a servant*. Domestic workers are not servants, nor slaves. Domestic work is a profession based on providing services of cleaning and caring, and not a profession to surrender once dignity and humanity. The link that slavery has with domestic worker needs to become a historical link and not a constant in the profession. Ultimately, domestic work will continue to be an important source of income for women worldwide, and it should be recognized as any other profession entitles to rights and obligations. Therefore, organizations and governments need to be proactive in protecting and enforcing legislation and social policies that can guarantee dignity and better working conditions for domestic workers worldwide.

The evidence suggests that domestic work is a fundamental profession that will likely increase as more women enter the labor market. The rationality is based on the fact that as middle and upper-class women enter the labor force, they transfer their household and caring responsibilities to other women. In other words, they hired domestic workers. The evidence will also suggest that men are not increasing their involvement in caring for dependable and house chores to the point of significantly helping, or replacing women. Therefore, these responsibilities remained relegated to women. Also, there is a global tendency for the reduction of governmental sponsored caring facilities. This enforces the nation that middle and upper-class women need to hire help in order to be able to enter the labor market. Finally, there is more availability of women willing to engage in domestic work because cross-border migration has increasingly become feminized.

This reaffirms the notion that there is a constant transfer of care from women that can pay for domestic workers. The transfer of care follows two distributions. First, internally, a rural/urban relation and globally a North/South relation. In other words, in a
rural/urban distribution the transfer of care takes place between rural women moving to the cities to offer their services as domestic workers. The second transfer of care is between women in the developed world employing foreign women domestic workers to engage in house chores and the care of dependables. In the developed world, attention is centered around foreign women domestic workers because the number of local women engaging in domestic work has drastically decrease.

For example, in the United States up to the XIX century, domestic work was the main occupation for women. At the turn of the 20th century, many women were able to find employment in other industries such as factories or as secretaries. In contrast, in the developing world, while middle and upper-class women are increasing their participation in other occupations, the great majority of women (lower class women) are still present in the labor market as domestic workers. In general, the employment conditions of women domestic workers and the underlying dynamics that dominate the field vary from region to region. However, low social status, low income, low governmental protection and low mobility into other professions are common features.

Following this line of thought, it is important to acknowledge that there is always the danger of turning domestic work into a single story. Domestic work and domestic workers represent a mirage of practices, working conditions, and life stories. This research does not want to minimize such an important profession into one narrative and

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one story. On the contrary, the main purpose of this research is to reflect and to explore a practice as ancient as civilization, and yet a profession ignored to the point of invisibility through history. This is the reason why any exploration on domestic work must try to build a global perspective that takes into account local nuances, but that understands that the differences and similarities in narratives are important to build a global understanding on domestic work as one of the main sources of income for women worldwide. Therefore, the analysis will use the situation of Colombian women domestic workers to illustrate how the main characteristics of domestic work are replicated in other contexts.

This country was chosen because it has the different features of domestic service present in other regions of the developing world. Colombia has a strong social hierarchy, a racially diverse population, and a weak rule of law. Additionally, it is a country that struggles with the dichotomies of civil war and development. As well as, modernity and tradition. The example of Colombia serves to ask and answer the main question of this research. Why is that work as a domestic servant persistently represents one of the main sources of employment for women despite tangible economic improvement, the influence of feminist movements gaining significant ground in the standing of women, and the almost elimination of illiteracy in the country?

I hypothesize that domestic service continuous to be one of the main sources of employment for Colombian women due to ancestral class and racial divisions; which have led to strong hierarchies, the constant enforcement of gender roles in a predominant male oriented society; resulting in the lack of opportunities of employment in other sectors, a rising number of middle and upper- class women entering the labor force and a limited number of public sponsor care taking programs. These reasons are the same reasons
why domestic work continues and will continue to be one of the main sources of income for women around the globe.
Chapter II
Generalities of Domestic Service

One of the main indicators to assess if a state has a “modern society” is having a strong, involved female labor force. In fact, many scholars and policymakers have devoted time and effort to fight gender discrimination and to empower women. The emphasis has been a historical rightful recognition of the mistreatment and limited rights that have been granted to women. This need for vindication has called for increased female enrollment in educational institutions, bigger participation in the labor force, and the ultimate goal of having women competing with males for positions of power with equal opportunities. It is commonly assumed that World War II started this process by fueling the entering of women into the labor force. The gap left by male soldiers called for duty was filled by female recruits coming from traditional household confinements. At last, women were part of the labor force. However, this approach misses an essential fact. Women have always partaken in the labor force as domestic workers. Indeed, domestic service is a profession that has been debated for its non-remuneration characteristics (in own household), its low remuneration and poor working conditions in the labor market, and as labor relegated primarily to women. Yet, although repeatedly overlook, domestic work has been the main source of income for women through different periods and in different cultures through history.

In 2013, the International Labor Organization estimated that if all the domestic workers around the world were to live in one country, then this country would become the tenth largest employer in the world. Express in other words, 1 every 13 women economically active is a domestic worker. For example, in Latin America 1 every 4 women is a domestic worker. In terms of the regional presence of domestic work; 41% of this
labor force is employed in Asia and the Pacific, 37% in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa 10%, the Middle East 4% and 7% in developed countries ⁷. Furthermore, as can be observed in figure 1 in the gulf countries, with the exception of Iraq, domestic work accounts for approximately 47.2% on average of the female labor force. It is interesting to see that the numbers may point to assume that in the gulf countries if women are engaged in an economic activity, almost the majority that are economically active are working as domestic workers. The majority of domestic workers in these countries are immigrant women which are employed in one of the most precarious labor arrangements in the world.

For example, according to Human Rights Watch, in the United Arab Emirates domestic workers are forced to remain with the employer that signed their visas even if domestic workers are victim of sexual, physical abuse, and general exploitation by the employer. Human Rights Watch, interviewed 99 female domestic workers employed in the UAE. In general, these women were subject to food depravation, constant psychological abuse and full-time availability to the employer. Although obliged to follow their contract in conditions very similar to slavery, in most of the cases these women were paid below the salary that was stipulated when signing the contract, or sometimes not even paid. The contracts are basically agreements between the parts that have no binding characteristics since they are not recognized by the legislation of the UAE. In this regard, migrant domestic workers are “literally” at the mercy of their employers⁸.

⁷ International Labour Organization, Domestic Workers Around the Globe. 24.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of domestic workers</th>
<th>% of total employment of female labor force</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>146,100</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>507,900</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>48,100</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>69,300</td>
<td>59.3%</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>151,100</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>48,500</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 1. Number of female domestic workers and their share of employment in the Gulf Countries (Graph by the International Labor Organization. In Domestic Workers across the world: Global and Regional Statistics and the Extent of Legal Protection. International Labour Organization. Geneva: ILO, 2013, 118).

2.1 Domestic Work Increasing

Despite the alarming situation of domestic workers in the gulf countries, and in other countries, domestic work is assumed to be an isolated profession with only an important presence in the developing world. In general, it is perceived to be as a reminiscent practice of feudalism and the colonial era. Nevertheless, the demand for domestic workers is on the rise in, both, the developed and the developing world. In 1995 the ILO estimated that there were, globally, 33.2 million domestic workers. As mentioned above this number has risen to 100 million domestic workers around the world. This approximation does not take into account 7.4 millions of minors working as domestic servants. Undoubtedly, the number of domestic workers is increasing⁹. For instance, in 1995 there were 355,00 domestic workers in Spain, yet in 2005 the number was estimated to be 747,000. Similarly, in 2008 in Italy, there were 419,400 domestic workers. In 1995, there were 200,000 domestic workers. Most of these domestic workers are migrants. For example, in Spain 61% of domestic workers are estimated to come from Eastern Europe,

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18% from Asia, and 10% from South America.

The bottom line is that across Europe the number of domestic workers is increasing. The only two exceptions are England and the Nordic countries. In England, there has been a decrease in domestic workers. At the same time, more families are hiring young girls to perform task related to domestic work under the figure of “au pair”. In the Nordic countries, the situation is unique since the welfare system has a system which sponsors child care and the elderly. Therefore, the need to hire a domestic worker is replaced by the different services offered by governmental agencies. Indeed, the welfare system in place in the Nordic countries which reduces the need for women and families to hire a domestic work is an exception in any context. Especially, when there is a global tendency to reduce governmental childcare and elderly care sponsor programs. Therefore, in the rest of the world is more common for a woman that wants to enter the labor market to hire supplementary help on household chores.

2.2 The Stigma of Domestic Work

It is important to notice that, usually, when women hired another woman to transfer her household and care responsibilities, the underlying notion is that the domestic worker is from a lower social, racial, or ethnic class in comparison to the employer. This has its roots in the historical link of domestic work with slavery and servitude. As a matter of fact, ancient records going back to 4000 BC, among the Hittites, Egyptians, and Hebrews, attest to the early presence of slave women performing a multiplicity of functions including non-exclusively; cleaning, cooking and forced concubinage. Furthermore, slavery was so widespread and dominant that by the fourth century A.D. one in three inhabitants of

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Athens, in ancient Greece, was a slave. Its early legacy is present in the word “family”, with its roots in the Latin word “famulus”, which means house servant or domestic slave. Moreover, the modern assumptions surrounding domestic work were developed in ancient Rome and Ancient Greece, which at the same time both were influenced by earlier civilizations.\textsuperscript{11} There are two main ancient concepts that are ingrained in the way domestic work is and has been contextualized.

First, the belief that domestic work is a profession performed mainly by women. This could be an ethnocentric concept due to the fact that in some middle-eastern countries women are expected to be in charge of the domestic labor of their own households, while men are traditionally paid domestic workers for an employer.\textsuperscript{12} Yet, aside from some Asian countries in the western world, including the Americas, domestic work is a profession mainly performed by women. It is assumed that the abilities needed to perform housework are natural in women. In other words, femininity is linked to cleaning, cooking, and in some instances to be sexually available for the employer. The second idea is that activities associated with domestic work are ubiquitous belittle because of its close relation with slavery.

\textbf{2.3 Slavery and Domestic Work}

Slavery and its shared relation with domestic service have prevailed through different periods in history. A brief review of slavery in the Americas serves as a starting point to find similarities between the situation of domestic workers in countries like Colombia, in the developing world, and the situation of domestic works in the southern territories of the United States. The first idea that needs to be taken into account is that

\textsuperscript{11} Rollins, \textit{Between Women: Domestics and Their Employers}, 13.
\textsuperscript{12} International Labour Organization, \textit{Domestic Workers Around the Globe}. 31-32.
undeniably, feudalism in Europe consolidated the idea of domestic service as long-term servitude, expanding the number of servants due to a rising merchant class who, without a nobility title, could afford to pay for their services. The institution of feudalism was exported to the Americas by the Spaniards and the Portuguese. The weather, natural resources and an indigenous labor force, gave the conditions for an economic and social model in which the Iberian and his descendants were the lords of the land. Native Americans, and, later on, slaves became the domestic workers. A minority of domestic workers were white Iberian single women who had to paid their passage to the new world or were traveling with her employer. In the first year of colonization strong hierarchies were established.

The Iberian born was on the top of the hierarchy followed by his offspring’s born in the new world. People of mixed races were in the middle of the hierarchy. In the lower levels were native Americans and in the bottom of the social ladder those of African descent. It is not an overlap to assess that the Iberian model of colonization was based on servitude. It was not a system to establish sustainable development, but to acquire wealth for Iberians and the Iberian Peninsula. The model developed in North America was strikingly different. The weather, a smaller labor force and the limited amount of natural resources, in comparison with its South American counterpart, did not allowed for a system based on servitude. The colonies in the North were based in a struggle to survive the inclement weather.
Chapter III
The Universality of Domestic Work

Following this line of thought, the Iberians came to the new world to perpetuate the servitude model expanded during the medieval feudalism whereas in the North the struggle was to even replenish the colonies. This is not to say that in the north there was no servitude. Indeed, the same racial categories present in Latin America existed in the North American colonies. Yet, there was less racial mixing allowing for a different landscape. In the U.S. South because of the presence of slavery, deep racial and social divisions developed. These social and cultural divisions are similar to the way society was, and is, configured in the Spanish and in the Portuguese colonies in South America. In the north with a colder weather, few slaves, and few native Americans to enslave social institutions developed differently.\footnote{Bruce R Scott, The political Economy of Capitalism, (New York: Division of Research, Harvard Business School, 2006), 212-213.}

For many observers, the racial dynamics and even several aspects of the idiosyncrasies of people in the South are striking similar to the racial and social relations that were established in the colonies in the Caribbean and the northern tip of South America. Specifically, in the Colombian Caribbean. In his autobiography, the Colombian Nobel Laureate Gabriel Garcia Marquez described how he found inspiration to his writing in the books of famous deep South authors like a William Faulkner. “The authors who stimulated me the most in the writing of it were North American novelists, in particular those whose books my friends from Barranquilla had sent to me in Sucre. “Above all because of the affinities of all kinds that I found between the cultures of the Deep South and the Caribbean, with which I have an absolute, essential, and irreplaceable
identification in my formation as a human being and as a writer.” Marquez as the leading figure of the literature movement called “Magic Realism” acknowledged how similar social institutions like racial hierarchies fostered the development of similar experiences for authors in the American deep south and him as a representative of the Colombian Caribbean were slavery was pervasive and racial hierarchies have shaped every social and political institution\textsuperscript{14}.

Marquez on his autobiography reflected on something that is usually overlook and just plainly ignored. A scenario in which cultural similarities can be found by comparing the Deep American South and the Caribbean is usually unthinkable because such analysis cannot reconcile the fact that the countries in the Caribbean belong to the developing world whereas the Deep American South belongs to the most powerful country in the Americas, the United States. However, both regions shared the living legacy of slavery which has defined social and cultural institutions. For the purpose of the study of domestic service, these similarities deepen the understanding of domestic service. Following this line of thought observations made on domestic service in the United States can be applied to the Caribbean region of Colombia, and other places where exists a legacy of slavery and strong hierarchical social divisions.

To base an analysis of domestic work only in the experience of certain regions in the United States seems to foreign for regions in the developing world that have social similarities. However, by using Colombia as a sample on the situation of domestic workers serves as a bridge to find a common ground on the characteristics that define domestic

\textsuperscript{14} Gabriel García Márquez, \textit{Living to Tell the Tale} (New York: A.A. Knopf, 2003), 367.
work. Since this is the case the author choose to analyze the official data gathered by the Colombian government to show the prevailing nature of domestic work as one, if not the main, source of income for women in Colombia. The observations emphasized the situation for women domestic workers at the national level; Colombia, at the department level; Atlántico, and at the city level; Barranquilla in the Colombian Caribbean.

3.1 Domestic Work in Colombia

In the 1980s, during the government of president Turbay Ayala predictions were made asserting that domestic work was likely to disappear in the following decades. The idea was that domestic work was part of an archaic exploitative colonial institution doomed to disappear with economic development. The hope was that the value of privacy in the household, the expansion of subsidized child care and elderly facilities was going to reduce the need to enlist women as domestic workers. This idea was framed under the notion that reducing exploitative practices translated into modernity and development\textsuperscript{15}.

This statement ignored that in the developing world there were and are plenty of examples of exploitative practices. Furthermore, defining domestic work as a transitional phase into modernity ignores the fact that deep class, educational, ethnic, and racial hierarchies foster the maintenance of a group of women willing to enter the labor market employed as domestic workers. In the case of Colombia, domestic work is the main source of income for women. I hypothesize that domestic service continuous to be one of the main sources of employment for Colombian women due to ancestral class and racial divisions; which have led to strong hierarchies, the constant enforcement of gender roles in a predominant male oriented society; resulting in the lack of opportunities of

employment in other sectors, and a rising middle class that relies on women from a lower social/racial to transfer them care and household responsibilities.

The evidence to this hypothesis relies primarily on the high numbers of women working as domestic servants in Colombia. According to the Dane (Colombian Statistics Department) out of 9,014,968 women working, 1,098,555 work as domestic servants. Furthermore, the number is higher due to the nature of the profession. A profession that welcomes unreported workers to the point of virtual invisibility\textsuperscript{16}. By nature of the profession one refers to employment contracts; usually informal agreements that cannot be legally enforced\textsuperscript{17}.

3.12 Colombia in Context

Political Context

Colombia has had one of the longest standing conflicts in the world. Although contemporary assumptions traced the conflict back to the start of the guerilla movements in the late 40s and the golden years of cocaine barons in the early 80s, yet the conflict began right after the country consolidated its bloody independence from Spain, in 1819. A fragmented government with limited possibility to enforce the rule of law characterized the country until the XX century\textsuperscript{18}. Only in the XIX century Colombia had five civil wars and started the XX century with “The thousand days war” which ultimate consequence


was thousands of deaths and the loss of the province of Panama\textsuperscript{19}. Most of these conflicts originated in the deep division in affiliation between a conservative political agenda or a liberal path. Such division pervade every aspect of Colombians; from religion to culture. The peasantry was disproportionately affected by this polarization and in the 1940s the guerilla movements started to rise in the countryside. In the 1970s, drug smuggling became entangled with the guerillas (internal displacement). In 2016, the Colombian government signed a peace agreement with the guerilla, FARC\textsuperscript{20}. In the horizon, guerilla members that have opted for a criminal career instead of being law abiding citizens.

\textit{Economic Growth}

For much of its existence, Colombia has been a country with an extractive oriented economy. As a colony of the Spanish crown, Colombia’s main export was gold. By the XIX century the main economic activities were mining, agriculture, and raising cattle. Additionally, the first factories were founded to supply the demand of certain products in the internal markets. Artisan textile manufactures had a long history in the country, but in 1907 Coltejer (La Compañía de Tejidos Jericó) the first textile factory of Latin American was created, in the town of Jerico, department of Antioquia\textsuperscript{21}. In terms of agriculture by the 1880s tobacco and coffee were established as the main crops of cultivation in Colombia. Exporting tobacco and coffee led to the emergence of the Colombian bourgeoisie class. Until that point wealth was concentrated in landlords, many, that could trace their fortunes to the colonial era.

1905 marked the beginning of a decade of unprecedented growth for the country that was maintained through the XX century. It is important to notice that until 1912, the country had one of the lowest record of exports in the region. In the 1930s the GDP was 3.76% and in the 1970s it increased to 5.78%. The population also increased. In 1960s, in Colombia, the population grew 2.36% on average per year. On that decade, the world population grew 2.01% on average. This means that population in Colombia grew more than the world average in those years. In the 1970s the Colombian economy had a steady grow due to the commitment of the Colombian government in not to default in its international payment obligations of loans. This led to Colombia becoming one of the main recipients of financial aid by the World Bank and the United States. The 1980s began by predicting more economic growth. Indeed, in 1986 the International price of coffee increased due to Brazil having a bad year with its coffee crop. Colombian coffee fulfilled the international demand, usually destined for Brazilian coffee, creating an economic boom in the coffee sector. Since Colombia had a well-established dependency of coffee, there was a national economic growth\textsuperscript{22}.

Political Context

The economic growth produced by coffee was accompanied by the beginning of one of the most violent chapters in Colombian history. In the 1980s the drug cartels had become very powerful infiltrating the government and establishing connections with guerrilla groups. This led to, what is considered to most tragic incident in Colombian history, the siege by the guerrilla group M-19 of the Palace of Justice. In two days between 30 to 40 members of the M-19 guerrilla died, 11 out of 25 Colombian Supreme Court

\textsuperscript{22} Frank Safford and Marco Palacios, \textit{Colombia: Fragmented land, divided society}. (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2002).
Justices were killed, and hundreds of civilians and public servants got hurt. This was no isolated episode since violence was rampant in the 1980s and the 1990s. Bomb explosions and bomb threats in place of public gathering were almost daily occurrences. Simultaneously, cocaine production grew from 100 tons a year in 1980 to 500 a year in 1990. The scenario was a staggering absence of the rule of law. The guerrilla groups and the drug lords became more powerful than not only the government, but the government himself. During the period Colombia became the country with the highest homicide rate in the world. From a homicide rate of 19 individuals per 100,000 inhabitants in the 1960s, to having 80 individuals per 100,000 inhabitants in the 1980s. Violence and an absent of the rule of law did not stop economic growth. In fact, between 1980 and 1991 the Colombian economy had a growth of 3.31% on average. This was double the economic growth in comparison to other countries in the region. In 1991 a new Constitution was introduced.

The Constitution of 1991 introduces progressive ideas to Colombian society. Among them, the recognition of minority groups such as Afro-Colombian and indigenous groups. It also allows for divorce and it attempts to make the regions less dependent from the central government. Probably the most progressive idea, given the deep conservative roots of the country, was allowing abortion in case it presents a risk to the life of the mother, if the fetus has life-threatening defects, it the fetus is product of an incest and if the fetus is product of nonconsensual rape (sentence C-355/06). What is marvelous about the Colombian case is that all these progressive ideas were introduced while the government while the population was vulnerable to all kinds of violence from a corrupt or

inefficient governmental officials, guerrilla groups and drug lords. In fact, the 1990s were characterized by the government fighting the drug cartels. The main leaders were killed or ultimately extradited to be trial in the United States. At the same time, the national government started peace negotiations with the rebel group FARC. A peace treaty that was only signed in 2016.

*Consolidating economic growth*

Despite having one of the oldest internal conflicts in the world, despite having been bled dry by conservatives, liberals, guerillas, and the armed forces, despite having strong social and racial divisions, despite having an incipient/ineffective rule of law for much of its existence, Colombia, in the 2000s, consolidated its place as the third largest economy in South America. For example, despite the world recession of 2009, Colombia maintained positive growth figures through the crisis and in 2011, and reached 5.9% of GDP growth. Through its turbulent history, it has maintained one of the lowest inflation rates in the region and its one of the few countries in Latin America that has never had hyperinflation, nor has ever stopped paying its international debt obligations.²⁴

As contradictory as it sounds, the violence that Colombians have experienced for a long time did not affect the ability of the country to reduce extreme poverty. Colombia has made impressive strides in reducing poverty and promoting shared prosperity during the last decade. Extreme poverty fell from 17.7 percent in 2002 to 8.1 percent in 2014, while total poverty (including moderate poverty) fell from 49.7 percent in 2002 to 29.5 percent in 2014. The decline implies that 6.2 million people left poverty in the period. As claimed by the Word Bank, poverty in Colombia was reduced by half between 2002 and

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2014. In other words, around 6 million people left poverty.

6 million people left poverty, paradoxically, 6 million is the estimated number of people that have experienced forced displacement due to the internal conflict. This fact leads to doubt a scenario in which poverty has been cut by half, when 6 million people have been forced out of their rural holdings into the main cities to face extreme poverty in shanty towns. Furthermore, official estimates, including assessments by the World Bank, indicate that the internal conflict has been the main obstacle for the development of the country. It raises eyebrows how Colombia as a nation navigates so many contradictions. Above all, economic growth and the reduction of poverty while having strong social hierarchical divisions which have defined the possibilities of social mobility for the majority of Colombians. This way, it is not surprising that low skilled occupations in Colombia are performed by those who have had a disadvantageous position in the social ladder.

Furthermore, it is not caused for astonishment that figures indicating economic growth in Colombia tend to ignore the reality of the majority of the population. In this sense, a review of many sources regarding economic growth lead to the conclusion that besides describing the export economy of Colombia, highlighting the role of coffee and natural resources, or economic growth in terms of GDP there is virtually no emphasis on the role of minorities and women in the economy. Following this line of thought, it is unthinkable to assume that the role of domestic work in the Colombian economy would be even mentioned in any study on the economy of Colombia. As a matter of fact, in any country in the world, the role of domestic work in the economy is, mostly, ignored.

It can be argued that governments in the developing world do not want to account for women engaged in domestic work because this will define the country as having
archaic institutions filled with a low skilled work force, unable to be articulated in competitive world markets. In any case, ignoring the importance of domestic work does not reduce the rising number of women becoming active in the profession. In fact, between 1995 and 2010 the number of women entering the labor force change from 43.2% to 52.8%. In Colombia, the population census estimates that there are 987,525 domestic workers in the country25. In other words, domestic work is the main economic activities for women in Colombia. The assumption is that this might be the case for many women around the world. That is the reason why Colombia serves as a pertinent starting point to evaluate domestic work. Its contradictions and multidimensional characteristics can be applied to other parts of the world with similar characteristics.

Chapter IV
Domestic Service and Education

One of the myths surrounding domestic work is the assumption that domestic workers are poorly educated. Why would anyone choose to be in the lowest level of the labor hierarchy if they have the educational tools to be engage in a more agreeable and respectable profession? As in any myth there is some true in this statement. It is true that women engaged in domestic work are disproportionally less educated than women working in other professions. Yet, since the 1970s this trend is changing. Globally more women are having access to education. For example, 30 years ago women migrants from Mexico to the United States were less educated than their male counterparts. Today, female Mexican migrants to the United States exceed their male counterparts in educational attainment and level of education overall.

In Colombia, just as in other countries in the region, the number of women enrolled in educational institutions surpasses the number of men. This is worth analyzing because in Colombian society, just as in any other country in Latin America and following Southern European beliefs, respectable women have been traditionally expected to be confined to household activities. In contrast, until fairly recently, working women were considered the immoral and the destitute. Domestic workers, sewers, ironers, clothing washers, tobacco rollers, peddlers and prostitutes were, and are, marginalized and regarded as the ones performing the undesirable professions. However, the demographics have changed and the educational attainment of women in general has been significant.

As a matter of fact, illiteracy has been dramatically decreased in the country. According to the historian Marco Palacios, in 1951, 38% of the population was illiterate. By 1993 only 11% of the population was illiterate. Furthermore, according to UNICEF, 97.8% of males between the ages of 15 and 24 years old know how to read and write. The same report indicates that women in the same age group have higher rates of literacy at 98.7%. Therefore, women in Colombia are more educated than their male counterparts. This is especially true for women engaged in domestic work. According to the official data collected by the Colombian national government, in Colombia 47% of domestic workers have at least a high school diploma, 41% at least primary school, 7% have a University degree, and only 5% have no formal education.

At the departmental level the tendencies are very similar and even show higher levels of education for domestic workers. A department is, a political division, the equivalent to an American state or a Canadian province. To illustrate the regional tendencies regarding education; the department of Atlántico was chosen. The department of Atlántico is located in the coastal northern part of Colombia, bordered by the Caribbean ocean. Atlántico is racially diverse due to the convergence of three cultures. These cultures were the Europeans, the native Americans and the descendants of African slaves.

To illustrate regional tendencies, the department of Atlántico with its capital of

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28 Safford and Palacios, Colombia: Fragmented land, divided society, 304.
30 Microdatos Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares GEIH,” DANE.”
Barranquilla was chosen. The reason why it was chosen is because its diverse population and its history of deep class/race division could be used to examine other regions in the world with similar dynamics when it comes to domestic work. Following this line of thought, regarding the level of education of domestic workers in Atlántico what can be infer is that the markers for educational attainment are slightly higher than at the national level. As seen in figure 2, in the department of Atlántico, 58% of domestic workers have at least a high school diploma, 34% have at least a primary school diploma, 5% have a University degree, and 5% have no formal education. At the city level, Barranquilla, 60% of domestic workers have at least a high school diploma.

Also, in Barranquilla 31% of domestic workers have at least a primary educational diploma, 6% have a University degree, and only 3% of domestic workers have no formal education. This data offers a striking scenario, almost half of domestic workers have at least a high school degree. This means that they know how to read, write, basic math skills, and some level of knowledge in general areas of education. This training is enough for a job is a receptionist, in an office, greeting costumers, or in a factory, among others. Yet, these women are engaged in domestic work even though it is assumed that domestic work requires no training. This presents a new picture on the stigma linked to domestic work. The assumption is that domestic workers are engaged in this economic activity because they did not acquire basic skills to engage in other professions. In other words, since they are considered to be ignorant they should be domestic workers. By analyzing these numbers, it is clear that there are other reasons for women to engage in domestic worker.
When analyzing official data, it is important to acknowledge that domestic work fosters invisibility. This means that, possibly, many women were not taken into account in the data because those women may have not report their profession as domestic work. The reason might be the shame and prejudice link to the activity. In other words, all the conclusions that can be made from the data have an important margin of error. This margin could lead to higher numbers or lower numbers. To illustrate this point, it is pertinent to analyze the official data regarding the age of active domestic workers for Colombia, the department of Atlántico, and the city of Barranquilla.

At the national level, the official data estimates that 35% of domestic workers are between the ages of 41 and 55 years old, 20% between the ages of 33 to 40 years old, 16% between the ages of 25 to 32, 12% between the ages of 18 to 24 years old, and 2% between the ages of 12 to 17 years old. At the department level, Atlántico, the percentages are very similar. Following the official numbers in Atlántico 39% of domestic workers are between the ages of 41 and 55 years old, 20% between the ages of 33 to 40 years old, 16% between the ages of 25 to 32 years old, 12% between the ages of 18 and 24 years old, and 2% between the ages of 12 to 17 years old. Lastly, in the city of Barranquilla 39% of domestic workers are between the ages of 41 and 55 years old, 19% between the ages of 33 to 40 years old, 20% between the ages of 25 to 32 years old,
11% between the ages of 18 to 24 years old, and 1% between the ages of 12 to 17 years old.

What could be assess from the estimates on the age of domestic workers in Colombia, Atlántico, and Barranquilla is that the data takes into account child labor. Child labor is beyond the scope of this research. Its complexity requires a detailed analysis since it is ignored by policy makers, especially in Colombia. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this research, including a percentage of underage domestic workers, it shades light into the fact that many children working as domestic workers may have not been taken into account, when drafting the data. This might be due to the fact to employed a minor is against the law, and no less than child abuse.

Also, it is hard to expect from a child to declare that she/he works as a domestic worker when the profession is linked to a hybrid notion in which a domestic worker can be a relative helping around, or a case of charity where the unfortunate is been helped by providing him/her with food, and shelter in exchange for work in a household. Naturally, it is assumed that children, especially female children, can perform chores related to domestic work since it does not require any training. The only abilities required are assumed to be natural skills in women. The conclusion is that the data is not accounting for female child domestic workers, pointing to a higher overall number of domestic workers.

These estimates do not clarify why is domestic worker one of the main sources of income for women in Colombia and other regions of the world, but it does contribute to the analysis in the sense that children working from a young age in domestic work are predestined to a life in this profession. These children are minimizing their chances for
labor mobility and social mobility. Still these children might have the chance to get a basic education because the working arrangement may include night classes or some sort of allowed training to learn basic skills such as reading, writing, and basic math. Also, maybe those children entered domestic work having some level of primary schooling. As mentioned, child labor is beyond the scope of this research who aims to review why domestic work is so prevalent in Colombia and other regions.

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Fig.3. Age of Domestic Workers in Colombia, Atlántico, and Barranquilla (Graph by DANE. National Administrative Department of Statistics. In Microdatos Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares GEIH. DANE, 2017).

4.1 Marianism and Education

Before analyzing why domestic work is a prevailing profession for women in Colombia, and probably for women in other parts of the world, it is important to review how women from a very conservative society entered the labor force and started to gain access to education. This analysis can shed light into understanding similar dynamics that took place in other countries of the region, other areas in the developing world and even in the Mediterranean region. As mentioned above, were expected to be confined and to fulfill primarily household chores. Those women actively working, as early as the colonial period, were ostracized and marginalized. These female workers, and to a certain point independent women were the opposite of the predominant doctrine during the colonial era. This doctrine is called “marianism”, a doctrine that had an everlasting impact in the configuration of Colombian society, and other catholic countries.

According to “marianism” the ideal woman was a pious, morally pure, white
Spanish woman A woman devoted to her husband, to her home chores, and devoted to emulating Virgin Mary. As such, marianism was the standard to judge the “worthiness” of a woman. Under this premise, the opposite of the ideal woman was the racially half-breed, the indigenous and the women of African descent. To perpetuate “marianism” the colonial authorities actively destroyed most of the ancestral community oriented practices in indigenous communities. Colonial authorities also constrained women of African descent (at the time slaves) for considering them of low morals, sexually available, and too eager for freedom of movement. At the same time a reliance on domestic workers was established due to deficient public services and the conference of a higher status when having one. The ideal white Virgin Mary emulator was supposed to refrain from working because that meant degradation. Therefore, only women that were to work were women from lower classes, and of darker skin colors.

These women “the half-breed” domestic workers, were disproportionately vulnerable to predation from white males. Sexual abuse and rape were common occurrences. It was part of being a domestic servant. Practices such as; male sons losing their virginity with the female domestic worker are, sadly, still present in the profession. For example, the famous Colombian indigenous women the “India Catalina”; interpreter of the conquistador “Pedro de Heredia” had three kids out of wedlock with him. These offspring’s born out of wedlock, fathered by the “white” ruling elite, were not recognized.

31 Velásquez, Reyes, and Rodriguez, Las Mujeres En La Historia De Colombia, Volume III, 53-54.
32 Velásquez, Reyes, and Rodriguez, Las Mujeres En La Historia De Colombia, Volume III, 91.
33 Chaney and Garcia, Muchachas No More: Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean. 27-28
34 Velásquez, Reyes, and Rodriguez, Las Mujeres En La Historia De Colombia, Volume III. 84-85.
In this sense, the law was clear, children were only recognized if they were the result of marriage. In this sense, natural kids were considered bastards. However, these informal unions gave rise to the “mestizo” population of Colombia and every other country in the Americas that has a mixed-race population\textsuperscript{35}.

4.2 Parentalism

As mentioned before, to suppress what was perceived as a threat, colonial authorities actively repressed indigenous groups and African Slaves. Indigenous people and African slaves got last names from their masters to denote property over them. In terms of work, native-Americas were driven out of their communities and forced into the “encomienda”. The encomienda was an institution in which colonial authorities demanded forced labor from the indigenous population. Through this system indigenous women were, usually, but not exclusively, forced into domestic service. Males were forced to work in different errands, but their labor was considered inefficient. Under harsh labor conditions, the mortality rate for native Americans was very high. It was considered that native Americans were lazy and did not like to work. The colonial authorities professed a doctrine based on the notion that rights to native Americans could only be granted by proving Christian abnegation and hard work. Since for the colonizers, native Americans were lazy, they could not grant any rights. In other words, the white settlers defined themselves as culturally superior. Therefore, they were entitled to titles of land and citizenship because they were superior to native Americans, slaves, and mulattos\textsuperscript{36}.

As the Christian chosen, the white colonizers saw their role through a paternalistic

\textsuperscript{35} Safford and Palacios, \textit{Colombia: Fragmented land, divided society}, 42-43.

sense in which there was no room for autonomy from neither native-Americans nor African slaves, or their descendants. At the bottom of this social compositions were slaves. Slaves in Spanish and Portuguese American were the result of an attempt to replace the native-Americas forced labor due to their high mortality rate under harsh labor conditions. European contractors started to bring shipment of slaves. The first shipments were French contractors who brought 4,250 slaves between 1703 and 1714. The French were followed by the British South Sea Company who brought 10,300 slaves between 1714 and 1736. A total of 13,000 slaves were brought by Spanish contractors between 1746 until 1757 when the demand for imported slaves declined due to the grown of the local population. African male slaves replaced native Americans in the mines and in sugar cane plantations. Like indigenous women, African women slaves were also forced into domestic service. In many cases domestic work was more desirable than the harshness of, for example, a sugar cane plantation.

While indigenous women were perceived as child-like creatures in need of guidance by their white masters, African women were considered the ultimate sinners. They were thought to be inclined to sexual liberty and they were perceived to cherished freedom of movement. These women were considered far from “marianism”; therefore, they were socially ostracized and marginalized. They were reduced to be judge as having low morals, to be prostitutes and to be witches. Having low morals in colonial times was sufficient to be considered as a criminal and be punished and even be killed for it. This was especially truth when a master owned the life of his slaves/indigenous people. In

37 Safford and Palacios, Colombia: Fragmented land, divided society, 49-50.
38 Velásquez, Reyes, and Rodriguez, Las Mujeres En La Historia De Colombia, Volume III. 78-79.
39 Velásquez, Reyes, and Rodriguez, Las Mujeres En La Historia De Colombia, Volume III. 91.
theory, native-Americans were not slaves and were supposed to be protected by the colonial authorities. However, their treatment was equally cruel as slaves were treated. For slaves, there had the possibility to be freed through something called “a letter of freedom” Those letters of freedom were rarely enough to grant freedom to a slave. Often, these letters were only empty promises evoking violence and general mistreatment. In fact, emancipation for slaves only became a reality in the XIX century.

Eventually, due to different social and demographic changes when the racially mixed population started to grow the colonial authorities set in motion continuously regulations to keep the racially mixed away from positions of power. Many of these positions or to enter University required documented prove showing “purity of blood”. These colonial early racial practices have defined every social institution not only Colombia, the region, but also other parts of the world subject to colonization. For Colombia, and other countries in South America skin color has been a sign of status of wealth. In fact, as early as the colonization period, for the mixed population light skin and some property could be the only way to achieve some level of social mobility. For example, in Mexico, it was fairly common for domestic workers and nannies to advertise their Spanish blood to find employment. In the case of Colombia, only in the Constitution of 1991 there was an official attempt to respect the autonomy and self-determination of indigenous and Afro-Colombian groups, by granting them two seats in the senate.

On the other hand, being a white woman was not enough to be immune from prejudice. A woman without a male figure to represent her and speak on her behalf, the

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40 Velásquez, Reyes, and Rodríguez, Las Mujeres En La Historia De Colombia, Volume III. 89.
41 Safford and Palacios, Colombia: Fragmented land, divided society, 51-53.
42 Velásquez, Reyes, and Rodríguez, Las Mujeres En La Historia De Colombia, Volume III. 80.
working destitute women, was deemed unworthy. It is important to notice that between 1450 and 1600, 28% of women migrating to the new world from the Iberian Peninsula were listed as unmarried domestic workers, traveling with an employer or with a work agreement with an employer already established in the colonies\textsuperscript{43}. For the majority of these working women the best scenario was to pay for their travel expenses to the colonies and married an artisan. The alternative was to fall victim of predatory male employers and give birth to illegitimate children and being destitute and forced to engage in prostitution for mere survival\textsuperscript{44}.

By the 1600’s, following the legacy exported from the old continent, a male driven society was well established. Obedience from women to men was a birthright for men (M III 322-324). In the words of Saint Thomas, “The male is more perfect due to his reason and virtue.” As expected, the male was early on, the central unit to procure order and control in the colonial household. Males were not only the economic providers, but also the social, spiritual and educational guide\textsuperscript{45}. In this sense, within the birthright of male was deciding to what extent women were allowed to be involved in society. Usually, this involvement was confined to a minimum presence, often inexistent, in public matters. Women, predominantly, took an active role in legitimizing the orientation and boundaries set by men for them. For example, in the XIX Soledad Acosta, an influential female writer, advised women that their main concern should be to have and to maintain a high moral standing, and to take care of her children and husband. As for men, Acosta emphasized

\textsuperscript{43} Chaney and Garcia, \textit{Muchachas No More: Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean}. 21.

\textsuperscript{44} Chaney and Garcia, \textit{Muchachas No More: Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean}. 53-54.

\textsuperscript{45} Chaney and Garcia, \textit{Muchachas No More: Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean}.18.
that their main concerns were politics, business, and friends.\textsuperscript{46}

\textbf{4.3 Catholicism and Education}

The writings of Soledad Acosta were directed to a pious, obedient, quite and invisible woman. Acosta’s writings were a clear manifestation of a strong catholic society. Just as in medieval Europe, in Colombia and in the other countries of the region, the church permeated every aspect of society. Its reach went beyond the household to the public sphere. The ultimate decision makers were priests; as agents of god and the representatives of the church. Of all of their spheres of influence it was education were its legacy had the most enduring legacy. After all, it is through education how the culture of a society is defined and prolonged. Since education was within the powers of the church, the church dictated the education that the father, as the head of the family, was supposed to impart. This unchallenged religious doctrine led to a well-established male driven society.\textsuperscript{47}

During the late XV century, the first educational systems were founded in the new world by the church. From that period until the XIX century primary education was provided by the church exclusively to male children from wealthy families. Male children born out of wedlock were also excluded, left with no rights to get enrolled in an educational institution. There is the famous story of Colombian president Marco Fidel Suarez. Suarez was president of Colombia from 1918 to 1921. The son of a domestic worker, never recognized by his father and born in 1855 out of wedlock, Suarez was denied entry to a primary school run by the church. He used to sit outside a classroom and listen to the

\textsuperscript{46} Velásquez, Reyes, and Rodríguez, \textit{Las Mujeres En La Historia De Colombia}, Volume III, 319.  
\textsuperscript{47} Safford and Palacios, \textit{Colombia: Fragmented land, divided society}, 291.
lessons through a window. The teacher was impressed for his eagerness to learn and eventually wrote recommendations that allowed him to be enrolled in other educational institutions. This is by all accounts, an exception and even as President of Colombia he was attacked by his opponent due to be an illegitimate child and the son of Rosalia Suarez, a domestic worker. Only in the Constitution of 1990 children born out of wedlock, “natural children” were given the same legal rights as children born inside marriage.

Universal education was only granted officially between 1920 and 1940. A reform highly contested by the church. As a matter of fact, the expansion and secularization of education was actively fought by the church. In 1820 a considerable primary education enlargement took place across the country when a constituent assembly (The Congress of Cucuta) called for the construction of schools in every settlement with more than one hundred males. Such enlargement did not include any considerations towards female enrollment in educational institutions. As a matter of fact, only the daughters of the wealthy had the option to enroll in a private educational institution. For the young women, able to be enrolled in these exclusive private institutions, education was limited to instruction in areas that could lead them closer to emulate the virtues of the “Virgin Mary”.

According to statistics of the time, in schools 90% of the enrollees were males. In the following decades, there was a narrow expansion in the enrollment of daughters of the

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50 Safford and Palacios, Colombia: Fragmented land, divided society, 291.
51 Safford and Palacios, Colombia: Fragmented land, divided society, 109
wealthy in schools\textsuperscript{52}.

One of the reasons to justify the low enrollment rates for women in schools was that women were expected to fulfill their role as mothers and wives above any other considerations. In the 1850s Colombian girls were expected to get married between the ages of 11 and 14 years of old. Males, between the ages of 15 and 18 years old\textsuperscript{53}. Wealthy women could expect a life with a husband as the main provider, and satisfied their main goal of a prolific family, especially in areas in the countryside. Many kids were synonym of a free source of laborers for farms. The other women, the majority, their productive lives were supposed to start between the ages of 10 and 14 and continue to work for, approximately, 50\% of their lives until death.

As in any other country in the period, working women were at the bottom of the social ladder, the majority, women domestic workers. Like current cases, women domestic workers were subject to predation from their male employers. In the case of an unwanted pregnancy, women were driven to the streets with no mercy, and they forced to engage in prostitution as a survival strategy in disgrace. This fact seems to be inspired in a Dickensian narrative, emanating from the harsh social conditions during the industrial revolution in London. A typical “Oliver Twist” workhouse story. Yet, these conditions were found everywhere in the western world. For the Colombian case, in the XIX century, Manuel Belgrano observed that it was common for politicians and travelers to comment on the conditions of poverty that drove women to prostitution in Colombia and in other countries of South America. These working women were either indigenous, black or of

\textsuperscript{52} Safford and Palacios, \textit{Colombia: Fragmented land, divided society}, 186-187.
\textsuperscript{53} Safford and Palacios, \textit{Colombia: Fragmented land, divided society}, 173.
mixed race\textsuperscript{54}.

It could be accurate to say that through history the racially mixed and those considered inferior due to race or ethnicity have been disproportionately afflicted by poverty, discrimination and overall harsh living conditions. For example, in Canada, during the period discussed, the destitute and marginalized were Irish women\textsuperscript{55}. The marginalization of women was more pronounced in urban areas were industrial expansion was taking place. Naturally, industrial expansion enlarged the pool of workers moving from the rural areas to urban settings looking for employment. More opportunities of employment did not mean higher educational level. In the case of Colombia, in urban areas, the majority of working women were illiterate and were living below the poverty line. In Bogota, out of 108,000 women, 75,000 were illiterate. In rural areas, illiteracy was more pronounced for men and women\textsuperscript{56}.

4.4 Expansion of Education

This illiteracy trend only started to change significantly in the XX century. During this period, some women started to get notoriety in the political arena. One of these pioneers was female writer Maria Cano. Cano, although not advocating directly in favor of women, her writings are regarded as a cry for political freedom\textsuperscript{57}. In the 1940s, World War II brought an industrial pushed for the ally’s countries in Latin America. In Colombia, many women became workers in factories producing goods bought mainly by the United States. By the 1940s the number of women enrolled in public schools was increasing.

\textsuperscript{54} Chaney and Garcia, Muchachas No More : Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean, 23.
\textsuperscript{55} Claudette Lacelle, Urban Domestic Servants in 19th-century Canada (Ottawa: National Historic Parks and Sites, Environment Canada, Parks, 1987), 128.
\textsuperscript{56} Chaney and Garcia, Muchachas No More : Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean, 107-112
\textsuperscript{57} Stanfield, Of Beasts and Beauty: Gender, Race, and Identity in Colombia, 83-84.
Changes in literacy for women helped promoting other areas of employment, besides housework. Politically, the suffragette movement in European nations found its niche in Colombian society and in the countries of the region. Colombian women became active in demanding political participation. Finally, in 1957, during the government of General Rojas Pinilla the right to vote for women was granted.\(^{58}\)

The expansion of women entering the labor force and the enlargement of their political rights brought an important change in Colombian society, the beginning of the secularization of the government. Until that point the church went to great lengths to minimize the influence of ideas considered to be modern and thus a thread to tradition and the status of quo of the church. Literary works by Voltaire, Montesquieu, among others were forbidden for a long time.\(^{59}\) However, following the example of France, a traditionally strong catholic society, Colombian political leaders started to ask for a separation of powers in which official matters would be deal exclusively by the government with no interference or influenced by the catholic church, nor its representatives. This was a major change in Colombian society since, up to those first debates, the church and its opinions and decisions were a major, in many cases the main force, driven every aspect of Colombian society.

By the 1970s, the government acted and, by law, clerical intervention in education was started to be officially limited. A system of public funded non-denominational school was established. The catholic clergy was allowed to remain in charge of their already established private religious oriented institution. As expected, the law limiting the powers


of the catholic church was strongly resisted by the clergy and its supporters. In 1970 Bishop Bermudez of the town of Popayan threatening the community with excomulgation if they were to send their kids to public schools\textsuperscript{60}. Despite the strong resistance from the clergy and its supporters, education in Colombia became “in principle” free of religious intervention, unless in private institutions run by the church. It is important to notice that the influence of the catholic church in the private realm of citizens was still very strong. Naturally, through the private realm, the church managed to remain as an influential figure in the lives of Colombians. As a matter of fact, up to the 1990s and early 2000s politicians used to consult political problematics with members of the clergy.

Yet, the world was changing and so was society. In the 1970s big cities experienced an influx of workers moving from rural areas to the growing urban centers. The labor force was more educated than previous waves of immigrants from rural areas. Interestingly, women were the main migrants with higher levels of education than their male counterparts. This tendency has increased over time. In 1976 women represented 36% of the overall labor force in the city of Bogota. Most of working women started to be concentrated in the main seven cities of the country\textsuperscript{61}. By 1996, women were representing 50% of the overall labor force\textsuperscript{62}.

Today, women represent 42% of the overall labor force. This number is probably higher since, as argued before, domestic work is one of the main professions for women. Since the profession fosters invisibility, there is an overwhelming number of women

\textsuperscript{60} Safford and Palacios, Colombia: Fragmented land, divided society, 237.
\textsuperscript{61} Chaney and Garcia, Muchachas No More: Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean.107-109.
\textsuperscript{62} Safford and Palacios, Colombia: Fragmented land, divided society, 303.
working as domestic servants not accounted for in the official data. Undoubtedly, like in Colombia, women participation in the labor force has increased in the developing and the developed world. In the U.S. there were an estimated 15% of women economically active in 1950. By 2003, this percentage had risen to 65% of women in the American labor force. The dramatic increased is visible in the presence of women in managerial and professional occupations in the Americas.

4.5 Paternalism and Beauty Identity

The rise of involvement of women in the labor force was accomplished despite a well-established male driven and a conservative society. In the case of Colombia, 'marianism' took an additional form. The government and the Catholic church were active in building a Colombian identity based on beauty. Thus, a duality was created. On one hand, women were expected to practice "marianism", but at the same time Colombian women were expected to follow exuberant and exotic standards of beauty. The tutelage of priests and males contributed to turn the beauty of Colombian women into a tool to build a national identity. There is evidence that by the late XIX century beauty pageants were promoted in periods of upheaval, economic crisis and governmental institutional failure. Early on, beauty pageants were used to cast a shadow over inequality, violence, and poverty.

Case in point, a civil war in 1905 led to the province of Panama to declare independence from Colombia, aid by the United States. A beauty contest was organized to pacify national discomfort due to the loss of Panama and the bloody conflict between

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63 Microdatos Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares GEIH," DANE."
64 Ehrenreich and Hochschild, Global Women; Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy, 8.
65 Stanfield, Of Beasts and Beauty: Gender, Race, and Identity in Colombia, 210.
liberals and conservatives\textsuperscript{66}. Beauty pageants were not device to liberalize society and foster ideas of modernity. On the contrary, beauty pageants were organized to reflect a deep traditional society that had a very rigid class structure that permeated every aspect of society. In the 1930s writer Maria Cano observed that social class was a defining factor in the lives of Colombians which limited the possibility for advancement of citizens\textsuperscript{67}.

As expected, beauty pageants were not the exception. The first national beauty pageants called for contestants between the ages of 18 to 20 from a “good traditional family, with good ancestry” and educated within the standards of the time\textsuperscript{68}. Needless to say, that “good ancestry” implied a white girl of Spanish descent. The legitimacy of the beauty pageant rested on having white girls that could trace their ancestry back to the Iberian Peninsula\textsuperscript{69}. By default, the majority of women in the country were of mixed ancestry, did not belong to traditional families and were not admissible into religious educational institution. Therefore, the majority of these women were ruled out from the beauty pageants competition. To the point, only in 1994 the first woman of African American descent won the Colombian National Beauty Pageant\textsuperscript{70}.

Through the XX century beauty pageants were used time in again as a tool of national building and to pacify political discontent. Between 1948 and 1958 during the period called “La Violencia”, were an estimated 200,000 people perished, beauty pageants were recurrently used to find a middle ground between the two political factions,

\textsuperscript{66}Stanfield, Of Beasts and Beauty: Gender, Race, and Identity in Colombia, 72.
\textsuperscript{67}Stanfield, Of Beasts and Beauty: Gender, Race, and Identity in Colombia, 83-84.
\textsuperscript{68}Stanfield, Of Beasts and Beauty: Gender, Race, and Identity in Colombia, 91.
\textsuperscript{69}Stanfield, Of Beasts and Beauty: Gender, Race, and Identity in Colombia, 61-65.
liberals and conservatives, who “were bleeding the country dry”\textsuperscript{71}. The aftermath of “La Violencia” was the creation of the guerrillas which eventually led to drug trafficking, drug barons, and drug cartels. In this context, beauty pageants endure as “sedatives for violence”. In 1962 there were at least 100 beauty pageants across the country and women had the right to vote; yet, according to the civil code the husband had right over his wife and her property. The husband could beat and even kill his wife and go on without punishment\textsuperscript{72}.

Starting in the late 1970s, the duality between the expectations of marianism from women and the governmental tool of using the beauty of Colombian women as “sedatives for violence” was deeply influenced by drug trafficking\textsuperscript{73}. An expectation of women enlarging their body attributes through implants became almost institutionalized. By the 1990s girls as young as 14 were getting breast implants. Observers, have affirmed that in Colombian society beauty is more cherished than education. In a way, there is a conception that a woman has more chances of a rich life if she is attracted enough to get the attention of a wealthy man. Most of these wealthy men can be involved in illegal activities. A behavior that can be overlook by society, especially by these girls looking for a better life. The country remains as one of the main catholic countries in the world. As such, expectations based on the tradition of marianism are still relevant. Yet, currently there are 300 beauty pageants every year and medical procedures to enhance body parts are on the rise\textsuperscript{74}. The objectization of women has not stop the fact that women have

\textsuperscript{71} Stanfield, Of Beasts and Beauty: Gender, Race, and Identity in Colombia, 105.
\textsuperscript{72} Stanfield, Of Beasts and Beauty: Gender, Race, and Identity in Colombia, 143.
\textsuperscript{73} Stanfield, Of Beasts and Beauty: Gender, Race, and Identity in Colombia 204.
\textsuperscript{74} Stanfield, Of Beasts and Beauty: Gender, Race, and Identity in Colombia. 201.
become the backbone of the Colombian labor force.
Chapter V
Women in the Labor Force, Colombia

According to the DANE, national gathered data, Colombia has a population of 46,292,052 million people. It is estimated that out of those 46,292,052; 21,584420 is the working population. Women represent the 42% of that work force. In other words, 9,014,698 of women are considered wage laborers. Out of those 9,014,698 working women; 987,525 are domestic workers. According to official data, domestic work represents the second profession for women in the country. The official data, estimates that the profession where more women work is as peddlers. Peddlers include lottery ticket sellers and newspaper sellers. The data indicates that there are 1,238,855 women peddlers. There is a difference of 251,330 of women that work as peddlers and not as domestic workers. It is important to underline that the official data leads to assume that the number of women working as domestic workers might be higher than estimated. The assumption might be that domestic work is the main profession for women in Colombia because there might be a sample error.

As shown in figure 4, the official data presents three categories closely related to domestic work. These three categories include economic activities such as cleaning, ironing, cooking, and serving. The first category of workers, cleaners and ironers estimates 111,030 women on these professions. The second category of cookers, waitresses and bartenders estimates 753,565 women in these economic activities. The last category closely related to domestic work is women working as doorwoman, cleaners and, sacristans. The data estimates that there are 437,869 women working in this category. Evidently, if these numbers are added assuming that some of these women are domestic workers wrongly categorized, domestic work can be considered the main
profession for women in Colombia. The assumption is that the three individual categories, presented above, are composed by activities that are closely related to domestic service. Therefore, women that were included in these categories could be mainly engaged in domestic work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working Women</th>
<th>Total Number of Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Washers, Cleaners and Ironers</td>
<td>111,030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cookers, Waitresses and Bartenders</td>
<td>753,565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Doorwoman, Cleaners and Sacristans</td>
<td>437,869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of working women in the three Categories.</strong></td>
<td><strong>1302,464</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 4. Number of women working in categories related to domestic work at the national level (Graph by DANE. National Administrative Department of Statistics. In Microdatos Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares GEIH. DANE, 2017).

These three categories added together represent 1'302,464 working women. As mentioned before peddlers, the largest category for working women, represent 1’238,855. The three categories added together surpass the number of women estimated to be working as peddlers. Now, if the number of women estimated in the three categories related to domestic work is added to the official number of domestic workers, 987,525, then the total number is 2’289,989 working women. Just assuming that there is a small percentage of women counted under the three categories that could be assumed to be engage primarily in domestic work, it is not misleading to assume that domestic work is the main profession for women in Colombia.

At the regional level the tendency remains. The department of Atlantico was chosen, to analyze the tendencies of domestic work at the regional level. The department of Atlántico has a population of 2’431,994 people. The department encompasses 23 towns, including its capital Barranquilla. Barranquilla and its metropolitan area, including
the towns of Puerto Colombia, Soledad, Galapa, and Malambo, has a population of 1’807,128 people. In the department of Atlántico, in the Caribbean region of Colombia, the majority of its 2’341,999 people, are concentrated in the city of Barranquilla. Not surprisingly Barranquilla has a population of 1’807,128 people.

The tendency analyzed at the national level regarding the regent nature of domestic work as one of the main economic activities, if not the main activity, remains unchanged at the regional level. In the department of Atlántico, it is estimated that out of its population of 2’431,994, 1’079,105 people are active workers. Out of 1’079,105 workers, 433,451 are working women. Women in the department represent approximately 40% of the labor force in the region. As seen at the national level, the main profession for women is what is categorized as “peddlers”. Peddlers are estimated to be 70,427 working women. The second larger category estimating employment for women is domestic service, with an estimated number of 49,467 women actively working in this profession. Just as at the national level, the data presents three categories that could show that domestic work is the main profession for women in the region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working Women</th>
<th>Total Number of Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Washers, Cleaners and Ironers</td>
<td>4,993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cookers, Waitresses and Bartenders</td>
<td>33,303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Doorwoman, Cleaners and Sacristans</td>
<td>17,611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of working women in the three Categories.</td>
<td>55,907</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 5. Number of women working in categories related to domestic work in the department of Atlántico. (Graph by DANE. National Administrative Department of Statistics. In Microdatos Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares GEIH. DANE, 2017).

As shown in figure 5, The first category of cooks, waitresses, and barmaids estimates 33,303 working women in it. The second category estimates 17,611 women working as cleaners, doormen, window cleaners and sacristans. The third category of
washer, cleaners and ironers is comprised by 4,993 working women. If the three categories are added together, the total number is 55,907 women working in professions closely related to domestic work. The data estimates 49,497 women working as domestic workers. If the overall number of the three related categories to domestic service is added to the official number of women estimated to be working as domestic servants, the result is 105,374 working women. A total of 105,374 women working as domestic workers surpasses the 70,427 women working as peddlers. According to the data and similarly to the national level, domestic workers are at the regional level the main profession for women in the department of Atlántico.

An argument could be built around the notion that it makes sense for the prevalence of domestic work as one of the main professions, if not the main profession for women since the department includes rural areas. In rural areas employment is more limited and women are driven to domestic service as a source of income since it is assumed that the skills needed to perform the work are natural to women and do not require formal training. However, a closer look into the data taking as an example the capital of the department of Atlántico, Barranquilla, the tendency prevails. Including or not including rural areas, domestic work represents the main economic activity for women in the region.

As previously mentioned Barranquilla has a population of 1’807,128 people. The total number of people actively working is estimated to be 812,711. Out of those 812,711, 338,139 are estimated to be women economically active. As reviewed at the national and regional level; peddling is considered to be the main profession for women. The category of peddlers is estimated to be 56,668 peddler women. Also, just as in the national and
regional level, domestic service is assumed to be the second largest profession for women in the city of Barranquilla. The data indicates that in Barranquilla there are 36,668 women working as domestic servants. For the city of Barranquilla, the official data also assesses the three categories related to domestic service that are present at the national level and at the department level. As expected, the three categories plus the official number of domestic workers may hint on an actual higher number of women domestic workers.

As shown in figure 6, the first group of washers, cleaners and ironers is estimated to be 3,139 women working on these professions. The second category estimates 23,428 women working as cookers, waitresses and barman. The last category relevant to this analysis is doorwomen, window cleaners and sacristan. The data estimates 14,754 women working on this group. If the three categories related to domestic are added, just as it was done at the national and departmental level, there is strong indicator that domestic work is the most prominent profession for women in the city of Barranquilla. In this case, 41,321 is the total of number of women in the three categories. If the official estimated for domestic workers in the city, 36,238, is added to 41,321 then the result is 77,559 working women. 77,559 of working women, largely exceeds the estimated number of peddlers. It should be remembered that, like at the national and department level, peddling is considered to be the main profession for women.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working Women</th>
<th>Total Number of Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Washers, Cleaners and Ironers</strong></td>
<td>3,139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Cookers, Waitresses and Bartenders</strong></td>
<td>23,428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Doorwoman, Cleaners and Sacristans</strong></td>
<td>14,754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of working women in the three Categories.</strong></td>
<td>41,321</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 6. Number of women working in categories related to domestic work in the city of Barranquilla. (Graph by DANE. National Administrative Department of Statistics. In Microdatos Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares GEIH. DANE, 2017).

### 5.1 Sampling Error

This analysis leads to infer that at the national, the department and at the city level, in this case Barranquilla, the three categories related to domestic service have domestic workers classified wrongly in their numbers. The main reason is due to the vague naming used in those three categories. As it has been discussed, the three categories related to domestic service are based on women working as washers, cleaners, ironers, cooks, window cleaners, waitresses, bartenders and as building attendants. A superficial observation is enough to assess that all these activities are related and sometimes interchangeable. For example, cleaner and window cleaner, or window cleaner and building attendant. Since the classification does not offer definitions to evaluate what are the duties in every profession, the best assessment is to assume that many women classified under these three categories are engaging in domestic work. For example, women working as an ironer may engage in cooking and cleaning. A building attendant may be in charge of cleaning windows and maybe cleaning the inside of apartments. It must be mentioned that waitressing and bartending are the activities with a lesser relation with domestic service since it is assumed that these activities are performed in public places. According to the definition of domestic service by the International Labour Union;
domestic work is an activity performed in the private realm\textsuperscript{75}.

The misclassification of women in the three related categories should not only be attributed to the vague categories designated by the official data. There is another more compelling reason to account for the misclassification of women engaging in domestic service in other related economic activities. As it was mentioned before, countries are not eager to show that the majority of their female labor force is engaged in domestic work. The reason is the shame and prejudice related to domestic work. In other words, the country will be judge as underdeveloped and anchored in the colonial era. Nevertheless, domestic work is an economic activity present in every country in the world. It is generally regarded as unskilled work performed by only people in the lowest place in the social ladder around the globe. In other words, undignified and shameful. However, this has not always been the case.

5.2 Domestic Work as an Apprenticeship

In pre-industrial England, France and for European immigrants to the European colonies of North America (United States and Canada) domestic work was regarded as a respectable occupation. Domestic work was perceived as a stage of life. A way to acquire training before formal schooling was implemented. It was also considered, a transitional period in which young women received training in household related chores before getting married and starting their own families. It is estimated that between 15\% to 30\% of women in pre-industrial England and France between the ages of 15 to 65 were engaged in domestic work. The majority of these women range between the ages of 15 to 32 years old. Before the existence of formal educational systems, domestic work was

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{75} International Labour Organization, \textit{Domestic Workers Around the Globe}. 7-10.
\end{footnote}
a way for women to have access to an apprenticeship. A training design to learn from their masters.  

The industrial revolution brought an abasement of the working conditions of laborers in Europe. An important number of factory workers, destitute domestic workers and prostitutes suffered and perished in the infamous ‘workhouses’. Workhouses were places were lodging and food were provided in exchange of work. It is widely accepted that the labor conditions were brutal and its legacy has been everlasting in English society. For example, it is estimated that 1 in 10 Britons descends from a workhouse worker. Despite harsh labor conditions, domestic work was more desirable than starvation on the streets or prostitution. In fact, even though male factory workers had higher salaries than female domestic workers, for factory workers labor conditions were worse. Factory workers had similar salaries, but they were supposed to house and feed themselves. Domestic work was more advantageous because it offered shelter and food. 

At the same time, payment for a domestic worker presented a contradiction. It is true that domestic workers were provided with food and shelter. However, domestic workers were paid under the system called Payment-In-Kind. Instead of a monetary compensation, the salary was assumed to be shelter and food. In fact, the cost of feeding and sheltering a domestic worker was assumed to be more expensive than the salary that such worker deserved for her work. Additionally, punishment was understood is a right of the employer over the employee. One of the roles of the employer was based on

76 Chaney and Garcia, Muchachas No More: Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean. 19-20.
a paternalistic notion in which the master of the household could inflict severe body punishment if he considered that the domestic worker was out of line\textsuperscript{78}.

This asymmetrical relation pre-dates European feudalism and as expected it found its place in the Americas. During the colonial period clothes, room, medication, and any other expense was deducted from the salary of the domestic worker\textsuperscript{79}. The reduction could imply no monetary compensation for the work performed. Currently this payment-in-kind is a characteristic of domestic work around the world. Some legislations when regulating officially domestic work as a profession recognize payment-in-kind. Others have abolished this practice. For example, in Brazil and in the province of Quebec, Canada wages cannot be adjusted by calculating them under the notion that lodging and food can be deducted from the payment. In Bolivia, the legislation goes even further by forbidden any source of payment in kind\textsuperscript{80}.

Despite the possibility of a salary paid in kind, in the North American colonies, for newly arrived immigrants domestic work was a way to improve the well-being of women. Although the conditions were in many cases cruel, in general, the advantages outweighed the disadvantages\textsuperscript{81}. In fact, according to McBride, in the XIX century in Canada one in three domestic workers was able to rise in the social ladder. At the same time, there were reports on high propensity of crimes such as drunkenness, infanticide, and prostitution, among domestic workers. For example, according to Claudette Lacelle in XIX century France, half of the prostitutes had apparently been domestic workers\textsuperscript{82}. Indeed, there is

\textsuperscript{78} Lacelle, \textit{Urban Domestic Servants in 19th-century}, 100.
\textsuperscript{79} Chaney and Garcia, \textit{Muchachas No More: Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean}. 21.
\textsuperscript{80} International Labour Organization, \textit{Domestic Workers Around the Globe}. 81.
\textsuperscript{82} Lacelle, \textit{Urban Domestic Servants in 19th-century}, 49.
a close relation between domestic work and prostitution. This link is beyond the scope of this study, yet it is important to mention that, currently and historically, women working as domestic workers have been driven to prostitution after being dismissed due to getting impregnated or raped by their employer. Case in point, in London during the XIX century between 59 and 70% of unwed mothers had been domestic workers. Inexorably, there were a high number of abortions, and orphans\textsuperscript{83}.

In general, for workers poverty and harsh living conditions were rampant. For instance, in the XIX century in the United States and Canada four months of savings resulting from a conventional salary as a domestic worker or a factory worker, were not enough to survive on the street for one week. Destitute women were forced to sell their body to survive. Once at the bottom of the moral ladder, there were not many possibilities for these women, but to endure a life as a pariah. Most of these women were either newly arrived from the countryside to the city, or recent immigrants. In the XIX century for the North American colonies, the majority of destitute women were Irish immigrants. Irish were the most scorned ethnic group during this period in the North American colonies\textsuperscript{84}.

In general, there were belittled and ridiculed. As expected, the majority of domestic workers, were Irish women. Irish domestic workers faced hardship treatment when being the first generation. However, as the ethnic landscape changed, when the number of Irish immigrants increased, so did the possibilities for upward mobility. As previously mentioned one in three Irish domestic workers was able to move up the social ladder.

In contrast, in Spanish and Portuguese America social mobility was virtually nonexistent. Starting in the colonial period, domestic service has been associated with the

\textsuperscript{83} Lacelle, \textit{Urban Domestic Servants in 19th-century}, 21.

\textsuperscript{84} Lacelle, \textit{Urban Domestic Servants in 19th-century}, 120-128.
lowest levels of class and race in the social ladder\textsuperscript{85}. In fact, domestic work was not perceived as an apprenticeship for women. It was and it is, servitude. Even for white new comers who did not belong to elite families and needed to find employment, domestic work was the only profession available. Mostly until the early XIX century, the only way to go up in the social ladder was to marry to an artisan and become a stay home wife. The way to go down the social ladder, was to fall prey to their employers, been thrown to the streets, pregnant and engaging in prostitution to survive\textsuperscript{86}.

These predatory practices have remained strongly linked to domestic service. From white Portuguese and Spaniards raping and subduing indigenous women and African slaves in the XIX century, to women migrating as domestic workers driven to prostitution for mere survival in foreign nations. As already mentioned, since domestic work is confined to the privacy of the household; intimacy with the employer gives rise to the possibility of sexual predation from the employer to the domestic worker.

\textsuperscript{85} Chaney and Garcia, \textit{Muchachas No More: Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean}. 22. 
\textsuperscript{86} Chaney and Garcia, \textit{Muchachas No More: Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean}. 121.
Chapter VI
Understanding Domestic Work

To study domestic work the first thing that needs to be taking into account is that defining domestic work can be elusive and difficult. As a matter of fact, there is no accepted definition on what constitutes domestic work. A lack of a common definition has been used as an argument to exclude the profession of domestic work from any source of legal protection in the legislation of many countries. This absence of provisions overlooks the basic fact that domestic workers earn a wage just as any other worker who is protected by law. Since domestic workers are, in general, invisible in the eyes of the law the propensity for abusing domestic workers is endemic in the profession. Domestic workers are expected to work longer hours than other workers. Yet, they are among the workers that earn the lowest wages.

Also, having benefits such as; health insurance, maternity leave, or overtime payment are rarities. It is common to find domestic workers with salaries way below the stipulated minimum wage of a country, and even find that part of her salary is paid in kind. Wage reductions justified based on lodging, food, clothing and even personal favors are common. The matter is that, worldwide, it is more common to find domestic work as part of the “shadow economy” of a country, than to find domestic work fully protected and regulated by the legislation. In other words, a commonality for domestic workers worldwide is their invisibility in the eyes of the law, rendering them vulnerable when engaging in this economic activity.

Another reason why domestic workers are so susceptible towards hardship and

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87 International Labour Organization, Domestic Workers Around the Globe. 7-20.
mistreatment is that, although non-exclusively, almost all domestic workers are women. Except for certain Asian nations were domestic work is performed by men, in some nations in Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas it is usually regarded as an economic activity for women. The International Labour Organizations calculates that 100 million people around the world are engaged in domestic work. 80% of those 100 million are estimated to be women\textsuperscript{88}. It is undoubtable that domestic work represents an important segment of the population worldwide and at such; a definition is vital to procure an entitlement in the labor rights of these workers.

6.1 Defining Domestic Work

The sociologist Judith Rollins made important observations that have served to set some parameters to define domestic work. According the Rollins, domestic work refers to non-family members engaged in household chores. This definition is problematic because as it happens domestic workers can be extended family of the employer. For example, in the developing world the domestic worker could have some sort of blood relation to the employer; an aunt or a cousin in some degree. For Rollins definition to be sufficient to assess domestic work then the definition of domestic work has to include extended family. Rollins makes no reference to this aspect in her book; “Between Women: Domestics and their Employees”. Employing relatives as domestic workers, is situation that can be easily encountered. For example, in any country in the developing world, maybe the employer was able to climb the social ladder, but not his relatives; therefore, he is in the position of higher them as domestic workers.

Rollins made important observations regarding the relation between domestic

\textsuperscript{88} International Labour Organization, \textit{Domestic Workers Around the Globe}. 3.
work and industrialization. She observed that increases in the level of industrialization of a country have as consequence the enlargement of the middle class. The middle class is able to afford paying the service of a domestic work. Therefore, the demand for domestic workers increases. For example, during the Industrial Revolution, western Europe had the highest recorded of domestic workers. In England in 1891 there were 1,549,502 domestic workers and in France, ten years before in 1881, there were 1,156,604 domestic workers.

As expected industrialization attracts people to the main cities, altering the agricultural sector. This is an important notion that predicts that domestic work as one of the main profession for women is far from disappearing. The demand for domestic workers will be likely increase as the middle class expands in the developed and in the developing world. Rollins made important remarks on the fact that as the middle class expands mortality rate for kids decreases. More kids, increases the demand of domestic workers since one of their roles is as caregivers to kids\(^{89}\).

### 6.2 A Feminist Theory on Domestic Work

Additional to Rollins’ observations on domestic work, in the 1960s and the 1970s important contributions to understand domestic work were made by feminist theorists. This analysis is centered, primarily, around housework. Housework which traditionally has been assumed to be unsupervised and unpaid. The principal is that housework should be considered like any other kind of paid work. Just because it is performed in the private realm (the residence) it does not lose its status as an activity that creates a product that has monetary value. Marxists feminist theorists, went further by considering the

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household as the workplace. In other words, an extension of the factory. As an extension of the factory, the household is part of the economic cycle as a function of male proletarians. Housework performed by females allows male workers to create capital in the factories. This means that in theory housework is the vehicle for equality between male and women given that both are productive beings creating capital. However, Marxist Feminist found, the previous idea as the source of oppression for women engaged in housework. If women are considered the proletarian confined to housework activities then men are a class of domestic exploiters. The male proletarians are exploited by the bourgeoisie class/ the owners of the capital. However, according to Marxist Feminists, the factory workers are the ultimate exploiters, since they exploit females responsible for housework.\footnote{Ehrenreich and Hochschild, \textit{Global Women; Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy}, 86-87.}

It is important to make a distinction between Marxist feminists and plain Marxist Theory. For Marxist theorists, domestic work does not hold the dimension, nor the importance that it has under the Feminist Marxist Theory. According to Marxist Theory, domestic work does not represent a trading commodity in the market of capital. As “simple labor” it is not considered an economic activity, but only an activity reserved to the privacy of the household producing no value. These observations go further by pointing out to the idea that housework activities do not produce value as commodities created in factories do. In this sense, domestic work is characterized by the “use-value doctrine.” The product created by domestic work is consumed immediately, and as such, it is hard to treated it as a commodity exchangeable in the market. However, women domestic workers
engaging in housework do produce a product trade in the market place\textsuperscript{91}.

Simultaneously in the 1960s, the influential book “Feminine Mystique” was published. This book is a landmark text for the feminist thought. In the 60s after women had won a lot of ground in educational attainment, political participation, and relative independence from male figures, there was disconformity among certain sector of American society. Among certain groups, there was a mourning for the loss of the traditional “kinder, ruche, and Kirche”\textsuperscript{92}. A German phrase which means; children, kitchen and church. Women were perceived as being in the process of losing what was considered their fulfillment of their lives; their responsibilities in the household. In the words of Friedan, “American women’s unhappiness is merely the most recently won of women’s rights.” Education attainment and entering the labor force was mending with the household essential role expected for women to undertake\textsuperscript{93}. In other words, women should not have ambitions of compete in the labor market with men. Their presence should be in the household as the main caregivers and performers of house chores.

In regard to housework, Betty Friedan asserts that a male dominant society confined women to “janitorial chores, beneath the ability of the average woman.” According to Friedan, housework is not shameful, but it is defined in an unequal exploitative relation between men and women. These relation is constantly reinforced when males do not participate in housework chores and it is women who are the only performers of it. For Friedan, housework as mainly an occupation confined to women which reproduces male dominance. The effects are not between husband and wife, but

\textsuperscript{91} Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Migration, Domestic Work and Affect: A Decolonial Approach on Value and the Feminization of Labor (New York: Routledge, 2010), 90.
\textsuperscript{93} Friedan, The Feminine Mystique, 13
also girls helping their mother and boys being served. These are mechanisms for the endurance to keep women confined to caring for dependables and house chores from generation to generation\textsuperscript{94}.

The tasks associated with domestic work vary a lot. This contributes to the difficulty in defining what constitutes domestic work. In an attempt to find a definition for domestic work, the International Labour Organization in the “Domestic Workers Convention” of 2011 Article 1; enumerates three characteristics to define domestic work. First of all, the term “domestic work” means work performed in on for a household or households. Second, the term “domestic work’ means any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship. The third characteristic is that a person who performs domestic work only occasionally or sporadically and not on occupational basis is not a domestic worker. These three characteristics are based on the premise that domestic work must be performed and it is restricted to a private household.

This definition is based on the United Nations, International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC). The ISIC classifies all economic activities as, “Activities of private households as employers of domestic staff.” Under division 97, what ascribes to domestic work, in the explanatory note: “maids, cooks, waiters, valets, butlers, laundresses, gardeners, gatekeepers, stable-lads, chauffeurs, caretakers, governesses, babysitters, tutors, secretaries etc.” are all domestic workers. The rational is that “The product produced by this activity is consumed by the employing household\textsuperscript{95}. In other words, it seems that as long as there is an economic activity performed in the household then that

\textsuperscript{94}Ehrenreich and Hochschild, \textit{Global Women; Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy} 87-88.

constitutes domestic work.

This definition is extremely problematic because it groups people that are engaged in different economic activities that required different skills/training in the same category. Furthermore, aside from ignoring the differences in special abilities required for each occupation, it ignores the differences in salary that people in this group have. Last, but not least, this definition ignores the way each occupation in this group is perceived differently by members of society. In other words, a maid does not hold the same status as a tutor. Even a waiter is not regarded the same as a secretary. Overall, the definition used by ILO based on the United Nations, ISIC contributes to the already spread misunderstanding and inefficient protection awarded to domestic workers. It even contributes to the generalized invisibility in which domestic work is maintained by not only the government, but by society. However, a broad classification of domestic workers serves as a way to enhance the argument that in Colombia, and other countries, the main occupation for women is domestic work. A broader category, increases the number of people that can be included in a group.

6.3 Employment Contract

Another notion that contributes to the invisibility of domestic workers is the employment contract. In this regard, the law is partially blind to the existence of domestic workers. This is due to the fact that labor agreements between employers and domestic workers are, usually, informal contracts. These informal contracts remained as oral agreements between the parties. The contract is negotiated verbally and the obligations are not properly defined. Although it is true that certain legislations recognized oral contracts as binding as are written agreements, proven an oral agreement is very difficult.
The results are labor agreements in which the rights and obligations of employers and employees are not clearly defined. Even if they are properly stipulated, seeking reparation proves to be daunting because there is no written record of the provisions negotiated in the oral agreement. In other words, contracts cannot be proven. If contracts between employers and domestic workers cannot be proven; therefore, the law cannot regulate on the matter. The use of oral agreements is pervasive in domestic work. Figure 7, shows data from Colombia.

Figure 7, shows the number of contracts that are agreed orally at the national, the department, and at the city level. The information on the table indicates that contracts between employers and domestic workers are usually oral agreements. The high number for oral working agreements for domestic workers and the literature that has study this phenomenon may point to affirm that, commonly, worldwide women that engaged in domestic work, as an economic activity, do it so under an oral contract with the employer. The agreement that arises between the employer and the domestic worker is perceived more as an employer helping a poor girl than a contractual obligation between the employer and the domestic worker.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Total of domestic workers</th>
<th>Verbal Agreement</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Written Agreement</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>681,361</td>
<td>624,925</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
<td>56,242</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlántico</td>
<td>40,148</td>
<td>39,889</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barranquilla</td>
<td>30,519</td>
<td>39,284</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 7. Verbal and written contracts for domestic workers in Colombia, Atlántico y Barranquilla (Graph by DANE. National Administrative Department of Statistics. In Microdatos Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares GEIH. DANE, 2017).

In fact, a labor contract between a domestic worker and her employers is rationalized not as a formal working agreement, like any other labor contract, but as an
asymmetrical paternalistic relation between the parties involved. It is asymmetric because the relation, essentially, entails more obligations from behalf the domestic worker to her employers, than the obligations of the employer towards the domestic worker. Explained in a different way, in a free market economy a service offered and consumed should be paid by the consumer. If a woman engaged in domestic work performs an economic activity, she should be economically compensated by the consumer of such activity.

However, what happens when the employer does not understand the service rendered by the domestic worker as an economic transaction that entitles him to an economic obligation? The answer is a daily problematic in domestic work. The employer does not see the transaction as giving rise to an economic obligation with the domestic worker. In fact, the employer may see this relation as an act of charity in which he must take the role of providing moral guidance and protection to his lesser; the domestic worker. For example, in South Africa San are employed as farm workers and domestic workers. In this relation Afrikaner employee see themselves as benevolent human beings helping the “savage” San\(^\text{96}\).

The master is the benevolent father. Historically, that is the same rationality used when forcing native Americans into domestic workers. In a master-slave relation the master is the only one entitled to set parameters in the labor relation. Benevolence in civilizing them by making them serve the superior “white” master. This is why paternalism defines domestic work. A view in which the employer is doing a good deed in employing “a poor and ignorant soul.” In this arrangement, the domestic worker has no bargaining power to protect her work with basic guarantees.

\(^{96}\text{International Labour Organization, Domestic Workers Around the Globe.}\)\text{44}.
This paternalism, without doubt, has been present since time immemorial. Prior even than feudalism in which the landlord/master has ownership of the land and privilege as a birth right. Those that were not born with privilege most serve the landlord. Through history what serving meant was sometimes expanded and sometimes limited. As it was mentioned before, “serving” has gone from plain “slavery” to payment-in-kind, to the first attempts to include domestic workers in the scope of the law. Yet, it is impossible to contextualize domestic work without making some reference to the asymmetrical expectations, marked by paternalism, that exist in the relation between the employer and her domestic worker.

### 6.4 Working hours for Domestic Workers

Paternalism and its asymmetry in defining the rights and obligations of domestic workers leaves domestic workers exposed to abuse. A lack of protection, in comparison to other workers, and a perception of domestic work as not formal work opens a door for women domestic workers in strong vulnerable positions. Rape, physical abuse, psychological abuse, life of servitude, debt bond and absent of payments are common occurrences in the lives of many women domestic workers around the globe\(^\text{97}\). This is not to say that some people do follow regulations an employed domestic workers with all the rights and guarantees as any other worker. However, worldwide this is an exception. Women domestic workers, are outside any regulations and prom to vulnerability and inhuman working conditions. To illustrate this point, it is important to mention working hours. It is estimated that domestic workers have the most unpredictable and longer schedules of working among any other laborer. The ILO argues for a maximum of 48

\(^{97}\) International Labour Organization, *Domestic Workers Around the Globe* 40-45.
hours of work for domestic workers per week. In the same study, the ILO found that the average for the 39 countries reviewed is 45 hours per week.

A close look to the numbers shows that while in countries like Austria, and Australia the average is around 15 hours a week, in countries like Qatar, Namibia, Tanzania, Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia, on average domestic workers work 62 hours a week. 8 countries from Latin America were included in the study. The average working hours for domestic workers from this part of the world is 36.92 hours a week. None of the Latin American countries included in the sample exceed the 48 hours set as a weekly work limit for domestic workers, by the ILO. Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, Thailand, Qatar, Namibia, Tanzania, Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia all exceed the 48 hours set by the ILO. Based on the countries included in the study, excluding Namibia, it seems that in Asia domestic workers are disproportionately more vulnerable to be forced to work until exhaustion.\footnote{International Labour Organization, \textit{Domestic Workers Around the Globe} 54-58.}
A strategy to decrease the vulnerability of domestic workers is part-time work. Traditionally, domestic workers have been expected to reside in the same place as her employer. Since the labor produced by the domestic worker is exchanged and consumed in the private realm (the employers house), the domestic work is by default in a vulnerable situation. The rules set by the employers are, usually, the only rules expected to regulate the relation between the employer and the domestic worker. A shift takes place when the domestic worker resides somewhere else. Automatically, the bargaining power of the
domestic worker increases. One of the advantage for a domestic worker when living in
the same premises as the employer is the possibility of saving on board and logging.
However, the possibility of saving on board and logging turns into an excuse for
mistreatment and reduced wages based on the possible commercial value of the free rent
and the food provided by the employer. This is especially true for internal and international
migrant women engaged in domestic work.

Immigrant women domestic workers are especially vulnerable, when residing in
the employer’s household, because their migration status depends upon the employer.
This is the situation of many Filipino women domestic workers in Canada which status is
conditioned to their permanent employment and residence in the employer’s household.
If they are subject to mistreatment or not, they have an obligation to stay with their
employer for two years in order to be eligible to apply for landed immigrant status in
Canada. At that point, some of these domestic workers move out to share apartments
with other co-nationals and they become part-time domestic workers.99

There is no doubt that newly arrived migrants finding work as a live-in domestic
worker offers the possibility to save on board and logging. This is especially true for
migrants that do not belong to a community in the host city. The tendency for migrant
women domestic workers is clear, once they have joined a community integrated by their
co-nationals they move out from the employer’s home and become part time workers.
There are certain disadvantages with a “live-out” situation. For example, traveling times
to and from the employer’s house makes the day longer. Also, the working schedule is
volatile forcing the domestic workers to have a full-time availability to perform part time

work. This compromises the idea of acquiring a real independence from the employer when working as a part-time domestic works. The exception resides in the ability for domestic workers to have a high bargaining power in the labor agreement and set clear conditions. Among them an agreement between the parties regarding working schedules.

Any labor agreement between an employer and a domestic worker is tainted by the notion that domestic work is assumed to be “unproductive work” because it is reduced to household chores and caregiving. The economic and social value that generates is overlooked. Additionally, these two activities have been linked to the nature of women and as such; those are part of the obligations of women to the family. It is widely accepted that cleaning, cooking, and caring for others are natural abilities for women. They do not require any formal training because they accompany the “state” of being a woman. Therefore, understanding household chores and caring for others as services that can be offered, produced, commercialized and consumed in the labor market has always been daunting.

Following this line of thought, the reluctance to acknowledge the value produced by the work of domestic workers is accompanied by other aspects that are resisted by employers. The starting point is the objective for employers to maximize the labor extracted from the employee and assigned this labor a low value. This is true for employers and employees in different areas. However, for domestic service is rampant, since domestic workers are one of the most vulnerable workers. This is exacerbated when domestic workers hold live-in, full time positions.

Their vulnerability resides in the fact that their labor is confined to private realms where they are exposed to mistreatment by the employer that can go unnoticed and
unregulated. The employer is reluctant to understand the home as the workplace of the domestic worker. Also, the employer struggles to define domestic worker as employed to engage in house chores and not as the replacement of a housewife or a mother. Finally, the employer overlooks the relation with the domestic worker reproduces asymmetric relations. The relation reproduces privileged and inequality based on race, class, and citizenship status. In this sense, it is important to mention that not all domestic workers have the same status and as such they have different rights, or power to negotiate labor agreements.

To illustrate this point, au pairs are educated young international girls that are recruited to be caregivers and help with house chores. Abuse exists for au-pairs too, however, in general they hold legal status in the country where they are working, the employment agency who is the medley between the employer and the au-pairs negotiates the working agreement with the employer, and are responsible for the au-pairs until it goes back to her country of origin. In terms of migrant domestic workers, au-pairs can be the group that have the more advantageous position to have their labor remunerated and their rights as workers respected.

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Chapter VII

“One of the family”

Despite the different working agreements that may exist between employers and domestic workers, the intimacy that emanates from living in the same household as the employers and the role of domestic workers as caregivers creates the notion of the domestic worker “as part of the family.” “Part of the family” conveys the idea that the domestic worker is so important to the family that she is like “part of the family.” The domestic worker is defined as this selfless caregiving creature that is essential for the functioning of the family. She is rewarded with the “like one of the family” after she has put the needs of the family above her needs. This evokes the “ideal” of the loyal servant; the loyal slave. Traditionally, in the US South and the Caribbean, the stereotypical idea of a domestic worker, is a big black woman who raised the kids of the family, caring for them as she would have done for her own kids.

In many instances, racial differences are overlooked when it comes to given their love to the housewife’s child. However, those racial differences are present in other interactions in the household. Even more, many grown up kids that are raised by the domestic worker, as parents, replicated the same dynamics that their parents undertake by perpetuating asymmetric relations with the caregiver of their children. As such, the domestic worker could ambition to be “like part of the family”, but she can never be “part of the family.” Usually, as loved by the family as possible, the status as an outsider of domestic worker in relation to the nuclear household is reinforced in different ways.

The first way the differences are reinforced is through what has been already discussed, payment-in-kind. The second way is through what Judith Rollins calls “spatial
differences.” Spatial differences are constantly reinforced in the place of employment of
domestic workers; the household\textsuperscript{101} Before, during slavery and after, or for wealthy
employers, the living quarters of domestic workers were the small rooms in the back of
the house. Those rooms were designed to be far from the main living quarters of the
household owner, but no too far to be able to serve the house owners. Today, although
this continue to be true for wealthy employers, living spaces have considerably shrink for
the majority of people, but the spatial difference endures. In the absence of a “small room
next to the kitchen or the garage, domestic workers are assigned to sleep “wherever there
is space.” Having a “private” space is a privilege for a few lucky domestic workers that
are employed by the wealthy.

This leads to another way in which the domestic worker instead of “being part of
the family” is “like one of the family.” Despite the fact that domestic work is more intrusive
and personal than any other profession, the domestic worker is expected to love and
provide care to the employer and the family, yet her own family and her responsibilities
are ignored by the employer. In the words of Jacqueline Jones, “domestic work is a labor
of love and sorrow.” Domestic workers have to deal with the duality of being in need and
in pain\textsuperscript{102}. Their obligations in the household go beyond household chores to include
being loving and caring with the members of the household. At the same time, the
domestic worker has to live knowing that she has her own family and even her own kids
to love. Yet, her energy most go to love strangers that considered her “like part of the
family” and not “part of the family.”

This dynamic between the employer and the domestic worker, embodies a

\textsuperscript{101} Salazar Parreñas, Rhacel. Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work, 165.
\textsuperscript{102} Salazar Parreñas, Rhacel. Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work, 120.
structure of exploitation. This reinforces an asymmetric relation that goes beyond a labor relation between the parties. The employer accepts an outsider in her household to care for her love ones, whereas the domestic worker puts the needs of the household above hers because her labor implies to love and to care for strangers. As expected, the result is that love and care distort the power of bargaining of domestic workers. In this sense, love and care are commodities exchangeable in the labor market. It is difficult to understand love and care as commodities in the economy of care when these are not recognized as such by the employer.

However, it is important to notice that intimacy with the employer also offers the possibility for domestic workers to use the closeness with the members of the household as an advantage when negotiating labor agreements or benefits. Love and care could offer and advantage for domestic workers since they engage in it. Yet, the relation between employer and domestic worker is so uneven that usually the labor and the care provided to the family members by the domestic worker ends up limiting the bargaining power of domestic workers. Domestic workers are in a position where they are always more invested in love and care than the employer.

7.1 Acts of Deference

Another way in which domestic workers are constantly reminded as being “like part of the family” and not “part of the family” is through what is known as deference. According to Irvin Goffman, trivial daily interactions are mechanism for the constant reinforcement of the domestic worker as the outsiders. The spatial differences discussed above are only

\[103\] Salazar Parreñas, Rhacel. Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work, 163.

\[104\] Ehrenreich and Hochschild, Global Women; Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy 135.

one way in which the domestic worker is constantly defined as an inferior, and even a
polluted being. Assigned different eating utensils from the ones used by the nuclear
household, cheaper food for the domestic worker, not seating on or not sharing common
spaces; are only few of the practices that reinforced how domestic workers are not equal
to the members of the nuclear household. The list of practices to denigrate the domestic
work is extensive and varies from country to country. However, all these practices are
based on actions by the employer and other members of the household to remind the
domestic worker of her condition as an outsider. It also reinforces a feeling of inferiority
in the domestic worker in comparison to the members of the household that she serves.

The other way rejection and a sense of inferiority are inflicted upon domestic
workers is through the use of speech and body movements. Domestic workers should
speak just when the employer has spoken, and unless spoken to. When they refer to the
employer and her household they are expected to maintain a distance from the employer
and her family. When addressing member of the household, usually names should be
prefixed. For some domestic workers, this reverence is not expected, but the reverence
is expected in other ways. In this sense, patterns of speech, gestures, body movements,
and the general attitude that the domestic worker should have while in service, are defined
by the essential asymmetric relation that entails domestic work106.

For example, eyes to the ground when interacting with household members might
not be expected for a domestic worker in a household in the US as much as it is a given
in a household in Taiwan. Yet, the domestic worker in the US is expected to never look
confrontational, but to interact with the employer with humility and prudence. Always, in

any setting in the world, the interactions between domestic worker and the employer are under the premise that the employer is superior. This leads to another deference strategy; ingratiating. Domestic workers reaffirm their inferiority in comparison with the employer by grazing the employer during trivial interactions\textsuperscript{107}.

As a matter of fact, it is through trivial interactions where deference strategies are constantly reaffirmed. Moreover, the interactions between domestic workers and the employer are intertwined with notions of maternalism and paternalism. Paternalism and maternalism are present in the interaction in the sense that the employer acts under the assumption that the domestic worker is a child-like creature in need of protection. For example, in Kuwait employers keep the passport of the migrant domestic worker. According to the Ministry of Interior in Kuwait, the employer has an obligation to keep the passport that belongs to the domestic worker because as a “child-like” creature, the employer has to offer protection by keeping the passport of the woman in their service\textsuperscript{108}. As such the domestic worker requires guidance and protection due to their own inferiority and ignorance. In exchange, domestic workers are expected to obey, to be loyal and to be obedient to the employer\textsuperscript{109}. This transaction is under the veil of a fictional kinship relation in which the domestic worker is “like part of the family”\textsuperscript{110}. This is especially true in a full-time/live-in domestic work position. It is in this context were maternalism takes place.

\textsuperscript{107} Salazar Parreñas, Rhacel. Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work, 170.
\textsuperscript{108} Abigail B. Bakan and Daiva K. Stasiulis, Not One of the Family: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 18.
\textsuperscript{109} Bakan and Stasiulis, Not One of the Family: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada, 13.
\textsuperscript{110} Chaney and Garcia, Muchachas No More: Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean, 30.
According to Rollins, women employers have been, traditionally, in an uneven power relation in comparison with men. As such, it is in the household where women can exercise power. Women employers can be more empathetic with the domestic worker because of the traditional assumption that house chores are reserved for women. Then as women, they can understand the women in their service. Thus, the woman employer shows the domestic worker care, nurture, and understanding. For Rollins, this maternal attitude turns into a weapon for the exploitation of women domestic workers\textsuperscript{111}. Even with nice maternal gestures, strategies for deference are perpetuated. If the domestic workers acts in a less deferent way towards the members of the household, or she is simply perceived “demanding”, then she will get fired or never get hired in the first place\textsuperscript{112}. In fact, there is constant fear for domestic servants of losing their jobs, or to not get hired. It might be a migrant domestic worker, a live-in or live-out domestic worker.

Any domestic worker, has the ultimate fear that if she complains about the working conditions there is the possibility of being fired. In the absence of a written contract, an enforceable legislation, and the general notion that domestic work is not an economic activity that should be treated as any other profession, domestic workers are constantly in feared of losing their jobs. Domestic workers are exposed to having their rights as laborers breached by their employers. Additionally, the notion of ‘like part of the family” makes their position more vulnerable than in any other profession. There is an illusion that since they are “like part of the family” even though there position as domestic workers is precarious at the society level, in the household she will be protected by the employer.

\textsuperscript{111} Bakan and Stasiulis, \textit{Not One of the Family: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada}, 13.
\textsuperscript{112} Salazar Parreñas, Rhacel. \textit{Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work}, 165.
This distorts the power of bargaining of domestic workers when it comes to negotiating her working conditions. The domestic worker is influenced by an employer who offers glimpses of paternalism and maternalism in the relation with the domestic worker. However, if the domestic worker shows signs of discomfort would probably be fired under the assumption that there are other poor girls that will be grateful to have a job as a domestic worker. Therefore, traditionally, the only remedy for domestic workers has been to accept their low place in the social hierarchy and take for granted the employer to be her superior not only in the working relationship, but on every interaction.

If the employer is a superior guider and protects the domestic worker, any attempt from behalf the domestic worker to organize and to bargain in group for their rights can be perceived a threat at the personal level by the employer. In this sense, domestic workers have a harder time to operate as laborers than other professions since organizing in group to negotiate their working conditions is challenging. They have to start their attempts of organizing by defeating the notions that the employer and the household are not “her family” but that her relationship with them must be regarded as strictly professional; even though it involves caring for them.

Another challenge when trying to overcome the barriers to organize is the fact that domestic workers are usually individually employed and might fear losing their jobs if the employer thinks they are getting organized to ask for better working conditions. Even if a space is found for domestic workers to exchange experiences on the job, these experiences varied. However, without doubt organizing domestic workers into labor unions generates fear due to the possibility for domestic works of losing their jobs. It is important to notice that even in countries were domestic workers are susceptible to the
will of employers and their rights are easily breached, there have been significant attempts to organize domestic workers locally and internationally. For example, at the local level in New York, Domestic Workers United won the first state law granting protection to domestic workers. Another example is CONLACTRAHO, an organization that groups 15 countries in Latin America. In Colombia (SINTRASEDOM) is the National Union of Domestic Workers which represent domestic workers nationally. There other groups, worth mentioning, like UTRASD which represents Afro-Colombian women in the city of Medellin. Still, less than 5% of domestic workers worldwide belong to a Union.

The existence of these organization implies that the problems faced by domestic workers have been detected and that policy makers should draw and ratify legislations to reduce the vulnerability experienced by these women. The International Labour Organization has called for worldwide governments to officially protect women working as domestic workers in their labor codes. The ILO emphasizes the important for employers to provide domestic workers with maternity benefits. Regarding maternity benefits the ILO points to five aspects that should be granted to women when engaged in domestic work. First, maternity leave defined as providing cash and medical benefits. Second, the job to remain secure while in maternity leave. Also, to forbid discrimination when hiring or while the domestic service is employed because of the obligation risen due to maternity leave. General health protection should be provided by the employer and breastfeeding arrangements in the workplace should be essential in the employment

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114. Chaney and Garcia, Muchachas No More: Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean.
relation\textsuperscript{115}. Ultimately, the best protection for domestic worker is for it to become professionalized. This means, to have more than one employer or/and to minimize interactions that could lead to “like one of the family” scenarios.

\textsuperscript{115} International Labour Organization, \textit{Domestic Workers Around the Globe}, 86.
Chapter VIII
A Male Oriented Society

Any organized effort to guarantee the working conditions of female domestic servants is based on the approach that women, traditionally, have been regarded in uneven terms in reference to men. It is a given factor that societies are mainly men driven. The degree of equality between men and women varies from country to country and in some regions women have gained a lot of ground in the fight for equal rights. In regard to western institutions, including the Americas, during the Roman Empire the foundational principles for a dominant role of men were established. This is important because Roman civil law had a strong influence in the development of the legal systems of western countries. Regarding the foundational principles for a male oriented society the concept of “patria potestas” is an important reference point.

Under “patria potestas”, the male was considered the head of the household. As head of the household, the male had power over his wife, his children, and his servants. Thus, paternalism was introduced in the law. Therefore, during the Roman Empire men were assumed to be moral guiders, providers, protectors, and the ultimate decision makers for the members of the household.\textsuperscript{116} Indeed, through the centuries, almost, all the relevant thinkers assert some way or the other the centrality of men in every realm of life. Among them, John Locke on “The Second Treatise on Civil Government,” regarding property asserts that servants are property of the male master and women are chattels of the husband or the father.\textsuperscript{117} It comes not as a surprise that the legacy of institutionalized paternalism has had everlasting consequences visible in different

\textsuperscript{116} Rollins, Between Women: Domestics and Their Employers, 27.
aspects of modern societies.

Currently, countries have different characteristics and so does societies. However, if there is a commonality that can be found all over the world is the embedded notion that society is mainly male driven. There is evidence that this is changing at different rates in different parts of the world since women are entering and have entered the labor force in an unprecedented number\textsuperscript{118}. It is important to know that this reflection takes into account that women participation in the labor market and in public life varies from country to country. In any way, this is not an attempt to generalize the situation of women into a “single story.” However, domestic service as it is rendered in the private household is intimately related to male dominant practices. It cannot be overlooked that one of the main concepts related to domestic work is the notion that the skills required, or the training expected to be a domestic worker are a given to the condition of being female.

As such, cleaning, caring, and serving are mainly occupations reserved for women. This carries all the problematics explored in previous chapters like not recognizing the three main services provided by domestic workers: moral care, emotional care, and material care\textsuperscript{119}. The lack of recognition of these services as commodities that give rise to an economic obligation from the employer to the domestic worker. Many authors have concluded that the problem in contextualizing domestic work as work is rooted in the notion that it is not work, but a part of the role of women as the main caregivers, and the main cleaners. This is especially true in the western hemisphere; including the Americas.

\textsuperscript{118} Ehrenreich and Hochschild, \textit{Global Women; Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy}, 29-30.
8.1 Transferring Care and Housework

A study conducted in 1980 by sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild found that in the U.S. context house chores were persistently a female occupation. According to Hochschild by 1980 males were engaging a bit more in household chores, but the responsibility and the expectations on it were still resting in females\(^\text{120}\). The current situation points to more engagement of men in household chores, but not to the point to conclude that house chores are a shared activity. Women prevailed to be the main caregivers and cleaners.

Despite the fact that the economy has changed from the time of colonialism and slavery, what has persisted is outsourcing household chores to outside help; domestic workers. Also, what has been evident to observers is that the expectation for men to engage in household chores has risen. Yet participation in household activities for men has not increase as has the expectation of men engaging on these activities. This has created a discomfort for women who have a double-shift; work in and out of the household. In this sense, for those that can afford them, in the developed world and those that employed them in the developing world, a domestic worker is the ultimate *deal ex machina*.

Domestic workers become the solution to the unconformity experienced by women in having house chores as their main obligation while having to be working outside the household. In other words, women have a double working shift while men have their regular working shift and their involvement in household chores is limited and probably occasional. When women enter the labor force they are not relinquishing their household

\(^{120}\) Ehrenreich and Hochschild, *Global Women; Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, 9-10.
functions. On the contrary women are faced with twice the working responsibilities in comparison to men\textsuperscript{121}. Thus, the \textit{deal ex machina becomes} the solution.

The \textit{deal ex machina}, brings tranquility to the household reducing the tension created by who should engage in tasks regarding the home. The domestic work takes the role of a marriage counselor since it avoids tension for the couple employing her\textsuperscript{122}. The deal ex machine is also faced with the “double-day” dichotomy since she has her own family. This is especially true for part-time domestic workers who after their shift as domestic workers, are expected to go home and engage in household chores. In other words, female domestic workers are the only workers who have a double-shift of household chores activities\textsuperscript{123}.

These expectations on women are encouraged by a society who perpetuates the traditional role of women as cleaners and caregivers despite the fact that females are continuously enhancing their participation in the labor force around the globe. In the media, it is common to find examples of labor divisions based on gender. Trivial images of girls doing dishes and helping their mom while boys taking the garbage out or assisting their father with minor house repairs, are ways to reaffirm gender roles\textsuperscript{124}. The difference of this image with traditional notions is that more than ever women are also income providers in the household. Increasingly, the income of the household is expected to be contributed by males and females. However, females are still expected to be responsible for household chores more than men. This is not a new notion. The literature has

\textsuperscript{121} Bakan and Stasiulis, \textit{Not One of the Family: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada}, 12.
\textsuperscript{122} Ehrenreich and Hochschild, \textit{Global Women; Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy}, 89.
\textsuperscript{123} Mary Romero, \textit{Maid in the U.S.A.} (New York: Routledge, 1992), 61.
\textsuperscript{124} Mary Romero, \textit{Maid in the U.S.A.} 19.
overlooked the fact that this double working shift has always been part of the profession of domestic work. Although, there is commonly assumed that women entered the labor market during World War II.

As argued in chapter I, is that women have always been part of the labor market as domestic workers. It might be true that during World War II women enter the manufacturing sector and other sectors, but women have always been part of the labor market engaging in domestic work outside their household. In many senses, this is why domestic work as a profession is so relevant to the study of women because despite a predominant male driving society through domestic work, since time immemorial, women have been able to participate in the labor market. For example, in the Unites States in 1870 50% of women were estimated to be employed as domestic workers\textsuperscript{125}. Again, the issue is that until now it is difficult to assert the nature of domestic work as an occupation that produces a commodity exchangeable in the labor market.

The establishment of a men driving society, at an early point, has had enduring consequences for women\textsuperscript{126}. The consequences on women are extensive and of crucial significance. Concerning domestic work, the main consequences are the assumption that cleaning and caring are tasks only for women and that as such they do not hold real value, and are not commodities. This leads to the fact that the labor of men is more valued than the labor of women. The result is that men are paid more in every profession in comparison with women. As a matter of fact, in the XVIII century England male domestic servants had higher salaries than women economically active in the same profession\textsuperscript{127}.

\textsuperscript{125} Mary Romero, \textit{Maid in the U.S.A.} 61.
\textsuperscript{126} Velásquez, Reyes, and Rodríguez, \textit{Las Mujeres En La Historia De Colombia}, Volume III, 71.
\textsuperscript{127} Rollins, \textit{Between Women: Domestics and Their Employers}, 28.
The wage gap has endured over time. An example of this wage gap between men and women is the case of Colombia.

As seen on Figure 9 in Colombia, men are consistently paid higher for their labor than women. This is true at the national, the departmental and at the city level. It is important to remark that figure 9 uses an exchange rate of 1 US dollar equals $2932.62 Colombian pesos. In terms of salary, where citizens have less earnings is at the department level. As it has been reviewed before, there is a concentration of people in the main cities. The lower earnings at the department level (compared to the national and at the city level, Barranquilla) could explain why there is a concentration of people in the main city of the department of Atlántico, Barranquilla.

As figure 9 shows, in Barranquilla men and women have higher earnings than at the department level. As it was mentioned before, the department level includes the country side. In the rural areas, there are less working opportunities since the main activity is agriculture and does not absorb as many people as the industrial sector in the city of Barranquilla. This regional tendencies are mentioned because from the example of Barranquilla and Colombia, inferences can be made applied to other countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Income Average</th>
<th>US dollars</th>
<th>Men US dollars</th>
<th>Women US dollars</th>
<th>US dollars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>981,264</td>
<td>334.60</td>
<td>1,056.880</td>
<td>360.39</td>
<td>298.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlántico</td>
<td>872,611</td>
<td>297.55</td>
<td>944,361</td>
<td>322.02</td>
<td>261.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barranquilla</td>
<td>939.414</td>
<td>320.33</td>
<td>1,025.457</td>
<td>349.67</td>
<td>278.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 9. Income for men and women in Colombia, Atlántico, and Barranquilla for the year 2014 (Graph by DANE, National Administrative Department of Statistics. In Microdatos Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares GEIH, DANE, 2017).

Following this line of thought, another inference that can be made is that due to the premise that society is mainly men driven, it does not come as a surprise that women are disproportionately affected by poverty. At the national level, 52% of women in
Colombia are considered to be poor. 52% is also the percentage of women living in poverty at the departmental level, Atlántico. For the city of Barranquilla, the number is estimated to be 53% of women facing poverty. The notion of a male driven society penetrates every realm. As a matter of fact, even when men are economically active in professions that are mainly perceived as women occupations, men end up earning more than women.

According to the national census of Colombia of 2014 women domestic servants are calculated to earn on average $565,612 Colombian pesos per month of labor. This is equivalent to approximately $192.22 US dollars. On the other hand, men working as domestic workers, which presence in the profession is rare, are assumed to earn $711,517 Colombian pesos per month of labor. This is the equivalent to approximately $241.81 US dollars. This leads to conclude that men have a higher financial compensation in comparison with women. In this case on average a difference of $49.54, even in a profession that is regarded as a female activity.

As shown in figure 11, the same is true in categories related to domestic service. These categories were explored on chapter V. For example, the Colombian national census asserts that peddling is the largest economic activity in Colombia (it has been argued through this study that for women, it is domestic work). Male peddlers make approximately $247.09 US dollars per month while women make $165.96 US dollars per month. The income gap increases for the category of merchants. According to the Colombian census, merchants are one of the highest categories of employment for Colombians. Male merchants make almost double the salary compared to female merchants. A gain of $176.02 of males over females.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salaries for women</th>
<th>Salaries for men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Washers, Cleaners and Ironers</td>
<td>309,161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cookers, Waitresses and Bartenders</td>
<td>511,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Doorwoman, Cleaners and Sacristans</td>
<td>588,201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 10. Female salaries in comparison to men in professions related to domestic service in Colombia (Graph by DANE. National Administrative Department of Statistics. In Microdatos Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares GEIH. DANE, 2017).

8.2 Racial and Class Relations

Aside from the fact that domestic service is fundamentally influenced by a male oriented society, domestic work is also embedded in status relations. These status relations are based on class and racial divisions. Although, non-exclusively, women economically active in domestic work tend to be perceived as racially inferior or/and of an inferior social position than the employer. Non-exclusively is mentioned because there are women domestic workers that are part of the same race as their employer. In the same way, there is room to take into account the possibility for cases in which domestic workers and their employers are part of the same social group. This might be the case where social classes are not so much clearly cut. In other words, where societies are more equal like in Scandinavian countries. This can also take place in the case of au-pairs. Aside from very specific exceptions, in general, domestic work is a laboratory for the interaction of colonialism, feudalism, imperialism, slavery and modernity. Modernity entails that in a democratic framework ideas such as; protection by the law, equality, and freedom are cherished. Even if, in a given country, these concepts have limited

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128 Ehrenreich and Hochschild, *Global Women; Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, 104.
enforcement, the ideas are among the population, and are expected to be present in the labor agreement between the domestic worker and the employer.

For some domestic workers modern, democratic notions take precedent in their labor relation with the employer. For others, the majority, their labor relation seems to be an anachronism. A relation in which racism, social, and colonial forms of production take precedent above any other notion. It could be argued that these notions are embedded in domestic work relations because they are reflecting the fact that modern societies carried these anachronistic notions. In other words, professing equality among the population, while having silent divisions.

For instance, in 1926 “The Canadian Settlers Handbook,” provided guidance for the newcomers. The handbook warned newcomers on a rigid class distinctions in Canadian society and how those social differences were reinforced by differences between urban and rural settlers. Servants were rural migrants who concentrated disproportionately in ethnic enclaves in the cities. The main victims of prejudice, discrimination and injustice were Irish servants. Literature of the time, compared them with dogs and asserted them as of an inferior racial and social class compared to English settlers\(^{130}\). Eventually, Irish migrants were able to assimilate into Canadian society, yet through time other groups filled the void for a “racially inferior” group engaged in the less prestigious professions (domestic work). Currently there is a lot of debate on the status of Filipino domestic workers in Canada who have to remain with one employer for two years before considering applying for permanent status in Canada.

If in the developed world, there is plenty of room for social and racial asymmetries,

\(^{130}\) Bakan and Stasiulis, *Not One of the Family: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada*, 58-59.
in the developing world these differences are more rampant, especially for domestic workers. In Latin America, the racial compositions of domestic work changes from country to country, but women domestic worker are mainly women of afro, Indian, or from a racially mixed background\textsuperscript{131}. In other words, the racial composition of domestic workers in Latin America shows the endurance of racial and social discriminatory practices; a legacy of their colonial past. For example, In Brazil race defines access to education, employment and public services.

The Brazilian constitution recognizes domestic work as a formal profession and as an economic activity. This protection has limited applicability and domestic worker remain mostly outside the scope of the law. At the same time, the majority of domestic works are disproportionately Afro-Brazilian and have a low level of education. In fact, the gap between the wealthy “white” population and the poor, the majority either black or of mixed race, is one of the biggest in the world\textsuperscript{132}. Additionally, Brazil has one of the most hierarchical societies that favors the notion of being “white.” In the sense, to be able to employ a domestic worker as a sign of prestige and whiteness\textsuperscript{133}. An act of ”Whiteness” in a society that, according to official data from 2008, is 68% Afro-Brazilian\textsuperscript{134}. In this way, employing a maid is a way to overcome racial insecurities and to rise in the social ladder. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that, in Brazil, domestic work is the second biggest occupation for women in the country.

\textsuperscript{131} Rollins, Between Women: Domestics and Their Employers, 41.
\textsuperscript{134} Brites, Domestic Service, Affection and Inequality.
Just as in the Colombian case, probably there is the possibility of proving that domestic worker might be the biggest occupation for women in the country by reviewing national statistics and the way they are collected. As expected, the majority of contracts are very difficult to be enforced since they are verbal agreements and the majority of domestic workers have salaries below the minimum wage. Therefore, the case in Brazil is the existence of domestic workers as a strategy to minimize the anxieties produced by strict racial and social divisions for the middle and the upper class. For the rest of the population is the reaffirmation of the unshakable legacy of slavery and colonialism.

As mentioned before, racial and social anxieties are rampant throughout the region. In Guatemala, even the legislature is in line with their legacy of discrimination. In the Guatemalan labor code, domestic service is included as a profession, but it does not hold the same recognition as other professions. The problem in awarding the same recognition resides in the fact that the majority of domestic workers in Guatemala are of native American origin. Oscar Barahona, one of the drafters of the Guatemalan civil code, said that he could not award equal rights to domestic workers because “native Americans in Guatemala are not fully recognized and protected by the law. Also, for the employers a paternalistic/maternalistic view takes precedent. This way it is assumed domestic workers to be “like part of the family” and not as women engaged in an economic activity tradable in the market place. Guatemalan domestic workers, the majority of native American origin, remained as “child-like creatures” in need of protection.

Women domestic workers, tend to be women that have been suppressed and

undervalued due to their gender, race, and social status. This means that they enter the labor force in an extreme vulnerable position. Their own value as a human being has been reduced by society and they enter the labor force as domestic workers as a strategy of survival. According to Romero, domestic workers do not enter the profession as a career choice, women become domestic workers because it is assumed that the only skills required to do the job are inherited to what it is to be a woman. As a woman, you know how to clean and how to care for others. Therefore, before entering the household of the employer, a woman domestic worker is already feeling inferior and unprotected.

It is not a wrong assessment to affirm that women that engaged in domestic work implicitly agree to this mistreatment and exploitation because they are seeking recognition and affection from behalf the employer and the other members of the household. In the absence of a government that can enforce protection for them, in a society that reaffirms their low status, to be protected in the household by the employer is the closest thing to have some sense of stability for these women. In this sense, the notion of “like one of the family” is an attractive accomplishment. In other words, physical and emotional labor are exchange for protection from the employer translated in some degree of paternalism and maternalism. However, the domestic worker remains the unequal outsider and even good will gestures can be interpreted as the employer extracting as much as possible from the services offered by the domestic worker. For example, generous gifts that might be assumed to be given to the domestic worker out of love and care, in reality are a strategy used by the employer to keep wages down and extract unpaid labor. The intent is to gain sympathy from the domestic worker so she feels obliged to pay for the “good

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136 Bakan and Stasiulis, Not One of the Family: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada, 15.
gestures” with emotional and physical labor.

The fictitious feeling of care from the employer does not replace the role that the government should take, in protecting any kind of worker, and it does not reduce the stigma that society imposes on domestic workers, but it does provide a momentarily sense of relief. A sense of belonging and protection that for some of these women is impossible to achieve in any other way\textsuperscript{137}. In fact, social mobility is very difficult for women domestic workers. As it has been discussed who is master and who is the maid has been defined through the interaction of race and social status. In this regard, Romero observed that domestic service as “an occupational ghetto” because in the profession there is no room for mobility\textsuperscript{138}. The little room for mobility is reserved for those domestic workers that are considered to be of a higher status\textsuperscript{139}.

\textsuperscript{137} Mary Romero, \textit{Maid in the U.S.A}. 125.
\textsuperscript{138} Mary Romero, \textit{Maid in the U.S.A}. 27.
\textsuperscript{139} Mary Romero, \textit{Maid in the U.S.A}. 95.
Social mobility for domestic workers is more viable within the profession than into other professions. In principle, just as in any other profession, entering or leaving the labor market as a domestic worker coincides with given birth, children entering school, husband’s unemployment, inexistente financial contribution from the father of her children, financial crisis, or underemployment\textsuperscript{140}. However, the majority of women that become active in domestic work come from economic inactivity. It means that for these women before domestic work they were, mainly, formally unemployed. This is mainly true for internal migrants, from the rural to urban settings and city domestic workers. For cross-border migrant women domestic workers this cannot be conclusive. Migrant domestic workers come from a variety of settings and countries. For the sake of clarity in the concepts, this argument will be reduced to be applied only to city domestic workers and internal migrants.

An example to illustrate this argument is the case of Colombian women domestic workers. According to Janine Rodgers 43% of women in Colombia who became domestic workers had no formal employment. They were either unemployed or were stayed home mothers. 22% of women domestic workers had other formal jobs before engaging in domestic work. 4% were engaged in non-paid independent work. The last 32% were domestic workers switching jobs within the profession. These findings leads to conclude that mobility in domestic work is possible from one domestic job from another and from economic inactivity into domestic work\textsuperscript{141}.

\textsuperscript{140} Mary Romero, \textit{Maid in the U.S.A.} 144-145.  
\textsuperscript{141} María Elena Valenzuela, Claudia Mora \textit{Trabajo Doméstico : Un Largo Camino Hacia El Trabajo Decente}. (Santiago: Organización Internacional Del Trabajo, 2009), 101.
In other words, social mobility for domestic workers is horizontal and not vertical. In horizontal mobility women, domestic workers have higher chances of having better jobs by finding better employers, that offer better working conditions, in domestic service than moving out of the profession and into another profession. In order to be able to find better employers, domestic workers relied on their networks composed by other domestic workers. Given the informality that entails domestic work the majority of information in these networks is shared through word of mouth. As the networks expand, there are higher chances of finding better employment conditions for domestic workers\textsuperscript{142}.

As Graph 1 shows, the worst scenario for a domestic worker is to live in the employer’s household. In this scenario, she is more vulnerable to actions of deference, exploitation, and unfair working conditions. However, for internal migrants (from the country side to the city) and cross-border migrants a live-in position can be advantageous. This resides in the fact that they can save money in food and lodging. It also provides shelter and protection from a new society. This can be true, but it can also be that the disadvantages outweighs the advantages. As has been discussed, it is normal to find that for women domestic workers that have live in positions, the employer adjusts the wages based on a reduction due to a charge for rent and lodging. Yet, the workload increases. Usually since the domestic worker is around, the employer tends to rely more on her, even to the point that she is always on call. It means that her resting time and days off are easily ignored.

Additionally, sometimes when sharing living quarters, women domestic workers are exposed to predatory employers who harass them sexually. Overall, live-in

\textsuperscript{142} Mary Romero, \textit{Maid in the U.S.A.} 144.
agreements are where women domestic servants are more vulnerable. Also in this scenario, the family and the personal lives of domestic worker is completely ignored. If her kids also require care, or if she has to provide for a family member are realities completely ignored. For example, many employers do not know where their domestic worker comes from, or even her last name.

The second possibility, is when the domestic worker lives independently from the employer in a different household. Living outside the employer’s household reduces interactions between the employer and the domestic worker that can result in actions of deference. The working schedule is established; therefore, after and before that work schedule the domestic workers has no obligation towards that household. At the same time, the hours of rest are respected and women domestic workers are less exposed to harassment by predatory employers. However, living in a different household than the employer does not avoid mistreatment and exploitation.

In a live-out work arrangement, the domestic worker is still dependable on the employer. In order to avoid losing her job, she could go to great lengths to remain available for the employer. Her hours of start and finish in the workday can be not respected and she could end up working more than what she originally intended. At the same time, actions of deference can still take place because the income of the domestic worker still depends on one employer. In the absence of effective governmental protection and regulation, the salary of the domestic workers will depend on the will of just one employer.

The third scenario is a domestic worker in the semi-specialized category. In this category, the domestic worker lives in a different household from the employer and she
works for more than one employer. In other words, the domestic worker holds multiple part-time positions. In this situation, her source of income depends on more than one employer. In this scenario, the domestic worker can be view as doing a formal occupation that entails a financial obligation from the employer. The majority of actions of deference do not apply to the domestic worker because the interactions between her and the employer are based on job performed and less about household interactions.

The expectations for the domestic worker are based on gaining a salary in exchange for a job performed and less about being protected and cared for by the family. In this sense, the fallacy of “like one of the family” is broken. Although it is hard to break the intimacy that arises from a working relation that takes place in the privacy of the household of the employer, the need for recognition essential for the live-in domestic worker becomes trivial for a domestic worker that holds multiple employers. There would always be great degrees of intimacy in the profession of domestic work, but dependency from one employer reduces those sensitive interactions.

Given the distance from the household, employers start to see the profession of domestic work as any other profession in the market place. As a profession that is based on the employer buying a product (cleaning and caring) tradable in the market place, produced by a domestic worker. Thus, entailing a monetary compensation just as in any other profession. This reduces the view that the salary of the domestic worker is an act of charity. The employer reduces the tendency to see himself as a paternal/ maternal figure that needs to protect the domestic worker, a childlike creature. It also reduces the tendency for in-kind-payment. Since domestic work is view as any other profession, payment-in-kind is understood as less appropriate, and monetary compensation as the
righteous kind of payment.

A disadvantage for the domestic workers in this category is the fact that more than one employer means dealing with more than one personality type. In other words, the domestic workers will have to make an effort to adapt herself to the different needs that different employers may have. This may prove to be exhausting due to propensity for intimacy in an employer/domestic worker relation. The solution is to reduce the emotional reliance that the employers may have over the domestic worker by a domestic worker becoming fully specialized and independent, the last category in horizontal work mobility.

Under this last category, the domestic worker is as independent as she can be, given the intimate nature of domestic work, having many employers and turning cleaning and caring for others as specialized skills. The domestic worker must have built a strong networking with either other domestic workers or different employers to be able to find different domestic work positions. In this scenario, employers understands the labor relation as paying for a specialized, professional service. As such, the compensation is higher for the domestic worker because the value of the service is perceived as more expensive. As a specialized worker, action of deference are minimized because the service render by the domestic worker is understood as something desired and needed by the employer.

The bargaining power of the domestic is as strong as it can be. In this dynamic, the domestic worker is less seeing as a “case of charity”, or someone from a lower social and racial standing, but as the real “ex-machina.” The ultimate problem solver/ helper in the household that will make the life of the residents easier. As such, her role in the

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143 Mary Romero, *Maid in the U.S.A.* 140.
household is appreciated and fairly compensated. For the domestic worker acquiring this level of professionalization in, and this level of independence from the employer is the best way to guarantee fairer working conditions. Moreover, it also benefits the domestic worker in the aspect that she can be have more flexibility to her own family and to her own responsibilities.

In all the categories reviews and shown in Graph 1 there will always be some degree of racial and social discrimination. The association of domestic work as a profession for the members of the bottom of the social hierarchy is hard to break. This is an association as old as civilization that won’t be easily break. However, a formality in the relation between the employer and the domestic worker and a professionalization of the service rendered by the domestic worker implies a less hierarchical approach to domestic work. Social and racial considerations, although still present, are less dominant in the relation between the employer and the domestic worker. Just as social and racial considerations are still present in this category, a degree of the fallacy of “like one of the family” would still play role.

It is important to notice that in every professional relation these considerations are present. For example, the figure of “mentorship” in certain professions denotes maternalistic/paternalistic notions. This could be the result that even the most equal society in the world has some hierarchical notions, even based on work experience or age. Taking into account that domestic workers have to navigate by default a society that does not reward their profession, to make it formal and professional is a way to secure better working conditions. The eager result should be to acquire a higher value in the market place for the product produced by domestic workers which implies real bargaining
power for domestic workers and the alleviation of the burden of the emotional labor associated to live-in domestic work.

Graph 1. Horizontal Employment Mobility for Domestic Workers (Graph by ILO. IN. Trabajo Doméstico: Un Largo Camino Hacia El Trabajo Decente, 2009).
Chapter X  
Domestic workers on the Move

To begin a discussion on migrant domestic workers it is important to acknowledge that migrants, as human beings, are unique in their circumstances, background and experiences. However, in any setting where migrants are on the move there are certain tendencies and characteristics that to a lesser or to a dominant degree remain recurrent. This is especially true when it comes to domestic work. As it has been extensively discussed, domestic work for national (from rural areas to urban centers) and cross-border migrants is a profession, if recognized as such, perceived to be performed by the members of the bottom of the social ladder in a society. It is, usually, invisible labor agreed upon on an advantageous gain for the employer and an exploitative outcome for the domestic worker. A labor relation in which the domestic worker invests physical and emotional labor in exchange for an inadequate financial compensation. As such, the labor agreements tend to be verbal and outside the scope of the law. The relation between employers and domestic workers is marked by various degrees of discrimination based on race, ethnicity or social differences. In these relations the employer defines himself, and it is recognized by the domestic worker, as a superior.

Additionally, Internal migrant domestic workers and cross-border migrant domestic workers faced the given fact that domestic work is inherently oppressive due to its roots in feudalism or/and colonialism. Additionally, is an occupation that reproduces male domination and gender biases. It is not perceived as real work, yet in the informal economy it is an acceptable occupation. When domestic work is not specialized labor, the majority of the cases, it is easy for national and cross-border migrants to fall under the illusion of being like “one of the family.” The employer benefits from the emotional
attachment of the domestic worker to the members of the household, yet her origin or her own family responsibilities are not of interest for the employer. Lastly, another similarity for domestic workers in any particular situation is the fact that they have to enlist extended family to take care of their own kids and dependable relatives. This leads to domestic workers enduring the pain of separation from her love ones.

In any setting racial, social, and educational differences are attached to the way domestic work is understood by individuals. The stigma as a dirty profession used by the poorest and the unskilled as a strategy of survival is hard to be redefined. It is true that domestic workers migrating from a rural to an urban setting, and migrating across-borders is not the same. The same is true if assuming that all contexts of reception are the same. As much as women domestic workers migrating from rural areas might be perceived as backward and uneducated, women domestic workers migrating internationally are subject to stronger discrimination and prejudice.

Additionally, national laws protect citizens and legal residents, whereas migrants remained outside the scope of national legislations due to the fact that many are illegal migrants or their legal status depends on the will of an employer. Therefore, they do not have the inherited governmental protection that internal migrants have. There is no doubt that cross-border migrants are in a more precarious situation compared to internal migrants. However, understanding internal migration is the starting point to analyze cross-cultural migration for domestic workers. Indeed, the similarities are overwhelming.

The first thing that needs to be discussed to understand global migration is to review the importance of internal migration. In other words, the common tendency,  

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144 Bakan and Stasiulis, Not One of the Family: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada, 10.
worldwide, for the movement of people from rural areas into the cities. The movement of people form the rural side migrating to the cities is said to have accelerated during the Industrial Revolution. The reasons might be related to the decline of agriculture, and the rise of employment opportunities in the urban industrial centers. The bottom line is that there has been a wide tendency to move to the cities in the last centuries. In the XVII and the XIX century, almost every country in the western hemisphere, including the Americas, had massive migrations from the rural areas into the cities. At the same time, the influx of new immigrants contributed to the compositions of the cities.

Men were attracted to the cities to find employment in factories and the industrial sector. Women were also moving to the cities, but the majority found employment as domestic workers. For example, during the centuries, in Mexico City and Buenos Aires 60% of women employed in these cities were domestic workers. At the time, the majority of domestic worker, coming from rural areas were considered backwards and ignorant by urban employers. Yet, as discussed before, work as a domestic servant was more attractive and safe than work in a factory. Most of this attractiveness was the live-in aspect. While men had better salaries in factories, they still needed to pay for food and lodging. For live-in domestic workers, although gaining less money, food and lodging was provided to them.

Similarly, for newly arrived cross-border migrant women domestic workers, a live-in position offers shelter and the chance to save on rent and lodging. In fact, it is recognized that migrant domestic workers and more willing to have a live-in position than

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local domestic workers. This is especially true for undocumented domestic workers who can have a sense of protection from local authorities and the unknown environment of the host city. At the same time, migrant domestic workers are usually isolated from society in general and members of their own community. This isolation fosters a scenario in which domestic workers are unaware of the existence of any sort of governmental protection, if it exists. It also leads to extreme exploitative working conditions.

In 1997, a study down among Filipino Kalayaan women domestic workers found that 84% had been victim of psychological abuse, 34% had been physically abuse and 10% sexual abuse. These percentages do not add to be 100%. The main reason is that these women could had been subject to more than one abuse. Also, 54% reported to had been locked, 55% said that they had to share their bed and 38% reported not been fed regularly. Cases of exploitation to live-in domestic worker are common around the globe. For example, in 2015 the Colombian newspaper, “El Tiempo,” reported the story of exploitation of Maria Trinidad Cortes who worked as a live-in domestic worker for 40 years for the same family. From the beginning, she was paid less than the minimum wage and in 1980 she stopped been paid all together. In 2015, she sued her employers and the court ordered them to pay her a minimum wage and health insurance. 35 years of salary owned to her were never paid. The argument of the employer was that “Trinita” was provided with food and lodging; therefore, she was paid. The first case reviewed was about cross-border Filipino domestic workers and the second case was, Trinity” an internal migrant. The unfair and exploitative labor conditions are overwhelmingly similar.

147 Ehrenreich and Hochschild, Global Women; Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy, 106-108.
in both cases.

As it has been the historical precedent, women domestic worker as national or cross-border migrants have experienced a work mobility confined to other labor opportunities within the profession. In graph 1, horizontal mobility was discussed. Horizontal mobility becomes possible once the migrant domestic worker has established a network of contacts. The starting point to establish this network is among their co-nationals, or people with whom they shared a background based on race or ethnicity. Inside these group, the social dynamics of their country of origin are replicated. Those that belong to a high social class in the country of origin may have an advantage when it comes to levels of education. The idea is that a high social standing in their country of origin could translate in the ability to develop better social networks in the host country. As such, a social hierarchy develops inside the group of migrants\textsuperscript{149}.

Despite the difference that might exist within the group, the fact remains, discrimination in the host country is directed to the entire group of co-nationals. This means that, usually, the network goes as far as the contacts made by other members of the community. Therefore, since the members of the group faced together, overall, similar limitations to integrate into the new society or the inability to access resources available for citizens, job mobility remains targeted to find better employers with better working conditions within domestic work.

It has to be remember that migrating internally or across borders, domestic workers tend to belong to groups that are and have been strongly scorned due to their rural/ racial or ethnic origins. This was the case of Irish women engaged in domestic work in Canada

up to the beginning of the XX century. Until this period, domestic work, in Canada, was a profession assumed to be performed by Irish women migrants. Currently, non-exclusively, the majority of domestic workers in Canada are of Filipino origin. In many instances, the situation of cross-border domestic workers has become more fragile.

For example, while Irish domestic workers were discriminated against, their legal status in Canada was never questioned. On the other hand, Filipino domestic workers in Canada have a fragile legal status that depends on the will of the employer and the government. If they want to apply for legal permanent status in Canada, they are forced to work for an employer for two years before being able to apply for it. Moreover, the decision on the application is not automatically yes, and it can be a lengthy process. The decision to grant legal status to the migrant domestic worker is up to the discretion of a federal immigration officer. If three negative assessments on the application for permanent legal status are rendered then a deportation order is issued°

Even the possibility of a lengthy process that could lead to a permanent legal status in the host country is a privilege for cross-border domestic workers. The majority of cross-border women migrant domestic workers do not have this luxury. In fact, they do not have the opportunity of becoming permanent residents in the host country, and they remained outside the scope of the law as undocumented. This is the case if they find the means to stay in the host country. In Taiwan, Singapore, and the Gulf countries strong policies are in place to make sure that after the labor contracts are done, women migrant domestic workers must leave the country. The policies are intrusive and they regulate situations such as pregnancy and even sentimental relations between foreign domestic workers and 150

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150 Bakan and Stasiulis, Not One of the Family: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada, 34.
citizens. The ultimate goal of these policies is to maintain domestic workers as occasional foreign labor and not as potential citizens. For example, in Taiwan women domestic workers are not allowed to bring family members and regular pregnancy test are required as well as an upfront tax on their salary to cover their costs of return to their country of origin.

Legislations in these countries are silent on the exploitative conditions associated with foreign domestic workers. Working long hours, not having private living quarters, proper nutrition, psychological and physical abuse, among others, are common practices that could have strong opposition, if the person victim of this abuse is a legal resident or a citizen. In these countries, women migrant domestic workers are not treated as human beings because they do not hold that legal status. Therefore, these abuses are overlooked or ignored by local authorities. Even employers do not feel that they are breaking the law by exploiting them, because there is no law to protect foreign domestic workers. In this sense, the situation of cross-border domestic workers in certain countries is equivalent to slavery. While internal migrant domestic workers can be exploited and subject to unspeakable abuses, in the majority of cases, as citizens there is some precarious level of protection from the government, but for undocumented workers there is just marginalization and anxiety. An overwhelming state of invisibility in the eyes of the law and society.

The anxiety and harshness of migrating alone and leaving their kids and family behind is not strong enough to deter women from seeking a job opportunity abroad. According to Ehrenreich one in ten women in the Philippines want a job in another

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151 Ehrenreich and Hochschild, *Global Women; Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, 49.
country. In fact, out of the 120 million illegal and legal migrants of worldwide migrants, it has been estimated that half are women\textsuperscript{152}. Therefore, there has been a feminization of global migration. For example, up to the 1970s immigration from Central America to the United States was 70% male. In the following decades, female immigration from central America increased to the point of becoming significantly female\textsuperscript{153}. Central American female migrants either migrate alone or they migrate following male partners. Indeed, most of women migrate alone leaving their family and dependable in their country of origin\textsuperscript{154}. It is important to notice that an important percentage of these women migrating, find employment as domestic workers.

\textbf{10.1 Global Transfer of Care}

The reasons for it have been extensively discussed through these pages. Mainly it is easy for migrant women to enter the labor market as domestic worker because the skills needed to engage on it are assumed to be intrinsic to be a female. The fact is that domestic workers are on the move. Domestic workers are no longer reduced to young women moving from rural areas to find employment in the profession in urban center. Today, domestic work has an important transnational aspect. In other words, global markets are not only linked through the flow of manufacturing production across borders, but it is also joined by the transfer of care\textsuperscript{155}. Specifically, the developing world has been increasingly transferring the caring and the emotional labor of the household to migrant women. The traditional colonial model of raw material extraction has been adapted to

\textsuperscript{152} Ehrenreich and Hochschild, \textit{Global Women; Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy}, 5.
\textsuperscript{153} Zimmerman, Litt, and Bose, \textit{Global Dimensions of Gender and Carework}, 65-70.
\textsuperscript{154} Ehrenreich and Hochschild, \textit{Global Women; Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy}, 38.
\textsuperscript{155} Zimmerman, Litt, and Bose, \textit{Global Dimensions of Gender and Carework}, 60-61.
include the extraction of care from migrant women active in domestic work.

Throughout history, there has always been a transfer of care from the wealthy to the working class. There have been four major dynamics in the transfer of care. The first one is through slavery. As it has been discussed, slavery is a practice as old as civilization. Cleaning chores and caring for the members of a household is one of the main roles associated with slavery. The second dynamic for the transfer of care is to the working class. It is often assumed that engaging in domestic work is a strategy to alleviate poverty. In other words, it is a strategy for the survival of the poor. This is a common belief due to the assumption that domestic work does not required special training. Therefore, a human being can earn a wage by cleaning and caring for members of a household. The third dynamic is the transfer of care to ethnic/racial minorities.

In different periods countries have hosted different waves of migrants that are willing to undertake what are considered low skilled professions. These migrants have belonged to ethnic and racial groups who agreed to receive a lower payment in exchange for their labor. It is not surprising that these ethnic/racial minorities have been ostracized by the dominant ethnic/racial group. An example are groups of Irish migrants to the English colonies of North America, Italians to the United States in the 1920s, native Americans in Latin America, Turks to Germany, among others.

The fourth dynamic of transferring of care, is to individuals belonging to specific historical and colonial zones of influence. According to Salazar-Parreñas this category is also known as the Migration System Theory. An example to understand this category is the situation of Ecuadorians in Spain. For a long time, Ecuadorians due to do their

\[\text{\textsuperscript{156}}\text{Salazar Parreñas, Rhacel. Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work, 2.}\]
historical tides to Spain, a previous Spanish colony, did not require a visa to visit Spain. Many took advantage of this and decided to stay permanently in Spain. Today, their presence is noticeable among women engaged in domestic work. A similar case was study by Parreñas in “Servants of Globalization”.

Parreñas study the situation of Filipino migrating to territories with historical and colonial tides with the Philippines. Her findings are center around Filipino women migrating to Italy and the United States. The main motivation for Filipino women to move to Italy are cultural similarities based on a shared catholic faith. On the other hand, for Filipino women moving to the United States is based on colonial tides and fluency in the English language. It is interesting to mention that all the categories reviewed above are coming together in an ever-growing globalized society. The transfer of care is not restricted to the categories mentioned above. In fact, all the categories are increasingly interacting with each other in the host society. The main reason is that the movement of people across borders is easier than before due to the reduction of transportation costs and the presence of already established network of migrants.

The principal is that the transfer of care to migrant workers has taken place for a long time. In this sense, women migrant domestic workers are just replacing previous waves of migrant women that upon arriving to the new countries were also engaged in domestic work. It is not an overstatement to assess that an important percentage of migrant women are absorbed into the care economy. For example, in the United States there has been estimates that conclude that the number of migrant women working as domestic workers has been increasing since the XIX century. According to Mary Romero, historically, in the United States domestic work has been disproportionately represented
by women that belong to minority groups and have been migrant women\textsuperscript{157}.

The difference between what has been a historical transfer of care from wealthy employer to migrant workers and members of minority groups is the fact that technology and transport innovation have made possible the maintenance of transnational households for migrant workers. Before, migrating meant that all family tides had to be cut. Migrants were, mainly, immigrants. Today not every migrant is an immigrant. Some migrants hold a temporary status and planned to go back to their country of origin. The fact that migrant workers are able to migrate while maintaining their family tides is a crucial factor when understanding the dynamics of migration. This is especially true when reviewing the situation of women migrants which main source of income comes from work as domestic workers.

The first aspect related to the importance of sustaining transnational households for women domestic workers is the change in the traditional assumption of men as the main providers of the household. This exemplifies a major change in the gender division of labor. It is not rare to find households that have been restructured to have an income coming from women and not only from men, yet in many cases women domestic workers have become the sole economic provider in the context of a transnational household. As previously discussed, the majority of migrant women who end up engaging in domestic work travel alone, leaving their family behind.

The reasons for women that would end up active in domestic work to migrate are varied. The decision to migrate could be under the assumption that as a woman it is easier to find a job in another country due to the fact that there is no formal training required to

\textsuperscript{157} Mary Romero, \textit{Maid in the U.S.A.} 61-71.
become a domestic worker. This way it could be a combination of individual choice or a family agreement. Also, the reason for these women to migrate can be the result of financial need. It could be the case that despite having a college degree or advance training on a subject, women decide to migrate and engage in domestic work in a foreign country because there are not opportunities of employment in their country of origin. These women are willing to experience downward mobility, despite having a college education or a consolidated profession, in exchange for the prosperity of a salary in a foreign country. After all, migrating is a way to alleviate unemployment.

There are a number of agencies and individuals that through legal resources recruit young women from developing countries to work as temporary domestic workers in pre-chosen households in developed countries. This is the case of Filipino women migrating to Canada. The government of Canada has a special category called the “live-in caregiver program”. Through this category Canadian employers can hire a foreign worker to care for kids or the elderly. Agencies and individuals who are interest in mediating between the employer and the potential domestic worker have to follow the conditions imposed by the Canadian government. For instance, the Canadian government stipulates that employer must pay $1,000 in processing fees. Also, potential care givers must be fluent in at least one of Canada’s official languages; English or French. In line with the notion that to become a domestic worker there is no required training, the Canadian government recognizes that as a low-skilled occupation the only possible requirement might be a certain amount of work experience, training on the job,
but no formal credentials\textsuperscript{158}.

The Canadian government take a paternalistic approach in an attempt to protect foreign workers requiring from the employer to meet very specific conditions. For example, the government assess the income of the household to check if the employer has enough money to guarantee the salary and other expenses associated with brining that hiring a foreign domestic worker. As already mentioned, the Canadian live-in caregiver program has been strongly criticized because it imposes a very strict control over the legal status of foreign domestic workers while in the country. It leaves the door open for employers to exploit domestic workers\textsuperscript{159}.

The situation of legal women foreign domestic workers in Canada serves as a starting point to review the last motivation for migrant women to leave their family behind in order to become a migrant woman domestic worker. The motivation to leave their family behind might be due to deception and coercion\textsuperscript{160}. The need to find better job opportunities is used by individuals and groups to deceive young women into migrating to countries believing that a certain job is waiting for them. It occurs that women are lied to and they end up working as prostitutes and as domestic workers when employment in other sectors was offered. The situation can be that a job as a domestic worker was found for the woman migrant worker, as promised. The issue might be the working conditions attached to the job.

For example, in Singapore women domestic workers are obliged to sign a


\textsuperscript{159} Bakan and Stasiulis, \textit{Not One of the Family: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada}, 7.

\textsuperscript{160} Zimmerman, Litt, and Bose, \textit{Global Dimensions of Gender and Carework}, 12.
document forbidden them to marry nationals. They have to submit pregnancy tests every 6 months and it found pregnant they are deported. Their passport is withheld by the employer upon arrival and 20% of her earnings are retain buy the employer to cover the expenses of her return ticket. One day off a week is awarded after a three-month probation period has concluded. The domestic worker cannot leave the country for two years, and her work permit only allows for a maximum of four years of employment in Singapore. Under this rigid conditions, to migrate permanently is not an option. Singapore goes to a great extend to make sure that domestic workers remained as temporary workers with limited rights. Rights are conferred to citizens. When migrant domestic workers are maintained as temporary workers, they are not entitled to rights. In this line of thought, they are outside the scope of the law.

The reality is that migrant workers are completely left to the will of the foreign government and their employer. Their country of origin is, usually, in no position to negotiate on behalf of their co-nationals. Fox example in 1988 Filipino women domestic workers seek the help of the Filipino government to press the Singaporean government into improving their working conditions. Indeed, the Filipino government pressured the Singaporean government through diplomatic channels. All in an attempt, to guarantee fairer working conditions for Filipino domestic workers employed in Singapore. The answer of Singapore was to impose a ban of three months in which Filipino domestic workers were not allowed to enter the country\textsuperscript{161}. The result was that negotiations failed and three months later, women domestic workers migrating from the Philippines to Singapore resumed their labor in the host country with the same exploitative working conditions.

\textsuperscript{161} Bakan and Stasiulis, \textit{Not One of the Family: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada}, 4.
conditions.

This ineffectiveness in protecting cross-bordered migrant domestic workers is not exclusive to the Philippines. This dynamic is very common when there is an asymmetric relation between the country of origin of the migrant domestic worker and the host country. When the country of origin of the domestic worker is perceived as poor and underdeveloped, the vulnerability of the migrant domestic worker exacerbates. If the domestic worker has migrated in a condition of Au-pair then the relation between the domestic worker and the employer is less asymmetrical. The Au-pair is treated with less deference because her country of origin is not necessarily a country perceived as underdeveloped and poor. Also, there is the assumption that if the country of origin is not underdeveloped then the levels of education of the migrant domestic worker should be higher.

In this sense, where the domestic worker comes from, will contribute to her possibilities of bargaining with the employer for better working conditions. In this sense, context of reception will also define the labor relation between the migrant women domestic worker and the employer. For example, the labor conditions are not the same for Filipino domestic workers in the Gulf countries than for Filipino domestic workers in Canada. As it was mentioned above, as exploitative as it can be in Canada, Filipino women domestic workers are offered the chance of applying for permanent status after two years of working with the same employer. These women can become citizens.

Context of reception, must always negotiate must and reconciled the fact that due to the perception of domestic work as servitude, by default, employers are not eager to hire a domestic worker that they see as an equal. In fact, employers follow a capitalistic
logic in which they want to extract the majority of labor from a worker for as less remuneration as possible. As such, among employers in different part of the world there are preferences based on the country of origin or the race of domestic workers. According to Ehrenreich and Hochschild, in “Global Women; Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy,” in Spain while employers find it hard to hire Moroccans due to their Muslim faith, they have a preference for hiring Peruvians since they are perceived as obsequious. Similarly, French employers find black domestic workers lazy, but they are perceived as being very good care takers for children and the elderly.\(^\text{162}\)

These preferences for a domestic worker from a certain nationality replicates around the world. The commonality is that the availability of women willing to migrate from a certain part of the world to another, is usually the result of colonial and historical ties between the country of origin of the domestic worker and the host state. In the case of undocumented workers, in the United States, employers reported their preference to higher them because they are considered to have a more “helping attitude” and more willing to be invisible than legal domestic workers.\(^\text{163}\)

Disregarding which nationality is preferred by an employer, a commonality for all domestic workers is the fact that the domestic worker is expected to care for the members of the household where she is employed, yet the importance of her own family and dependables is minimized and even completely ignored by the employer. It is important to acknowledge that not every employer is the same; therefore, not every employer rationalizes the family of the domestic worker as irrelevant to his/her relation to the

\(^{162}\) Ehrenreich and Hochschild, Global Women; Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy, 108-109.

\(^{163}\) Ehrenreich and Hochschild, Global Women; Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy, 76-77.
Some employers for altruistic reasons or genuine care for the domestic work assume a helping attitude towards the domestic worker. They help with extra expenses that the domestic may have to assume like schooling for her children or the care of a sick relative. Some employers even led the children of the domestic worker live with them in the employer’s household. Sometimes they even assist the domestic worker in the process of bringing her children abroad from the country of origin. These are some of the example when the employer takes into account the fact that while demanding care from the domestic worker to herself/himself and the members of the household, the domestic worker has her own family responsibilities.

Sadly, employers taking this into account are an exception to the rule. A common scenario, is to find domestic workers struggling to accommodate demands of caring for the members of the household and longing for her own family. Even if the employer is extremely accommodating, domestic work demands deep human emotions and deep personal commitments based on caring and providing love to strangers (the members of the household). Domestic workers have to struggle to negotiate her impositions of love for strangers and responsibilities of caring for her love ones. As it has been discussed, the only arrangement in which the domestic worker does not have to negotiate her sentimental investment with her caring responsibilities is when the domestic worker is a “Specialized, live-out, domestic worker.”

10.2 The Value of Remittances

As it has also been discussed, the majority of migrant women domestic worker need to negotiate the depth of their emotional investment while employed in the profession. The incentive to engage in these negotiations is the material gain from
engaging in domestic work. When speaking in transnational terms, this material gain is known as remittances. For countries, remittances have become the most important aspect of transnational households. People working abroad sending a portion of their salary to their family in their country of origin. For many countries, especially in the developing world, the influx of remittances has become very important. To illustrate this point, it is important to review the case for The Philippines and their citizens working as domestic workers abroad.

The government of the Philippines has acknowledged the importance of the capital entering the country as the result of domestic workers sending money to their families. In fact, the government sees emigration of nationals as a strategy to decrease national unemployment. Perhaps, the most important aspect of remittances is the idea that it could be a mechanism to stimulate economic growth. In the case of the Philippines, the government has underlined the role of women domestic workers working abroad as the “Nation’s Modern-Day Heroes.” In other words, the government has expanded on the notion of using remittances send by Filipino women domestic work to be used to help the national development of an export-oriented economy. For reducing unemployment and to develop a strong export-oriented economy, the principle has proven to be problematic. There is no evidence to assume that remittances entering the Philippines have stimulated the national economy.

Additionally, the Filipino government praises the importance of having money sent by women working abroad as domestic servants, yet the government does not protect

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164 Ehrenreich and Hochschild, *Global Women; Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, 254.

them, abroad from unfair labor conditions, nor at home from prejudice. While mothers leave their country of origin to find employment and provide for their family, they faced strong criticism for being able to leave their kids behind. In other words, they are characterized as being bad mothers. These mothers working abroad for their families back home is not recognize as a sacrifice, but as selfish women leaving their kids behind. The "bad mom" characterization is more prevailing than the disapproval towards domestic violence\textsuperscript{166}.

This sort of "familism" is perpetuated by male figures. If women become the main income earner in the household, it is expected that the traditional role of men changes. After all, in highly feminized migration patterns, men are the ones left behind with children and other members of the household. In this scenario, one could expect men taking a central role in all the functions related to the household; caring for dependables and house chores. Those chores that have been traditionally relegated to women. What the evidence shows so far is that, indeed, the traditional roles of men and women in the family is changing. However, this does not mean that men are replacing women as the main caretakers and household chores performers.

In a developed employer/developing employee transfer of caring, foreign women domestic workers allowed for men household figures to remain distant from house chores and caring for dependables. It is a transfer of care from the employer to the employee that narrowly takes into account males\textsuperscript{167}. For those women who undertake the journey of working abroad and caring for strangers, she has to rely on other female figures to care

\textsuperscript{166} Salazar Parre\~{n}as, Rhacel. \textit{Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work}, 61-62.
\textsuperscript{167} Ehrenreich and Hochschild, \textit{Global Women; Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy}, 9-10.
of their dependables back home. These female figures can be grandmothers, mother in laws, or extended female relatives. Also, women domestic workers abroad can afford to hire a women domestic worker in their country of origin. These local women domestic worker can come from the country side or from an ethnicity perceived to have a lower societal standing in comparison to the ethnicity of the employer.\textsuperscript{168}

The exploitative nature of domestic work allows for the constant reproduction of unfair labor conditions between different groups. As it has been discussed, this is the result of societies with very rigid social and racial hierarchies. For example, according to Rhacel Salazar-Parreñas, Filipino women engaged in domestic work abroad feel the shame attached to domestic work. These women are constantly struggling with being a domestic worker and employing a local domestic worker in their country of origin. They feel vulnerable with the Tagalo notion of “nakakabobo”. In other words, by being a domestic worker they are becoming dumb\textsuperscript{169}. This indicates that they not only see themselves as becoming dumb, but that the domestic workers that they higher in their country of origin are dumb. The foreign domestic worker struggles with the perception becoming as dumb as the domestic work under her service. This contradiction in class mobility is exacerbated when the domestic worker has at least a college degree, or a well-established profession in her country of origin.

In this sense, the fallacy of education takes place\textsuperscript{170}. In other words, the notion that formal education translates into better employment positions. As it was discussed in the case of Colombia, women are improving their levels of formal education, yet domestic

\textsuperscript{170} Salazar Parreñas, Rhacel. \textit{Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work}, 123.
work remains a profession that absorbs women. For example, in a sample of foreign
domestic workers in Spain; 50% were overqualified for the profession. The women
interviewed had more than 1 year of college education. This leads to assume that
domestic work is absorbing women with little formal education and, also, women with
medium to high levels of education.

This could be because in the developing world an unstable economy makes the
informal sector of the economy, professions such as domestic work, a good sector to
alleviate unemployment. On the other hand, in the developing world foreign college
degrees and other credentials are no automatically recognized. Therefore, again,
domestic work becomes a viable profession to enter the labor market in the foreign
country. In the profession of domestic work, language skill deficiencies or not having a
legal status are easy negotiable. In fact, in many cases employers, like the United States,
pREFERRED to higher women domestic workers that have poor English and no legal status
because they have a more servile attitude. They are perceived as more willing to serve
the employer without complaining about exploitative working conditions.\textsuperscript{171}

In all the situations reviewed above, domestic workers have to negotiate a feeling
of losing ground in their social status and the pain caused by been away from their family.
The bearing of this situation is based on the idea that engaging in domestic work is a
temporary situation, and that there is an economic gain for herself and her family. Many
women domestic workers send their salary back home with the idea to save enough to
have a business, a house, or something that can be translated into a level of prosperity
for herself and her family. Some of these women relied on their husbands to make

investments and to save. Studies on the subject, in different parts of the world, have found similar dynamics. First, as mentioned above, men do not replace women in their role as primary caretakers in the household. In fact, men feel their masculinity thread if they take part in household chores. In this sense, males rather have their kids raised by extended family female figures or local women domestic workers\textsuperscript{172}.

It is true that the male involvement in raising kids and household chores has increased in the developing and the developed world, yet the involvement has not been to the point that women have been replaced all together, or that house chores and caring for dependables are functions divided between husband and wife. It is also true that some families are able to create prosperity by really investing the remittances sent by the women domestic worker working abroad, yet it is more common to find examples of remittances used in daily necessities and not in creating wealth for the family.

In many cases, men are unemployed, and women become the main economic provider of the family\textsuperscript{173}. For example, in Sri Lanka men are drawn to replicate the idea of “the traditional wealthy landowner” who had lighter skin, and was perceived to be lazy and often drunk. The remittances sent by Sri Lankan women domestic workers to their male partners becomes an opportunity to invest the resources to be considered as having a higher social status\textsuperscript{174}. In other words, the salary gained by women domestic workers covers daily expenses such as; alcohol and it is not used to achieve lasting prosperity for the family.

\textsuperscript{172} Ehrenreich and Hochschild, \textit{Global Women; Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy}, 200-201.
\textsuperscript{174} Ehrenreich and Hochschild, \textit{Global Women; Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy}, 191-194.
In this context, the notion of “temporary downward mobility” as present in domestic work is challenged. As it has been reviewed, women migrants employed in domestic work followed a developing/developed asymmetry. The rational to migrate, is to take advantages of employment opportunities with competitive salaries. Salaries that can bring earnings in not possible in the country of origin. This is a basic criteria to choose the destination to migrate, when the migrant has the opportunity to choose. The motivator is to take advantage of exchange rates between the host country and the country of origin.

Many women migrant domestic workers, planned to work for a number of months and years with the objective to acquire a sum of money that can make possible some sort of investment. The instability at the family level and at the home country challenge the idea of “temporary downward mobility” because women domestic work might end up staying longer than planned and expected, in an attempt to make enough money to go back and buy a house or start a business. In reality that is not conclusive evidence to show that, in fact, through remittances overall prosperity for women domestic workers has been achieved. However, in the short term a way to measure wealth for these migrant workers is through their availability to pay for the schooling of their children.

The idea is that higher levels of education will translate in better employment opportunities for their kids. A way to compensate the feeling of downward mobility for women domestic workers employed abroad is by the notion that their kids will have more opportunities if they have the chance to be highly educated. Additionally, the opportunity to provide their children with educational training outweighs the pain of family separation that women working abroad experience. The ideal is to bolster the

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175 Salazar Parreñas, Rhacel. Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work, 123.
opportunities of their kids. Rachel Salazar-Parreñas found that children that have their mother working abroad as a domestic worker have contradictory feelings on the matter.

These children, feel a sense of abandonment and blame their mother for leaving them. At the same time, they enjoy the financial benefits of having their mother sending them money. In fact, 60% of interviewed children by Salazar-Parreñas, want to have their mother working abroad. The literature calls this a dislocation, or the absent parent. Studies on the “absent parent” look at the development and consequences for the children left behind when women domestic workers are forced, or make the choice to become a domestic worker abroad. The relevance of this subject will only increase since there has been a rapid feminization of migration. For example, Brites in Brazil has study the social environment for kids who are raised by the grandmother when the mother has moved away to work as a domestic service. Brites comments that in these families, the main care provider are the female figures. She observed that when the mother is not around, children are more exposed to gang activity and drugs.

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177 Brites, Domestic Service, Affection and Inequality.
Conclusion

In 1980, the Colombian government, predicted that domestic work, as a strategy of survival for the poor, was going to disappear in Colombia. The idea was based on the fact that industrialization was going to reduce low skill workers, like domestic workers. In 2017, is certain that domestic work is one of the main professions for women in Colombia. According to official statistics gathered by the country, it is the second profession for women in the country. However, as it has been argued, the way that the data was collected and the categories used to classify workers lead to assess that domestic works can be the main profession for women in Colombia. The prevailing nature of domestic work as one, if not, the main source of income for women in Colombia is a good indicator to comprehend the importance of domestic work worldwide. The International Labor Organization (ILO), estimates a number of 100 million domestic workers around the globe. Traditionally, most of these workers were rural migrants to urban settings. Currently, although cities keep receiving workers from rural settings, domestic work has become an important profession in the transnational aspect.178

In fact, the evidence reviewed shows that domestic workers will keep increasing. Domestic workers world-wide face different challenges. Under no perspective the nuances of their circumstances can be generalized into one narrative. Different contexts of receptions, and different relations with employers result in individual experiences. However, as it has been discussed, there are elements attached to domestic work that shape into a great or a lesser extend the profession of domestic work. The first of these

178 Maria Elena Valenzuela and Claudia Mora, Trabajo Doméstico: Un largo Camino Hacia el Trabajo Decente (Santiago: International Labour Organization, 2009) 9.
elements is the ancestral relation that domestic work has with slavery and servitude. This is the most challenging aspect of the profession. It is important for society, domestic workers, and employers to rationalize domestic work as any other formal profession that sells a product in the market. As it produces a product, it gives rise to a monetary compensation. Indeed, domestic work is not unproductive labor, but labor that gives the opportunity to an important group of women to enter the labor market. Two distinctive group of women enter the labor market. First, the middle and upper-class women entering medium to high skills profession. The second group are women who received the household and care responsibilities from the first group.

In this sense, the world has been connected through trade, and through an extraction model in which the developed countries have purchased raw materials like rubber, metal, food, sugar. Currently, the world is connected through the transfer of care\textsuperscript{179}. In other words, there is purchasing of care services from the developing world by wealthy nations. This global transfer of care sustains the life style of women at both ends of the transaction. On one side, women purchasing care rely on foreign domestic workers to be able to enter the labor market. As it was reviewed, men are increasing their participation in care roles and house chore activities. However, not to a rate to affirm that they have an equal participation with women, or that they have replaced female figures. Therefore, for those who can afford it, domestic work is the ideal solution to transfer caring responsibilities between female figures. On the other side, women active in domestic work have a chance to enter the labor market and provide for their family. In fact, for women migrants, domestic work is seen as an opportunity to save enough funds to buy a house.

\textsuperscript{179} Ehrenreich and Hochschild, \textit{Global Women; Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy}, 4
or to start a small business in the country of origin.

The rationality to migrate to a wealthier country is linked to the currency exchange comparative advantage. This refers to having a salary in a currency that when converted to the currency of the country of origin equals to a surplus capital. In this sense, the possibility of migrating to a developed country and face downward social mobility is compensate by the possibility of generating that surplus capital. The evidence shows that the majority of women employed as domestic workers send to their country of origin the majority of their salaries. This is not a new practice sustained by the maintenance of transnational households. In fact, as early as the XVIII century there is evidence that women were sending on average 50% of their salaries to their relatives in rural areas180.

Indeed, this has become such a strong source of revenue for families that countries has seen it as an opportunity to encourage national development. As in the Filipino example, the government has encouraged women to continue maintaining their transnational household. In this sense, the input of female domestic workers in the earnings of households has been so important that today the literature on the matter points to conclude that there has been a shift in who is the main household provider. As a matter of fact, this no longer a responsibility exclusive of men. In many instances, women have become the main and only household financial providers. This is especially true in the households of women migrants domestic workers181.

As it was study, many women who leave their families behind do so because the country of origin did not offer a way for these households to cover all their necessities.

180 Chaney and Garcia, Muchachas No More: Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean. 111.
181 Ehrenreich and Hochschild, Global Women; Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy, 106-108
This means that men, in this equation, are unemployed. Thus, women engaged in domestic work abroad start sending remittances to their families. In the household men, do not replace women in household chores and care responsibilities. In fact, there are an important number of examples in which men remained unemployed. These men rely, solely, on the remittances sent by women migrant domestic workers. Additionally, women have to rely in other women and in female members of their extended family for the care of their children and household chores. These shows that the transnational transfer of care includes an extra group of women. Therefore, the transfer of global care starts with women in wealthy nations employing a foreign domestic worker. This domestic worker, transferred her own care responsibilities to female extended family members or to a domestic worker employed by her. The role of men in this transaction is at best, marginal.

In fact, what the literature is showing is that there has been a feminization of migration. In other words, women are migrating at the same rate, and even more in certain studies, than men. These trend is likely to increase in the decades to come. First domestic work has the ability, as a profession, to reduce unemployment. It has been argued that the skills required to engage in domestic work as natural to women. Therefore, if one is a woman then she can clean and care for dependables. Second, there is a growing trend towards outsourcing household activities and chores. For example, there are more services to deliver groceries, to clean and wash clothes, and even to buy clothes. As expected, there are more women willing to engage in domestic work because there are more women migrating\textsuperscript{182}. Also, there is a global tendency more governments to reduce care facilities for children and the elderly.

\textsuperscript{182} Ehrenreich and Hochschild, \textit{Global Women; Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy}, 99.
The reduction of care facilities sponsored by the government is so persistent that for countries in the developing world to have access to loans, one of the conditions to lend money is to reduce welfare programs. This paternalistic approach, is a precondition imposed by institutions like the World Bank and the IMF\textsuperscript{183}. This encourages the reliance on domestic workers for middle and upper-class women who want to enter the labor market. In fact, this makes difficult for women to enter the labor market because to do so they have to rely on other women for the care of their dependables. Men do not face the same conditions and restrictions. In this sense, it could be argued that the global tendency to shrink governmental sponsored programs for the caring of children and the elderly incentivizes the increase of domestic work. Another reason to motivates the likely increase of domestic work is the decline of the extended family\textsuperscript{184}. Traditionally, women migrating looking for jobs from rural settings to the cities relied on their mothers and other family members to entrust the care of their children. This dynamic is not a given anymore. In fact, women that want to leave their children behind, they have to transfer their care responsibilities to other women and pay for it.

The importance of domestic work, their likeness to increase, and its crucial role in the transfer of care for women has been established. The exploitation and prejudice that women domestic worker is faced has also been reviewed. Since the profession is not likely to decrease its numbers, domestic workers has to be professionalized. Women domestic workers have to break the link that slavery has with the profession, by making their relations with the employer formal and less dependable. In this sense, women

\textsuperscript{183} Zimmerman, Litt, and Bose, \textit{Global Dimensions of Gender and Carework}, 81.
\textsuperscript{184} Ehrenreich and Hochschild, \textit{Global Women; Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy}, 104.
domestic workers have to engage in the profession by making a given that they produced a tradeable commodity that gives rise to a monetary obligation and a compensation. Only in this way, women domestic workers will receive the dignity and the protection that other professions hold. Domestic work is the art of serving, but not the art of being a servant.
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