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Domestic Work

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residents to self-petition for their status independent of their abusers. In 2000, Congress passed the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (VTVPA) which created the U-visa, which allows victims of certain crimes, including domestic violence and sexual assault, to apply for nonimmigrant status if they cooperate with law enforcement authorities in the investigation or prosecution of the crime.

Stewart Chang

See also Family; Immigration and Gender; Parenting; Social Work; Victimization

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Domestic Work

Paid domestic work encompasses a wide array of labor types usually referred to as care work or reproductive labor. Most paid domestic work positions involve housecleaning or child care, possibly cooking, or some combination of the three. Over time, minority women—first African Americans and later Latinas—came to be represented disproportionately in these jobs. This entry provides a brief history of domestic work and its relationship to race and ethnicity in U.S. society.

Defining Domestic Work

Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo identifies three common types of domestic work positions in her study *Doméstica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence.* She includes (1) the live-in nanny/housekeeper, an employee who works for and lives with one family and is generally responsible for child care and caring for the household, (2) the live-out nanny/housekeeper, who works for one family full time but returns to own home at the end of the day and (3) the housecleaner, who cleans houses on a contractual basis often for several different employers. Scholars such as Mary Romero have argued that this last position provides greater flexibility and autonomy, shorter hours, and higher pay.

Only a few decades ago, many had predicted the occupation would become obsolete; however, at the beginning of the 21st century, the occupation and its demand are growing. Several factors have contributed to this growth, including greater income inequality, the large movement of middle- and upper-class women into the workforce, and mass immigration of women from poor nations to fill caring roles in wealthy nations. As Hondagneu-Sotelo points out, in areas where there is a greater income inequality, there are often greater concentrations of paid domestic work. Although some women have long worked in wage labor (often not having the class privilege to not work), recent decades have shown a large influx of class-privileged women into white-collar and professional sectors. This movement of upper- and middle-class women into the workforce creates a demand for others to pick up "caring labor" in the home.

Women's Work

In most parts of the world, domestic work is associated with women. In the colonial period of U.S. history, domestic work was mostly preformed by slaves or indentured workers. In the middle and southern colonies, large numbers of convicts and indentured workers from England held domestic service positions, as did free willers, Europeans who sold themselves into slavery for passage to the Americas. Native American and Black slaves and servants were also found in large numbers in New England and the South, respectively.

By the late 1700s, native-born free White labor replaced indentured labor in the North and Black enslaved workers replaced White servants in the

South. In Judith Rollins's chronicling of this history, she argues that this period represents both the most egalitarian and dehumanizing period of the master-servant relationship—egalitarian in the North and dehumanizing in the South. Because workers in the North were wage laborers, often of the same ethnicity and religion as employers, they were perceived as being more socially equal. In the South, Black enslaved workers performed most domestic labor, making this relationship extremely dehumanizing, characterized by the violent exploitation of slavery. Following emancipation, these domestic slaves often assumed roles of low-wage workers and the relationship between employees and employers changed very little.

This egalitarian attitude in the North was short lived as immigrants began to replace native-born Whites in these positions. During this period, which Rollins refers to as the third phase in U.S. domestic service, terms such as *servant* were reintroduced, rituals of deference were more formalized, and many houses were designed with separate "servant" quarters. These tensions were reflected in the high turnover rate of the profession, the flight to nondomestic jobs, and the transformation of domestic work from a live-in to live-out position.

Furthermore, new technology, the movement of various household tasks into the commercial sphere, and changing ideologies among middle- and upper-class families regarding housework decreased the need for help with domestic tasks. World War I opened various nondomestic positions in factories and offices, and many workers left domestic service. However, these opportunities were often restricted to Whites, particularly native-born Whites. In addition, the decline in European migration during World War I coupled with Black migration to the North from the South facilitated the recruitment of Black women into northern domestic positions.

Racialized Work

By the 1920s, Black women were disproportionately represented in domestic service in various places beyond the South. Institutionalized racism, reflected in blocked educational and occupational opportunities, restricted Black women's intergenerational mobility out of domestic work, whereas many European immigrants had been able to use domestic work as a means of class mobility. White women were often considered help, but the labor of Black women was treated as servitude. Furthermore, unlike White

women, Black women were not as able to use domestic service as an avenue of mobility to other occupations or as a temporary job until marriage. Historically, Black women could not rely on marriage as a guarantee that they would not have to work. Racial discrimination limited job opportunities for Black men, ensuring that many Black women would continue to work as domestics even if they married. Contemporary trends illustrate that White women are more likely than are women of color to be hired as nannies, are not expected to perform all housekeeping tasks such as cooking and cleaning, and are paid higher wages on average.

The racialization of paid domestic work has been shaped by regional forces, and who performs domestic work varies between time and place. In the United States today, immigrant women primarily from Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean perform most of this labor, although there are clearly exceptions largely based on regional differences. Whereas in Los Angeles, this labor is often performed by foreign-born Latina workers, in parts of the Midwest that do not have significant immigrant populations, working-class and poor White women might dominate the field. Historically throughout the West and Southwest, domestic workers were mostly Mexican and Mexican American women, in addition to Asian women (and briefly Asian men), and African American and Native American women. For many years, domestic service represented the largest source of non-agricultural work for Mexicanas and Chicanas throughout the Southwest, often reflecting blocked opportunity structures and the deliberate recruitment of these women into the occupation by Americanization efforts and domestic training schools.

The current rates of paid domestic work are difficult to ascertain given the large numbers of under-the-table transactions. However, domestic workers are disproportionately women of color. Until the 1970 census, domestic service represented the largest occupational category for Black women in the United States. Following the Civil Rights Act of 1964, many Black and Mexican American women left domestic work for jobs in the public sector. About this same time, the percentage of foreign-born Latinas working in domestic service jumped.

The Current Situation

Adding to this trend is the growing feminization of migration, in which more than half of all the world's

immigrants today are women, many of whom migrate to fill domestic work positions. Gender, race, and class divisions have always been instrumental in delineating who performs both paid and unpaid domestic work; however, today nationhood and citizenship are also increasingly central issues. Rhacel Salazar Parreñas's analysis of paid reproductive work encompasses this shift, highlighting that globalization has transformed the politics of reproductive labor into an "international transfer of caretaking." Class-privileged women in receiving countries purchase the labor of immigrant women, whereas migrant workers purchase the labor of even poorer women left behind in sending countries.

This labor is often not conceptualized as employment, largely because it takes place in a private home and it is a job that requires a large amount of emotional performance. However, employers' hesitancy to see themselves as employers may have negative consequences for workers. By claiming that workers are members of the family, employers are denying their responsibilities as employers and reinforcing the gendered division of labor, treating female domestics as proto-mothers. The relationships between employees and employers have changed greatly over time. Whereas past relationships were often characterized as maternalistic, in contemporary domestic work relationships, many employers try hard to limit personal interactions with domestic workers.

The nature, structure, and relationships in paid domestic work are constantly evolving. Economic forces, immigration patterns, and domestic workers themselves are extremely instrumental in this shift. For instance, Black women in the North and South are largely responsible for the large-scale shift from live-in to the often more preferable live-out positions, as Mexican American women transformed the profession in the Southwest to the common contractual arrangement found today. Current studies on domestic work provide insight into the international politics of citizenship, nationhood, and inequality, the gendered division of reproductive work, and contemporary relationships between women of different social locations.

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See also African American Women and Work; Family; Feminism; Gender and Race, Intersection of; Globalization; Guest Workers; Immigration and Gender; Immigration and Race; Latina/o Studies; Racialization

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Dominican Americans

In the 2000 U.S. Census, more than a million people identified their ancestry as Dominican. Dominicans are the fourth largest Hispanic group in the United States; however, they are among the least understood. This entry provides both a brief overview of the historical context for Dominican migration and a demographic profile of the community. It also examines the perspectives of ethnicity and race theorists on the experiences of the Dominican community.

History and Socioeconomic Profile

The Dominican Republic occupies the eastern two-thirds of the island of Hispaniola, also known as Quisqueya, which it shares with Haiti. Santo Domingo,