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The Glass Ceiling's Missing Pieces: Female Migrant
Domestic Workers Navigating Neoliberal Globalization in
Latin America

SUBMITTED TO

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BY

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For

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Abstract

This thesis explores globalization's effects on female migrant domestic workers in Latin America by examining the socioeconomic and political status of Paraguayan and Peruvian domestic workers in Argentina. Through this research, I answer several key questions. First, how does globalization shape neoliberal markets that enforce the exploitative structures of domestic labor? Second, how is gender inequality present in governmental and social discrimination? Third, do the costs of transnational care labor outweigh the benefits? The former two questions are answered by the rising demand for care labor and resulting global care chains that fuel greater cross-border migration and statelessness of female migrants. Additionally, cultural and familial pressures magnify the sexual division of labor and maintain domestic labor's low social status. Using a gender analysis, I address the last question by concluding that gender inequalities through governmental and social discrimination, plus emotional-familial burdens, outweigh domestic labor's short-sighted financial prospects and autonomy provided by globalization.

Keywords: female migrant domestic workers, cross-border migration, sexual division of labor, global care chains, statelessness

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I. Introduction

Nanny. Maid. Care laborer. Domestic worker. Regardless of their titles, domestic workers are subject to labor exploitation. According to 2013 International Labor Organization statistics, approximately 53 million female domestic workers migrate from poor countries to high-income countries as the global demand for domestic labor increases.¹ Neoliberal economic policies encourage open markets to create this growing trend of the transnational labor pool. But a closer look into the economic, social, and political forces influencing migrant domestic labor elucidate the structural deficiencies that engender labor exploitation.

The economic forces behind globalization in the late 1900s encompass a neoliberal ideology of free trade, free movement of capital, restricted government controls, and democratization.² Here, the “neoliberal vision of the state” serves as a mediator between private actors to capitalize national resources while minimizing the government’s financial, legal, and infrastructural obligations in correcting the labor exploitation of domestic workers.³

Feminist theory criticizes the “*homo economicus*” logic of global capitalism because it only considers women to be economic units in the production of services,

¹ Maria Kontos and Glenda Tibe Bonifacio, “Introduction: Domestic and Care Work of Migrant Women and the Right to Family Life,” in *Migrant Domestic Workers and Family Life*, ed. Maria Kontos and Glenda Tibe Bonifacio (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 1.

² Jane H. Bayes, Mary E. Hawkesworth, and Rita Mae Kelly, introduction to *Gender, Globalization, and Democratization*, by Rita Mae Kelly et al. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 3.

³ Sara Friedman and Pardis Mahdavi, introduction to *Migrant Encounters: Intimate Labor, the State, and Mobility Across Asia*, by Sara Friedman and Pardis Mahdavi (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015): 5, JSTOR.

dismissing other social and individual aspects.⁴ Nelson argues that reducing workers to economic inputs dismisses the “social dimensions” of human needs, family priorities, and community ties.⁵ The criticism of shallow economics points to the exclusion of human welfare in economic considerations despite efforts to take the issue of human misery into account.⁶ Unfortunately, these efficiencies are seen in patterns of gender inequality as well.

Globalization’s social effects extend to gender discrimination, namely the feminization of domestic labor that rests on cultural norms of masculinity as superior and femininity as inferior.⁷ The “soft,” “feminine” devaluation of social concerns such as family rights have impoverished economics.⁸ Now, the personal is political because domestic labor crosses into one’s gendered identity and dictates their social status. The feminization of labor creates a social division of gender roles that places domestic work at the lowest rung of the labor ladder. This equates domestic labor to slavery given its historical resemblance due to new demands of globalizing neoliberalism.⁹ “Occupational segregation by sex” is a form of horizontal segregation that is not natural and inevitable, but rather is caused by inefficiencies and inequalities that can only be corrected by

⁴ Mariángeles Camusso, “Trabajo doméstico y Buen Vivir: un desafío para las narrativas publicitarias,” *Chasqui. Revista Latinoamericana de Comunicación*, no. 134 (April 2017): 167, accessed October 7, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.16921/chasqui.v0i134.3060.g2898>.

⁵ Julie A. Nelson, “Labour, Gender and the Economic/Social Divide,” in *Women, Gender and Work*, ed. Martha Fetherolf Loutfi (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2001), 379.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 371.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 377.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 369.

⁹ Manuel Abrantes, “A Matter of Decency? Persistent Tensions in the Regulation of Domestic Service,” *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, no. 45 (January 2013): 112, 119, accessed October 7, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.7440/res45.2013.09>.

integrating both sexes into the workforce.¹⁰ Yet, proper integration requires adequate state implementation and reliance on enforcement that have both been historically problematic.

In fact, political forces such as state law in practice lack consistent and compelling application that is necessary to combat discrimination.¹¹ Domestic workers are especially susceptible to exploitation because they work within the private homes of employers and are excluded from the protection of labor laws.¹² Moreover, much of the domestic service operates in the informal sector.¹³ The privatization of domestic labor in informal workspaces creates positions of greater vulnerability for female domestic laborers that already lack citizenship. Regarding previous research of domestic labor, Kontos and Bonifacio criticize one-sided studies that only recognize this service as “proper work” and fail to include the right to family life.¹⁴ However, they contend that there has been a shift in the consideration of migrant domestic workers from the “victim-oriented approach” to the “agency approach” with the empowerment of these workers.¹⁵ Ultimately, globalization has affected women in mixed ways, both negative and oppressive as well as positive and liberating.¹⁶ As a result of globalization, educated

¹⁰ Martha Fetherolf Loutfi, introduction to *Women, Gender and Work*, by Martha Fetherolf Loutfi (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2001), 10.

¹¹ Loutfi, introduction, 14.

¹² Kontos and Bonifacio, “Introduction,” 1.

¹³ Abrantes, “A Matter of Decency?” 113.

¹⁴ Kontos and Bonifacio, “Introduction,” 3.

¹⁵ Kontos and Bonifacio, “Introduction,” 3.

¹⁶ Bayes, Hawkesworth, and Kelly, introduction, 4.

women in developed countries have taken steps forward, but even more women in the rest of the world have stepped back into poverty.¹⁷

It is important to shed light on this under-explored topic and question neoliberalism's systematically exploitative forces that subject domestic workers to poor working and living conditions. Rather than question the individual women that choose this type of work, it is important to dig deeper into the underlying societal pressures and discriminatory legal practices that produce these conditions in the labor market. Initially, I became interested in domestic labor when I studied abroad in Buenos Aires, Argentina for the Spring 2016 semester. My class took a field trip to a suburb of the city to visit *Las Juanas en La Colectiva*, a grassroots organization assisting female Paraguayan, Peruvian, and other domestic laborers abused by Argentine employers and others in their community. I was curious to learn more about the switched gender roles that female, rather than male, migrant workers left the country to provide for their families. I wanted to research the motives behind their transnational struggles and how globalization influenced this transnational domestic work. I chose Argentina to represent Latin America because this host country is the top destination for border countries, the migration dynamic presented racial differences between the host country and home country, and I am able to read the research in Spanish. This paper serves as a platform to investigate underlying labor exploitation and gender inequality present in domestic work and hopefully encourage more research to substantiate my findings.

In this paper, I examine the effects of globalization of migrant domestic laborers in Latin America. Specifically, I investigate the cases of Paraguayan and Bolivian

¹⁷ Bayes, Hawkesworth, and Kelly, introduction, 5.

domestic workers in Argentina. The migratory patterns of each case highlights trade-offs in financial and family values according to societal and governmental pressures. The globalized market, established by neoliberal policies, perpetuates the exploitation of domestic labor. Gender inequality emerges from the forces of globalization through governmental and social discrimination.

First, this analysis outlines globalization's impact in the historical and theoretical framework to evaluate the conditions of migrant domestic work. Paraguayan domestic laborers are a unique case that highlights migration patterns, access to the labor market, and cost-benefits of migrating. Bolivian domestic workers are a second case that reinforces these migration patterns. The evidence from each ethnic group underscores the main argument that while globalization has provided greater economic mobility and autonomy for foreign domestic laborers, the consequences of gender inequality outweigh the financial benefits of domestic labor.

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II. Literature Review

The complex nature of migrant domestic work in Latin America is laced with structural deficiencies produced by weak state regulation. A typical domestic worker is employed in private households to carry out various tasks such as cooking, cleaning, driving, and gardening.¹⁸ There are two types of domestic workers: live-in domestic workers, or “*puertas adentro*,” and live-out domestic workers.¹⁹

Domestic workers are subordinate to their employers in labor relations because the sector is poorly regulated, hard to control, and devoid of international standards.²⁰ The difficulty of regulatory oversight and inspections in practice is due to issues of homeowners’ privacy.²¹ The complexity of labor relations in domestic work relates to intersections of gender, social class, ethnicity, race, nationality, education, age, language, and others.²²

Factors that influence domestic work include work culture, supply of workers, and demand of high-income countries with the capacity to hire this service.²³ This trend

¹⁸ Victor Tokman, “Domestic Workers in Latin America: Statistics for New Policies,” *WIEGO Working Paper*, no. 27 (June 2010): 1, accessed October 17, 2017, http://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/Tokman_WIEGO_WP17.pdf.

¹⁹ Débora Gorbán and Ania Tizziani, “Inferiorization and deference: The construction of social hierarchies in the context of paid domestic labor,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 46 (September 2014): 108, accessed October 7, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2014.01.001>.

²⁰ Tokman, “Domestic Workers in Latin America,” 1.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

²² Janine Rodgers, “Changes in domestic service in Latin America” (paper presented at the 29th Conference of the International Working Party, Faculty of Economics, University of Porto, Portugal, September 8-10, 2008).

²³ Tokman, “Domestic Workers in Latin America,” 2.

towards high-income countries is affirmed by the fact that 87% of Latin American emigrants venture to developed countries and only 13% drift within the intra-region.²⁴

The normalization of the sexual division of labor is prevalent in Argentina, even within the range of domestic services.²⁵ Under the umbrella of domestic work, the few men in the sector score higher-paying jobs such as gardeners, drivers, guardians, and waiters, while women work in cleaning, cooking, and childcare.²⁶ According to Gorbán and Tizziani, women represent 98.5% of domestic workers in Argentina.²⁷ Women in domestic labor are mainly poor or indigenous, and migrants constitute more than 43% of this sector.²⁸ Domestic work is a substantial source of employment for women, since one in eight women employed are domestic workers, while only 0.5% of domestic workers are men.²⁹ Similarly, in some countries, the total number of women working in the informal sector surpasses that of men.³⁰

In Buenos Aires, immigrants who fill low-skilled service occupations, such as domestic workers, are from Paraguay and Bolivia.³¹ This trend reflects the fact that, in

²⁴ Tokman, “Domestic Workers in Latin America,” 13.

²⁵ Mariángeles Camusso, “Trabajo doméstico y Buen Vivir: un desafío para las narrativas publicitarias,” *Chasqui. Revista Latinoamericana de Comunicación*, no. 134 (April 2017): 169, accessed October 7, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.16921/chasqui.v0i134.3060.g2898>.

²⁶ Tokman, “Domestic Workers in Latin America,” 4.

²⁷ Gorbán and Tizziani, “Inferiorization and deference,” 110.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 110.

²⁹ Tokman, “Domestic Workers in Latin America,” 1.

³⁰ Sara Elder and Lawrence Jeffrey Johnson, “Sex-Specific Labour Market Indicators: What They Show,” in *Women, Gender and Work*, ed. Martha Fetherolf Loutfi (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2001), 261.

³¹ Maia Jachimowicz, “Argentina: A New Era of Migration and Migration Policy,” Migration Policy Institute, last modified February 1, 2006, accessed October 16, 2006, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/argentina-new-era-migration-and-migration-policy>.

2001, Paraguay and Bolivia were the top source countries of Argentina's total foreign-born population of 1,531,940 at 21% and 15%, respectively.³² Thus, these two countries provide important references for the study of migrant domestic workers in Argentina.

The theoretical framework provides the background necessary to understand globalization's effects on domestic work through the existence of gender inequality from social and political discrimination. Gender inequality is fueled by gendered class relations of domestic labor and impoverished economics of neoliberalism that produce an oppressive hierarchy of occupation status and the feminization of labor. Bayes, Hawkesworth, and Kelly define the concept of gender as a process that forms divisions between men and women in labor, power and emotions, as well as fashion, behaviors, and identity.³³

Gender inequality in domestic labor is produced by powerful economic forces that take advantage of developing countries at the expense of forgotten social costs. Economically, the "compensating wage differentials" theory is flawed and too simplified to conclude social efficiency because people are willing to work for fewer wages for job features they enjoy or demand higher wages if they disagree with the features.³⁴ The trend of out-migration in Asian countries with economic inequality and unstable political

³² Jachimowicz, "Argentina."

³³ Jane H. Bayes, Mary E. Hawkesworth, and Rita Mae Kelly, introduction to *Gender, Globalization, and Democratization*, by Rita Mae Kelly et al. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 1.

³⁴ Julie A. Nelson, "Labour, Gender and the Economic/Social Divide," in *Women, Gender and Work*, ed. Martha Fetherolf Loutfi (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2001), 374.

transitions can also be applied globally.³⁵ Negative effects of globalization have been observed through the out-migration of poor countries due to an increasing “care deficit” as women are migrating abroad to meet the international demand of cheap labor.³⁶ Domestically, home countries struggle with the gender inequality of labor drain, while migrants individually face inevitable work-life imbalances. Gorfinkiel identifies these struggles of migrant women, who are expected to meet the demand for taking care of families abroad, while their personal and familial care needs are placed on a backburner.³⁷ The demanding market produced by globalization also produces the political inequality of power to exercise family rights as domestic workers. Interestingly, while neoliberal policies incited debt crises, deregulation, privatization, and structural adjustment policies, the same institutions and governments promoting neoliberalism also advocate for individual human rights, including women’s rights.³⁸

Emerging from inequalities produced by globalization are changing social divisions in existing gendered spaces of labor, and implications for traditional gender roles, family values, and public-private spaces. These spaces of contention in domestic work are between the public/private, remunerated/non remunerated, voluntary/obligatory, pleasant/dysphoric, and individual/collective.³⁹ The forces of globalization changes set gendered regimes by changing labor divisions, altering the nature of the government, and

³⁵ Sara Friedman and Pardis Mahdavi, introduction to *Migrant Encounters: Intimate Labor, the State, and Mobility Across Asia*, by Sara Friedman and Pardis Mahdavi (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015): 11-12, JSTOR.

³⁶ Friedman and Mahdavi, introduction, 12.

³⁷ Magdalena Díaz Gorfinkiel, “Family Rights in a Migratory Context: Whose Family Comes First?,” in *Migrant Domestic Workers and Family Life*, ed. Maria Kontos and Glenda Tibe Bonifacio (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 134.

³⁸ Bayes, Hawkesworth, and Kelly, introduction, 7.

³⁹ Camusso, “Trabajo doméstico y Buen Vivir,” 179.

causing social upheavals and dislocation.⁴⁰ Within the public-private sphere, in domestic work the line between “house” as the intimate space of employers and “work” as a function of production in a capitalist market is blurred.⁴¹

Extending the idea of impoverished economics of globalization are equally deficient theories that justify social divides. One concept that Bayes, Hawkesworth, and Kelly reject is “modernization theory,” the idea that once women work in the paid labor force they will be independent entities, free from past patriarchal oppression and exclusion from economic and political areas.⁴² Oftentimes, women experience short-lived liberty because patriarchal structures regain control once women return to their families.

Domestic work within the dynamics of globalization is the “new emotional imperialism,” where an “international migration system of care labor” is created through a demand of low wage workers by Western nations and other high-income countries to care for children and ailing adults.⁴³ Globalization produces increased economic competition and demands more flexibility which strains family needs in order to meet labor market factors of individualization and differentiation.⁴⁴ These demands are “time, labor, and emotional investments” for migrant workers that juggle work and family life.⁴⁵ Regarding the positive effects of globalization, immigrants have experienced social progress in countries such as Australia and the U.S. where the “ ‘male breadwinner’

⁴⁰ Bayes, Hawkesworth, and Kelly, introduction, 3.

⁴¹ Camusso, “Trabajo doméstico y Buen Vivir,” 173.

⁴² Bayes, Hawkesworth, and Kelly, introduction, 13.

⁴³ Manuel Abrantes, “A Matter of Decency? Persistent Tensions in the Regulation of Domestic Service,” *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, no. 45 (January 2013): 113, 114, accessed October 7, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.7440/res45.2013.09>.

⁴⁴ Martha Fetherolf Loutfi, introduction to *Women, Gender and Work*, by Martha Fetherolf Loutfi (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2001), 12.

⁴⁵ Friedman and Mahdavi, introduction, 8.

gender regime” shifts to a “ ‘partnership’ gender regime” in financial contribution roles of couples.⁴⁶ While wealthier, educated women in developed countries reap these benefits, domestic workers and other low-status female laborers bear the brunt of globalization.

The second element of measurement is the extent of political discrimination present that tolerates domestic labor exploitation, particularly through the lack of citizenship rights and workers’ rights in the legal framework. Daily working hours are controversial in the legal and private realm, especially in distinguishing paid labor under a contract and unpaid labor under family obligations.⁴⁷ Addressing this issue is problematic, since state law emphasizes equality in theory, but also legitimizes difference and prejudice produced by the law.⁴⁸ Another example of systematic discrimination is demonstrated by a lower level of benefits that characterize care workers as “sub-workers” in social security programs, and creating “the implicit indecency of ‘lower level’ citizens.”⁴⁹ This argument is further supported by the gray area between live-in and live-out domestic workers, which is subject to the private contract between the employer and worker and translates to legal vulnerability to overtime impositions.⁵⁰ Additionally, time-related underemployment adversely affects women more than men.⁵¹ Nevertheless, market forces of globalization are likely to dismiss domestic workers from relevant

⁴⁶ Bayes, Hawkesworth, and Kelly, introduction, 9.

⁴⁷ Abrantes, “A Matter of Decency?” 112, 114.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁵¹ Sara Elder and Lawrence Jeffrey Johnson, “Sex-Specific Labour Market Indicators: What They Show,” in *Women, Gender and Work*, ed. Martha Fetherolf Loutfi (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2001), 265.

regulation through counteracting legal structures and the language of the self-employed worker.⁵² The effects of excluding live-in domestic laborers in law implies a lack of living condition standards that would precede any possible regulatory oversight.⁵³ Employment security offers little protection for domestic workers, because causes for dismissal include expansive applications of misconduct.⁵⁴ One negative effect of globalization is the lack of adequate citizenship rights, such as a migrant worker's right to provide for themselves and their families back home, that creates "essential statelessness."⁵⁵ The market forces subordinate migrant workers into this vulnerable state that contributes to what Kontos and Bonifacio call the paradoxical "immobility of 'transnational' paid care work."⁵⁶

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⁵² Abrantes, "A Matter of Decency?" 120.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁵⁵ Friedman and Mahdavi, introduction, 9.

⁵⁶ Maria Kontos and Glenda Tibe Bonifacio, introduction to *Migrant Domestic Workers and Family Life*, by Maria Kontos and Glenda Tibe Bonifacio (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 5.

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III. Paraguay: Country Background

This chapter will focus on Paraguay as a home country for many female domestic workers. Before this country background is provided, it is important to understand Argentina's as a host country.

Argentina is a popular host country for migrant domestic laborers. This host country features a favorable US dollar currency peg, open economy, free education, and a large labor pool of migrant domestic workers. Additionally, the majority of migrant domestic workers are live-out care laborers. Argentina is consistently the country that attracts the most intraregional migrants of South America, which sustains its cheap labor force.⁵⁷ Economic, political, educational, and emotional-familial are contributing factors in heavy migration flows to Argentina.⁵⁸ While educational and familial motivators differ among migrant groups, Argentina's history of economic liberalization and political volatility produced the present conditions that affect all migrant workers.

Argentina's history of neoliberal reform affected labor conditions in various ways throughout different administrations. In the 1990s, Argentina opened their economy by pegging the Argentine peso to the US dollar, which was an appealing factor for migrant

⁵⁷ Aranzazu Recalde, "Renegotiating Family and Work Arrangements while Caring Abroad: Paraguayan and Peruvian Women in Argentina," in *In the dark: Family rights and migrant domestic work*, ed. Maria Kontos and Glenda Tibe Bonifacio (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 3.

⁵⁸ Marcela Cerrutti, "La migración peruana a la Ciudad de Buenos Aires: su evolución y características." *Población de Buenos Aires* 2, no. 2 (September 2005): 18, accessed November 3, 2017, UAEM Sistema de Información Científica Redalyc.

workers.⁵⁹ Argentina's seemingly strong currency offered a favorable currency for migrants fleeing from economic disasters in their home country. Thus, a paycheck from Argentina provided greater financial leverage for migrants back home. While this economic ideal seemed promising, domestic workers' rough labor conditions distorted this image. In the 1990s, neoliberalism deteriorated the preexisting hiring and exploitative nature of labor conditions in Argentina in addition to the victimization of intraregional migrants under the Carlos Menem administration between 1989 to 1999.⁶⁰ However, greater democratic controls took the reins at the turn of the 21st century. Labor conditions and migrant domestic workers' rights saw positive improvement in the 2000s under the Néstor and Cristina Kirchner administrations with labor regularization campaigns and documentation programs in action.⁶¹ While these were steps in the right direction, government bureaucracy hindered their ability to meet the migrant workers' demand for these programs. Since much of domestic work has remained in the informal sector, these documentation programs are key to citizenship rights and social welfare even if they provided limited benefits to migrants.

Legally, migrant workers had labor rights on paper, but several implementation flaws were hidden between the lines. The 1956 Decree Law 326 (Executive Order 326/56), or Special Statute on Domestic Work, gave some rights to domestic laborers.⁶²

⁵⁹ Rosalia Cortes, "Migrants' social and labor market outcomes: Paraguayans in Argentina," *QScience Proceedings, Family, Migration & Dignity Special Issue* (2013): 2, accessed October 16, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5339/qproc.2013.fmd.16>.

⁶⁰ Recalde, "Renegotiating Family and Work," 4.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Abrahamson, "Domestic Migrant Care Workers in Argentina," For more information on the Special Statute on Domestic Work, see Lorena Poblete, "Modos de regulación del trabajo doméstico," *El trabajo doméstico: entre regulaciones formales e informales*, no.

This law obligated employers to “award weekly rest, work attire, work tools, and a healthy diet,” but neither work day hours nor minimum pay were included in the law.⁶³ Additionally, this law only pertained to live-in domestic laborers working “in the same household for at least four hours per day and four days per week” under a formal contract.⁶⁴ This law left domestic work’s majority of live-out domestic laborers in the informal sector unprotected. Similarly, the Migration Law that Argentina’s Congress passed in 2003 presented many policy changes and granted migrants universal access to education and health care, free legal representation, the right to a fair trial prior to expulsion, and the right to family reunification.⁶⁵ Migrants faced the same bureaucratic processes and legal gaps that prevented these democratic rights from becoming the reality for all transnational workers.

While legal reform efforts have produced some results, the cultural stigma around female domestic workers is ingrained in Argentine society. Domestic labor in Argentina has historically been a lower value occupation, leading to a stigma regarding the social status of workers.⁶⁶ Foreign female workers have increasingly dominated Argentina’s domestic work. In 1995, 13.8% of these women pursued domestic work and this swelled

30 (October 2015): 4, accessed October 17, 2017, Cuadernos del IDES; and Débora Gorbán and Ania Tizziani, “Inferiorization and deference: The construction of social hierarchies in the context of paid domestic labor,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 46 (September 2014): 111, accessed October 7, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2014.01.001>.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Maia Jachimowicz, “Argentina: A New Era of Migration and Migration Policy,” Migration Policy Institute, last modified February 1, 2006, accessed October 16, 2006, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/argentina-new-era-migration-and-migration-policy>.

⁶⁶ Recalde, “Renegotiating Family and Work,” 16.

to 40.1% after 1996.⁶⁷ Migrant domestic laborers filled the labor demand, while native Argentine women pursued higher-level work. Before intraregional migrants occupied domestic workspaces for Argentina's aristocrats, aboriginal and black people carried out this work.⁶⁸ Thus, the historically low regard for paid domestic labor pervaded Argentine society before migrants arrived. Later, Native Argentine women in the upper middle class benefited from the Perón administration's (1946-1955 and 1973 -1974) state promotion of women's labor participation with public daycare, which allowed them to pursue more attractive work up the social hierarchy and leave housework to domestic employees.⁶⁹ However, this movement coincided with the downfall of Argentina's economy and a growing bitterness of native Argentines towards the international migrants that replaced their internal workers.⁷⁰

When female migrant domestic workers resided in Argentina, living conditions proved to be difficult. This was especially the case for migrant mothers that had to balance work-life with limited family time. Fortunately, online communication through video conference capabilities like Skype and interactive chats allowed female migrant workers to participate in their families' lives virtually.⁷¹ In a transnational way that is still widespread among many migrant communities today, these tools allow migrant mothers

⁶⁷ Santiago Canevaro, "Migración, crisis y permanencia de la migración peruana en Buenos Aires. Trayectorias laborales e identidades sociales de mujeres en el servicio doméstico," *IX Congreso Argentino de Antropología Social* (2008): 8, accessed November 3, 2017, Acta Académica.

⁶⁸ Recalde, "Renegotiating Family and Work," 5.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Canevaro, "Migración, crisis y permanencia de la migración peruana," 14.

to sustain long-distance families and participate in family life.⁷² Another challenge that female migrants faced was resettling their families in Argentina. Migrant women who brought their families to resettle in this host country rented rooms in pensions, which are the cheapest housing options located in disadvantaged areas. Although they have questionable infrastructure, pensions provide shared facilities among tenants and does not need a deposit nor rental guarantor.⁷³ Oftentimes, relocating the family was a hefty financial burden that required much sacrifice in extra work and the female migrant's personal health. Yet, this was the better option for families to escape the economic and political turmoil in their home countries.

The first case to be examined is Paraguay. Due to Paraguay's political and economic turmoil since the 1950s, the country was unable to support and retain its growing population, and female workers resorted to domestic work abroad in Argentina. In the early 2000s, Paraguay experienced population growth and economic expansion but suffered high poverty rates.⁷⁴ Yet, the necessary government assistance to help the poor was unavailable. While large numbers of Paraguayans lived in poverty, the institutional means for social mobility and progress were inadequate. According to Cortes, 65% of the youth did not participate in the educational system, 40% of teens were not enrolled in formal schooling, and 16.3% of teens and young adults (15 to 29 years old) were not in work or study.⁷⁵ Additionally, 70% of Paraguay's unemployed were ages 15 to 25 as of

⁷² Canevaro, "Migración, crisis y permanencia de la migración peruana," 23.

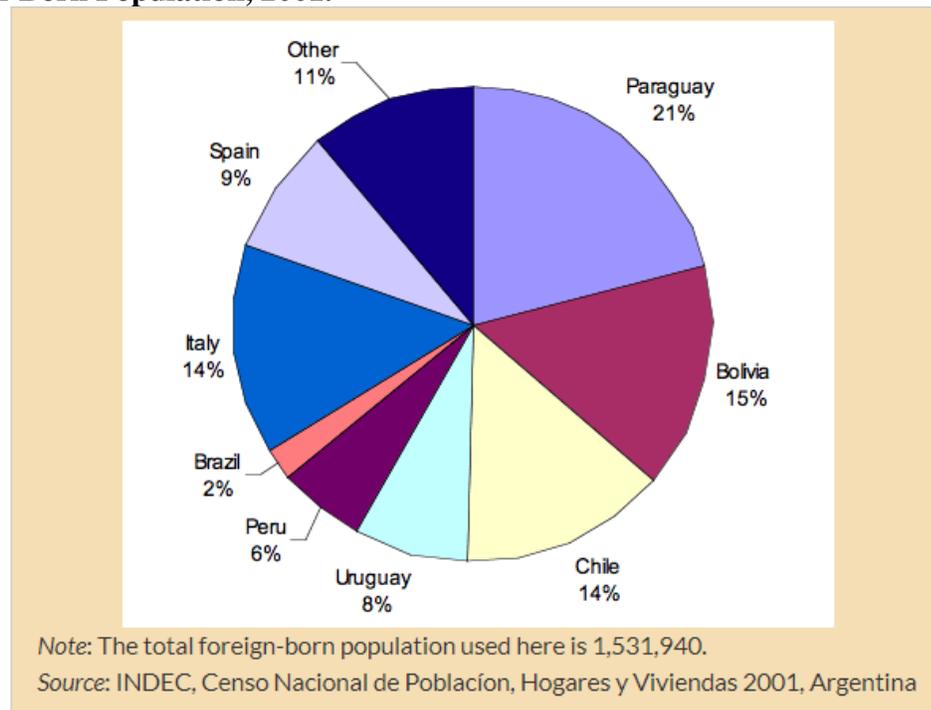
⁷³ Recalde, "Renegotiating Family and Work," 8.

⁷⁴ Cortes, "Migrants' social and labor market outcomes," 2.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

2008.⁷⁶ Without the educational or work obligations of the home country, Paraguay lost its young productive population that once possessed the potential to contribute to society and pull the country's economy forward. This is demonstrated by Paraguay's 6% drop in population due to international migration between 1990 and 2002.⁷⁷ Not surprisingly, Paraguay is the country with the highest youth (15 to 24 years old) labor participation rate compared to that of other sending countries in Argentina's records.⁷⁸ Ultimately, work readiness, unfavorable working conditions, and low wages in Paraguay motivated more than 90% of Paraguayan migrants to move to Argentina in pursuit of better work opportunities.⁷⁹

Figure 1. Top Eight Source Countries in Argentina as a Percentage of the Total Foreign-Born Population, 2001.



Source: Maia Jachimowicz, "Argentina: A New Era of Migration and Migration Policy,"

⁷⁶ Cortes, "Migrants' social and labor market outcomes," 3.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Migration Policy Institute, last modified February 1, 2006, accessed October 16, 2006, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/argentina-new-era-migration-and-migration-policy>.

Paraguayan migrants in Argentina constitute a majority foreign population, as illustrated in the Figure 1 above. While these numbers reflect Argentina's 2001 National Population Census, a more recent statistic supports the unwavering presence of this dominant group. It is relevant to note that Paraguayan migrants are concentrated in cities. A 2010 Census report from the city of La Plata district is relevant, whereby 14,268 Paraguayan migrants of 43,397 migrants lived in the capital city of Buenos Aires.⁸⁰ To clarify, these migrants mainly constitute Paraguay's rural population and reflect heavy migration flows to cities. This group first moved to cities in Paraguay and then to cities in Argentina, while urban migrants sought work in Spain.⁸¹ This division of socioeconomic migration patterns reflects the education levels of respective Paraguayan migrants, and these migrants in Argentina have, on average, less education than the migrants in Spain.⁸²

The low socioeconomic status of domestic work leaves many female Paraguayan migrants left to bear the social burdens and difficult costs to keep a transnational family. About half of Paraguayan female migrants are already disadvantaged in Argentina because the local Paraguayan *Guarani* is their first language, which is very different from Argentine Spanish, or *Castellano*.⁸³ While there are Paraguayan female migrants that work in Argentina to support their families back in Paraguay, the majority are young

⁸⁰ Aranzazu Recalde, "Renegotiating Family and Work Arrangements while Caring Abroad: Paraguayan and Peruvian Women in Argentina," in *In the dark: Family rights and migrant domestic work*, ed. Maria Kontos and Glenda Tibe Bonifacio (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 1.

⁸¹ Cortes, "Migrants' social and labor market outcomes," 2.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

migrants who leave their parents' houses and send remittances back to their families.⁸⁴

The duty to provide for the family at a young age propels many women into the labor force. Paraguayan women's relatively high labor market participation combined with social acceptance for women's independent migration explains the high numbers of female migrants in urban areas, compared to that of other Latin American women such as in Mexico where patriarchal structures confine women to household roles.⁸⁵

Table 2. Economic sector— migrants in the metropolitan area, 2010.

Economic Sector	Women	Men
Manufacturing	4.9	12.1
Construction		24.9
Trade	23.1	41.7
Transport		8.4
Private Services	6.3	9.4
Social Services	15.8	1.8
Domestic Services	42.2	
Rest	7.7	1.7
Total	100	100

Source: Rosalia Cortes, "Migrants' social and labor market outcomes: Paraguayans in Argentina," *QScience Proceedings, Family, Migration & Dignity Special Issue* (2013): 4, accessed October 16, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5339/qproc.2013.fmd.16>.

Table 2 above depicts the distribution of jobs by industry sectors among Paraguayan migrant women and men. According to the table, domestic services constitute 42.2% of work undertaken by Paraguayan migrant women in metropolitan Argentina, while employment in this sector is not considered by Paraguayan migrant men.

The low status of migrants affects their ability to access social welfare benefits in Argentina. 85% percent of migrants are not registered in the Argentina's Social Security

⁸⁴ Cortes, "Migrants' social and labor market outcomes," 3.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

system. They also gain less in school performance, housing access, and cash transfer programs compared to native Argentines.⁸⁶ Social security distributions between men and women highlight underlying gender divisions of work within the welfare system that place women at a disadvantage for benefits. Table 3 below shows the roughly 20%-point discrepancy between Paraguayan female migrants and native Argentines in social security contribution status compared to relatively close rates of 10% point differences for that of men. Thus, the low status of domestic work negatively affects migrant women more than men in terms of access to social benefits in the host country.

Table 3. Contribution to social security— migrants and natives, 2010.

Contribution Status	Migrant	Natives	Migrant	Natives
Contributes to social security	45.2	63.6	62.4	71.7
Does not contribute to social security	54.8	36.4	37.6	28.3
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Rosalia Cortes, “Migrants’ social and labor market outcomes: Paraguayans in Argentina,” *QScience Proceedings, Family, Migration & Dignity Special Issue* (2013): 4, accessed October 16, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5339/qproc.2013.fmd.16>.

Besides the low status of their work, Paraguayan women also struggle with personal family obligations strained by separation and long work hours. Recalde illustrated the real life example of social burdens through her interviews with Paraguayan female workers among other Latin American female domestic workers. One woman’s experience proves family reunification and separation to be equally difficult in the case with her two children that no longer associate her with her motherly role upon

⁸⁶ Cortes, “Migrants’ social and labor market outcomes,” 3.

reunification, and her son who suffered with severe depression.⁸⁷ Unfortunately, this social burden is not the only issue that Paraguayan domestic workers have to overcome.

The political status of female Paraguayan care laborers remains inadequate because migrant regulations are not reflected in actual enforcement and are subject to the discretion of individual employers. According to Cortes, migration regulations include the status of residence permits and access rights to economic and social relief programs.⁸⁸ The discrepancy between the law that outlines domestic work and true implementation of these policies often falls short of expectations.

The limited rights of Paraguayan domestic laborers is attributed to the “*Special Regime*,” or the 1956 Domestic Service Statute, Decree 326/56, which excludes domestic workers from standard worker health and safety regulations, bars access to unemployment benefits or maternity leave, permits longer working days, shorter leave periods, and lower severance compensation compared to other workers.⁸⁹ However, the new law in March 2013, the Special Contract Regulations for Employees of Private Houses, aims to make the labor conditions of care laborers equal to that of general salaried workers.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Recalde, “Renegotiating Family and Work,” 12-13.

⁸⁸ Cortes, “Migrants’ social and labor market outcomes,” 5.

⁸⁹ For more information about the Special Regime, see Lorena Poblete, “Modos de regulación del trabajo doméstico,” *El trabajo doméstico: entre regulaciones formales e informales*, no. 30 (October 2015): 4, accessed October 17, 2017, Cuadernos del IDES; and Débora Gorbán and Ania Tizziani, “Inferiorization and deference: The construction of social hierarchies in the context of paid domestic labor,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 46 (September 2014): 111, accessed October 7, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2014.01.001>.

⁹⁰ Gorbán and Tizziani, “Inferiorization and deference,” 56.

In between this significant change in the legal framework, many progressive steps in the early 2000s helped to lead domestic workers' rights despite several pitfalls. In 2004, Argentina enacted a migration law that grants MERCOSUR nationals rights equal to Argentines and deems migration to be a human right.⁹¹ Paraguayan migrants benefit from this law because it is one of the four MERCOSUR member states as a result of regional trade integration.⁹² Thus, the Argentine government supported an "inclusive citizenship" of social, economic, and political rights for MERCOSUR migrants with this new right.⁹³ However, government support does not always translate to available assistance for female domestic workers. In 2005, an employment regime for care laborers was adopted and was the first law to regulate this service with the provision of paid vacations, maternity and sickness leaves, severance pay, and 8 hour work days with overtime pay and holiday overtime pay.⁹⁴ Although this law signaled a step in the right direction, these stipulations are constrained by the individual employer's discretion and "good will."⁹⁵

Citizenship regularization is another area of legal struggle that female domestic workers face. Although Argentina's 2006 Great Homeland Decree was designed to help regularize MERCOSUR, Peruvian, and Venezuelan migrants, Paraguayan migrants saw

⁹¹ MERCOSUR, or *Mercado Común del Sur*, is a free-trade area in Latin America's Southern cone that was created through regional integration in 1991. For information about the 2004 migration law, see Aranzazu Recalde, "Renegotiating Family and Work Arrangements while Caring Abroad: Paraguayan and Peruvian Women in Argentina," in *In the dark: Family rights and migrant domestic work*, ed. Maria Kontos and Glenda Tibe Bonifacio (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 1.

⁹² Recalde, "Renegotiating Family and Work," 17.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

the most benefits since they obtained the most number of regular status from 2006 to 2010.⁹⁶ However, the regularization process for citizenship was complex and many recent migrants defaulted to expensive informal intermediaries that discouraged later migrants from citizenship regularization.⁹⁷

Access to healthcare proved to be another challenge for female Paraguayan migrant workers. Implemented through social work, healthcare financing is mandatory in Argentina, but Paraguayan migrants have less access to this health care system in which roughly 60% of women are not covered by health insurance compared to 46% of men.⁹⁸ Thus, Paraguayan female migrant workers face a double disadvantage of less access; their low status as domestic workers plus their subordinate position to men makes female migrant domestic laborers the most vulnerable and exploited labor pool. Moreover, the weak positions that female Paraguayan migrants face is shared among other female Latin American migrants, as explored in the next chapter.

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⁹⁶ Cortes, "Migrants' social and labor market outcomes," 5.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Social work, or *obras sociales*, is a system of subcontracting health care providers that is state regulated and administered by trade unions that collect the employer and employee shares of wages.; For more information about healthcare financing in Argentina, see Rosalia Cortes, "Migrants' social and labor market outcomes: Paraguayans in Argentina," *QScience Proceedings, Family, Migration & Dignity Special Issue* (2013): 5, accessed October 16, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5339/qproc.2013.fmd.16>.

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IV. Peru: Country Background

During the 1980s, Peru experienced devastating political and economic situations that led to the “brain drain” of their population to Argentina, while female migrant workers flooded Argentina’s domestic labor market. The inability to provide sufficient income coupled with irregular political violence left the country in shambles. Peru’s political instability is now characterized by frequent constitutional reforms, presidential crises, and the volatility of their democratic institutions and violence.⁹⁹ While Peru is governed by a presidential system, its democratic regime has been threatened by Sendero Luminoso’s armed organization and a civil war from 1980 to 1994 under authoritarian leader Alberto Fujimori.¹⁰⁰ When he became president in 1990, Fujimori centralized power, created an unstable judicial branch, and practically dissolved the rule of law, which progressively worsened the economic crisis.¹⁰¹ President Fujimori implemented a drastic stabilization program and structural reform aimed at opening the economy and increasing the labor market’s flexibility in an attempt to save the economy, but his neoliberal policies made Peru even more vulnerable.¹⁰² For example, creating a more flexible labor market actually benefited consumers at the expense of exploited workers

⁹⁹ Marcela Cerrutti, “La migración peruana a la Ciudad de Buenos Aires: su evolución y características.” *Población de Buenos Aires* 2, no. 2 (September 2005): 9, accessed November 3, 2017, UAEM Sistema de Información Científica Redalyc.

¹⁰⁰ For more about the political violence in Peru, see the ideas of Santiago Canevaro, “Migración, crisis y permanencia de la migración peruana en Buenos Aires. Trayectorias laborales e identidades sociales de mujeres en el servicio doméstico,” *IX Congreso Argentino de Antropología Social* (2008): 4, accessed November 3, 2017, Acta Académica; and Marcela Cerrutti, “La migración peruana a la Ciudad de Buenos Aires: su evolución y características.” *Población de Buenos Aires* 2, no. 2 (September 2005): 10, accessed November 3, 2017, UAEM Sistema de Información Científica Redalyc.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Cerrutti, “La migración peruana a la Ciudad de Buenos Aires,” 10.

with worsened working conditions and insufficient income. Furthermore, the existence of poorly paid jobs in Peru opened the door to a surge in the informal sector.¹⁰³ An increasing amount of Peruvians resorted to the black market for work that emphasized the severity of this national crisis. The national level of poverty rose along a similar trajectory from 37.9% in the mid-80s to 57.4% in the beginning of the 1990s.¹⁰⁴ Ultimately, the political violence in the 1980s and 1990s internally displaced between 600,000 and 1 million Peruvians.¹⁰⁵ Left with little hope for their country, Peruvians fled to neighboring Latin American countries and Argentina became a popular destination.

Cerrutti characterizes the massive migration to Argentina as a “Peruvian exodus” seeing that an estimated 25% of Peruvians emigrated in the 1980s as political refugees.¹⁰⁶ Argentina was attractive to Peruvians for several reasons. This host country offered favorable economic conditions such as an attractive labor market, relatively higher salaries, and a better exchange rate.¹⁰⁷ Specifically, Argentina’s convertibility regime that pegged the American dollar to the Argentine peso legitimized the economy and attracted migrants to enter this new labor market.¹⁰⁸ This would give Peruvians greater economic leverage and the ability to support their families back home. After 1994, Argentina

¹⁰³ For more about the surge in the Peru’s informal sector, see the ideas of Santiago Canevaro, “Migración, crisis y permanencia de la migración peruana en Buenos Aires. Trayectorias laborales e identidades sociales de mujeres en el servicio doméstico,” *IX Congreso Argentino de Antropología Social* (2008): 4, accessed November 3, 2017, Acta Académica; and Marcela Cerrutti, “La migración peruana a la Ciudad de Buenos Aires: su evolución y características.” *Población de Buenos Aires* 2, no. 2 (September 2005): 9, accessed November 3, 2017, UAEM Sistema de Información Científica Redalyc.

¹⁰⁴ Cerrutti, “La migración peruana a la Ciudad de Buenos Aires,” 10.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁰⁷ Canevaro, “Migración, crisis y permanencia de la migración peruana,” 5.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

became an important host country of the Peruvian diaspora because it was an easier, more accessible, and lower cost destination compared to other countries.¹⁰⁹ Yet, this economic experiment that transformed Argentina's labor market elicited higher unemployment rates than before along with social, economic, and political mutations.¹¹⁰

Peruvians' migration to Argentina came in two waves. The first wave of Peruvian migrants went to Argentina in the 1930s to 1980s, and were greatly motivated by Argentina's free education and well-known institutions.¹¹¹ The second wave of migrants in the 1990s was characterized by the pursuit of job opportunities whereby Peru had the largest net migration to Argentina of any other migrant group.¹¹² In this case, the possibility of returning to Peru was much lower than it was with the first wave, because international work is a longer commitment than an educational investment. Rather than a lack of jobs, the insufficient income provided by scarce jobs was the main cause of Peruvian emigration.¹¹³ Even during the stress and rapid job turnover of Argentina's 2001 crisis, some Peruvian migrant workers were pushed back home, but a large number stayed put.¹¹⁴ Thus, most Peruvians chose to endure Argentina's economic hardships and keep their migration privileges.

In Argentina, the Peruvian migrant population became an integral part of the city. As previously shown in the chapter on Paraguay of Figure 1, the *Top Eight Source Countries in Argentina as a Percentage of the Total Foreign-Born Population, 2001*,

¹⁰⁹ Canevaro, "Migración, crisis y permanencia de la migración peruana," 2.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 5, 7.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹⁴ Canevaro, "Migración, crisis y permanencia de la migración peruana," 22.

Peru constituted 6% of the 1,531,940 total foreign-born population.¹¹⁵ In subsequent years, this percentage increased despite the diversity of Peruvian migration destinations. In fact, Argentina has been a strong host country as it became more difficult for Peruvians to move to alternative destinations such as the United States, Japan, and Europe.¹¹⁶ Within Argentina, most Peruvians reside in urban areas. Between 1991 and 2001, the Peruvian population in Argentina quadrupled from 15,939 to 88,260 migrants, and of this number 33,315 resided in the province of Buenos Aires and 38,990 resided in the Federal Capital.¹¹⁷ Specifically, the Buenos Aires Metropolitan Area (AMBA) is home to an overwhelming 71% of Peruvian migrants and 42% alone reside in the city of Buenos Aires.¹¹⁸ A closer look at the socioeconomic status of Peruvian domestic workers highlights other trends in female migrants.

First, we will examine the socioeconomic status of Peruvian care laborers. The demographics of the Peruvian migrant community in Argentina presents important implications for female domestic workers. As a large majority of the Peruvian migrants, female domestic laborers are also motivated by a desire for personal autonomy and economic independence despite largely working undocumented in Argentina. The Peruvian migrant population is characterized by predominantly single women, low representation of children and adolescents, higher education levels, geographic concentration in the Buenos Aires province and capital, and a significant amount of

¹¹⁵ Maia Jachimowicz, "Argentina: A New Era of Migration and Migration Policy," Migration Policy Institute, last modified February 1, 2006, accessed October 16, 2006, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/argentina-new-era-migration-and-migration-policy>.

¹¹⁶ Canevaro, "Migración, crisis y permanencia de la migración peruana," 17.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹¹⁸ Cerrutti, "La migración peruana a la Ciudad de Buenos Aires," 8.

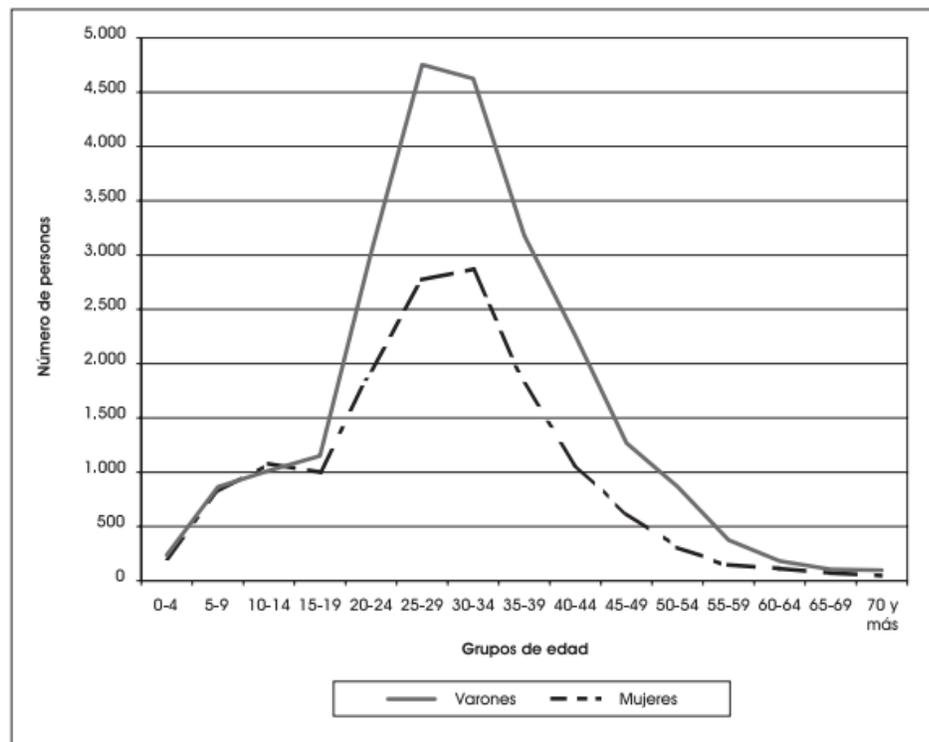
undocumented migrants.¹¹⁹ In fact, within the Peruvian migrant population, females dominated in the 1990's migratory demographics with more than 60% of the net balance in Argentina.¹²⁰ A majority of Peruvian women were single and this made their decision to migrate easier without the emotional burden of sustaining a transnational family. Of course, there are Peruvian mothers who migrated to Argentina for work but the collective social cost is less than that of other countries who have less single women employed in international domestic labor. It is also important to note that the latest surge of Peruvian migrants from the 1990s mostly come from the middle class, middle lower urban, and rural.¹²¹ This implies that the migrant population is not exclusively from the poor and that Peru lost much of its middle working class core. This loss set back the economic recovery of this struggling country. Below is a chart illustrating the age groups of Peruvian migrants, with most migrant women in the 25-29 and 30-34 age brackets.

¹¹⁹ For more about the characteristics of Peru's migrant community in Argentina, see the ideas of Santiago Canevaro, "Migración, crisis y permanencia de la migración peruana en Buenos Aires. Trayectorias laborales e identidades sociales de mujeres en el servicio doméstico," *IX Congreso Argentino de Antropología Social* (2008): 22, accessed November 3, 2017, Acta Académica; and Marcela Cerrutti, "La migración peruana a la Ciudad de Buenos Aires: su evolución y características." *Población de Buenos Aires* 2, no. 2 (September 2005): 7, accessed November 3, 2017, UAEM Sistema de Información Científica Redalyc.

¹²⁰ Canevaro, "Migración, crisis y permanencia de la migración peruana," 7.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

Figure 4. City of Buenos Aires. Balance of Peruvian migrants in 1991-2001 by age groups and sex.



Source: Marcela Cerrutti, “La migración peruana a la Ciudad de Buenos Aires: su evolución y características.” *Población de Buenos Aires* 2, no. 2 (September 2005): 14, accessed November 3, 2017, UAM Sistema de Información Científica Redalyc.

Moreover, this chart supports the idea that fewer Peruvian children and adolescents migrated to Argentina compared to the older age brackets. Thus, child labor among the Peruvian migrant population is not as common. Another defining feature of these Peruvian migrants is higher education levels, including 20% with a university education and 29.5% of men and 39.3% of women with technical skills.¹²² Despite a more educated migrant population, Peruvians faced difficulties in establishing themselves in Argentina and worked below their qualifications, as 55.2% worked in the temporary or informal

¹²² Canevaro, “Migración, crisis y permanencia de la migración peruana,” 6.

sector.¹²³ While these migrants exhibited greater levels of education and work potential, they were forced to compete in the labor market under lower standards. This is because longer established migrant networks of other countries occupied better options in the formal sector and it was easier for women to insert themselves in a domestic labor market of predominantly female workers.

Female Peruvian domestic workers also expressed motives to migrate for personal advancement. On one level, they emigrated out of the country in pursuit of better living conditions, job opportunities, and economic resources.¹²⁴ But even more, these migrant women differed from men, who moved for purely economic reasons, because they also sought emancipation and personal liberty.¹²⁵ The surge in the female migration of Peruvian women is attributed to inclusive labor market conditions, open social networks that connected women to work, and low barriers to entry in domestic work. Barriers to work entry were low for female laborers since they were hidden from the legal implications and were given the opportunity to optimize remittances to the family.¹²⁶ Domestic labor in Argentina provided an employment avenue for Peruvian women that would not have been available to them back home and contributed to women's high labor force participation. Migrant social networks also existed under other contexts, such as distinct religious organizations that provided social connections to insert themselves into the Argentine society.¹²⁷

¹²³ Canevaro, "Migración, crisis y permanencia de la migración peruana," 6.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹²⁷ Canevaro, "Migración, crisis y permanencia de la migración peruana," 22.

Another interesting trend of Peruvian female domestic workers is their US dollar payment preference. As a result of the currency devaluations initiated by President Fujimori in the 1990s, banks became bankrupt and issued void checks.¹²⁸ Thus, female workers asked to be paid in US dollars.¹²⁹ The economic leverage gained by this currency shift provided insurance for potential savings losses incurred by unstable economic situations in the home country. While Peruvian female domestic workers' socioeconomic situation provided some social stability, their political position was less promising.

Peruvian domestic laborers' political status remains in a vulnerable state. Their legal status is hard to attain despite some institutional reforms in Argentina. The most challenging obstacle that Peruvian migrants faced was the difficulty in the migratory regularization process.¹³⁰ Two common limitations to the legalization of immigration status include the financial barrier of high costs to regularize and the failure of work contracts to permit legalization process initiation.¹³¹ The complexity of legalization combined with systemic barriers in navigating through the process leaves many domestic workers laboring in the informal sector as undocumented migrants. Some even resort to marrying an Argentine to gain citizenship rights and access to social welfare.¹³²

A couple of laws benefit Peruvian migrants in theory, but the results are still under review. One political reform is the Great Homeland decree, mentioned in the previous chapter, that established a program to help the regularization of migrants,

¹²⁸ Canevaro, "Migración, crisis y permanencia de la migración peruana," 13.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 2.

¹³¹ Cerrutti, "La migración peruana a la Ciudad de Buenos Aires," 22.

¹³² Ibid.

brightens the hopes of many migrants, and still continues today.¹³³ Since the second wave of migrants arrived in Argentina later than others, the impact of this decree is still underway and more research is needed to examine its effectiveness. Additionally, the 2003 Migration Law was sanctioned and gives migrants access to certain fundamental rights such as education and health, which was previously denied.¹³⁴ While the political implications of this law sound optimistic, the reality is its effectiveness needs more research. In any case, red tape and political process are slow to take effect and any change that may affect Peruvian migrants is a gradual process. Given the political circumstances of their undocumented positions, Peruvian migrants are vulnerable and have little agency to protect themselves without holding guaranteed rights to fall back on.

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¹³³ Canevaro, "Migración, crisis y permanencia de la migración peruana," 25.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

V. Conclusion

The Paraguayan and Peruvian case study findings in Argentina illuminate globalization's effects on domestic labor in Latin America. This chapter will compare case studies before analyzing their significance to the argument that the benefits of migrant domestic work outweigh the social and governmental discrimination produced by globalization. According to Recalde, the family, state, and market are three forces that are important in shaping the nature of domestic labor.¹³⁵ Access to these three forces is determined by familial love, obligation and cultural norms, citizenship status, and money.¹³⁶ Thus, many social and governmental forces maintain domestic labor's exploitative and vulnerable position in the hierarchy of labor. The differences between Paraguay and Peru vary in social and governmental forces and demonstrate this idea.

First, pre-existing migrant profile differences between Paraguayan and Peruvian care laborers highlight job advantages or the potential for greater discrimination. The Paraguayan and Peruvian cases are important to consider because they illustrate Latin American domestic workers' migration patterns despite their demographic differences. In both cases, 7 in 10 Paraguayan and Peruvian migrants reside in the Buenos Aires Metropolitan area.¹³⁷ This provides a common base to analyze both migrant groups who also dominate the domestic labor market in BA.

¹³⁵ Aranzazu Recalde, "Renegotiating Family and Work Arrangements while Caring Abroad: Paraguayan and Peruvian Women in Argentina," in *In the dark: Family rights and migrant domestic work*, ed. Maria Kontos and Glenda Tibe Bonifacio (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 6.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

On the other hand, the social profiles between Peruvian and Paraguayan migrants vary in socio-demographic characteristics, the selectivity of migration, and migration patterns presented in overlapping ways.¹³⁸ A prominent socio-demographic characteristic lies in the education levels of each migrant group in Argentina. In fact, the education profiles vary greatly between the two, with 14.1% of Paraguayans having completed high school compared to 73.5% of Peruvians. Yet, because Peruvian domestic workers flooded the labor markets in the 1990s after the Paraguayans and other Latin American migrant groups settled in Argentina and demonstrated a greater presence in numbers, Peruvians were left with the more exploitative domestic labor opportunities, at least to begin with. Paraguayan migrants were the pioneers in Argentina's domestic sphere because they made this labor market competitive and solidified the chains of migrant women.¹³⁹ Thus, Paraguayan migrants have more developed social networks compared to the Peruvians who arrive in Argentina without these advantages.¹⁴⁰ This social network has given Paraguayan migrant domestic workers an edge in scouting opportunities with better working conditions. Consequently, the poorest working conditions are left for newcomers like the Peruvians who were uninformed and endured greater discrimination. Naive female Peruvian migrants began to work and realized that their initial education

¹³⁸ Marcela Cerrutti, "La migración peruana a la Ciudad de Buenos Aires: su evolución y características." *Población de Buenos Aires* 2, no. 2 (September 2005): 15, accessed November 3, 2017, UAEM Sistema de Información Científica Redalyc.

¹³⁹ Santiago Canevaro, "Migración, crisis y permanencia de la migración peruana en Buenos Aires. Trayectorias laborales e identidades sociales de mujeres en el servicio doméstico," *IX Congreso Argentino de Antropología Social* (2008): 8, accessed November 3, 2017, Acta Académica.

¹⁴⁰ Cerrutti, "La migración peruana a la Ciudad de Buenos Aires," 16.

aspirations in Argentina would not be possible due to the “flexibilization of domestic work,” or process of systematically making domestic labor flexible.¹⁴¹

A defining feature of Peruvian female care laborers is cultural. According to a report by one domestic worker, one of her employers told her that she preferred foreign female workers, particularly Peruvians, because they worked harder and longer with another level of cultural endurance.¹⁴² However, employers oftentimes take advantage of this hard work ethic as the labor pool becomes more competitive. This same domestic laborer worked with her previous employer until she was 7 months pregnant.¹⁴³ Ultimately, the similarities and differences highlight the nuances in Paraguayan and Peruvian domestic workers’ demographics. Nonetheless, both cases experience similar benefits of migrant domestic labor to varying degrees.

Now, we will examine the benefits of migrant care labor. This type of work offers female workers several benefits including autonomy and independence, but these ideals are often short-lived and limited due to other competing social and familial obligations. According to the perspective of one migrant women, female migrants express high priorities on finding their own independence.¹⁴⁴ Mainly, female migrants are enticed by opportunities for “autonomous decision-making and economic independence”¹⁴⁵ that migrant domestic work offers. A combination of becoming a breadwinner and working distantly allows female domestic laborers to have greater decision-making powers in family finances with the power of the purse. Thus, migrant labor, like domestic work,

¹⁴¹ Cerrutti, “La migración peruana a la Ciudad de Buenos Aires,” 19.

¹⁴² Canevaro, “Migración, crisis y permanencia de la migración peruana,” 10.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁴⁴ Cerrutti, “La migración peruana a la Ciudad de Buenos Aires,” 20.

¹⁴⁵ Recalde, “Renegotiating Family and Work,” 8.

gives women the agency to assert their position in the patriarchal family in the transnational context. Unfortunately, this newfound independence through a partnership gender regime in migrants of predominantly poor families is often short-lived. This shift to greater gender equality in households often regresses back to the original patriarchal dynamic once the family joins the mother migrant in Argentina or if she returns to her home country. A transnational family provides empowerment by giving women the agency to “renegotiate men’s participation in the social reproduction of their households” resettled in Argentina, but this reconfiguration is temporary because men “often manage to restore pre-migratory, patriarchal domestic arrangements” once work dynamics have normalized.¹⁴⁶ This naturalization of ‘women’s domesticity’ has permitted men to continue avoiding the ‘second shift’ while leaving the gendered division of household roles unchanged.¹⁴⁷ Once the family rejoins, the father reasserts his dominant position by finding work and taking over the family’s financial burden while the mother is encouraged to work less and assume the her traditional role in domestic matters.

Societal gender roles for women place unpaid, domestic housework for one’s own family beneath paid work despite its comparable emotional and physical labor. Therefore, relatively speaking, moving from assumed domestic labor for one’s family to often informal and poorly paid domestic work in another’s house demonstrates limited women’s progress. Rather than a step forward, female domestic laborers take a side step into the domestic labor workforce. This feminized work oftentimes demands harsher working conditions without mandated labor protections to level up to men in similar

¹⁴⁶ Recalde, “Renegotiating Family and Work,” 8.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

positions. This gender gap is accentuated with neoliberal policies that systematically discriminate against poor migrant women by taking advantage of their lack of citizenship and political invisibility in the host country. Hidden from balancing labor laws and legal reforms, female domestic workers suffer in silence, while the financial burdens of providing for their families complicate the decision to quit this important source of income.

Moreover, financial independence produces this autonomous decision-making power. As an important family contributor, migrant mothers are able to capitalize on savings and invest in their children. Thus, these mothers are able to provide more resources such as school supplies, clothes, and luxury items for the family. As a breadwinner who controls a portion of the family income, migrant mothers have the agency to promise these goods and materials to the family.

However, this cycle often feeds the family into a cycle of consumerism as they become dependent on these material goods to replace their mother's love and presence. In one case, a domestic worker struggled with a son who lost interest in studying and only wished to purchase a motorcycle.¹⁴⁸ While her son became consumed by materialism, she was too distant both physically and emotionally in their mother-son relationship to influence her son otherwise and provide a closer, more supportive environment. Her son did not understand the physical and emotional labor she invested in order to provide him a better future and opportunity to move up the economic ladder. This cycle also damages long-term mother-child relationships and cannot replace quality time spent together. In another case, the youngest daughter did not express sorrow when her mother left after

¹⁴⁸ Canevaro, "Migración, crisis y permanencia de la migración peruana," 16.

visiting, because her grandmother had replaced her mother as the maternal figure in her life.¹⁴⁹ The older son became estranged from his migrant mother and demanded material goods while he socially isolated himself and suffered from depression.¹⁵⁰ In both cases, neoliberalism powered by capitalist incentives perpetuate these materialistic habits in the family that negatively affect migrant mothers in the long-run. Overall, while domestic labor's economic and elevating benefits seem enticing to female migrants, the social costs incurred by neoliberalism make this model unsustainable. Social and governmental discrimination only add to this negative weight stacked against these benefits.

Next, we will analyze the social discrimination produced by globalization. Domestic work produces discriminatory social practices rooted in social divisions and gender inequality. More specifically, migrant care laborers in Argentina struggle with the "triple status duty to care" through kinship, gender, and racial class ties as well as the exploitation of this labor through many levels of coercion such as personal moral obligations to legal vulnerabilities.¹⁵¹ In other words, these three separate social forces act against domestic workers and inhibit their personal development or career advancement possibilities. Kinship pressures describe relatives' family obligations to support the family unit, including the children and elderly. This extra effort is often exerted at the expense of paid work opportunities or higher education. Gender pressures pertain to traditional gender roles assigned to women under a patriarchal system that oppresses women and perpetuates inequality in society. Racial class forces most heavily fall on poor immigrants such as Paraguayans and Peruvians, because they have the fewest

¹⁴⁹ Recalde, "Renegotiating Family and Work," 12-13.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 12.

legal protections and are often subject to exploited domestic labor due to lack of regulatory oversight. This triple status duty to care influences the domestic labor of female kin, or the global care chain. This phenomenon is generated by providing the travel ticket and subsistence for the relative in exchange for care labor of the children.¹⁵² Since these young females are usually not in work or study, as in the Paraguayan case, this family connection provides a gateway to easy access into the domestic labor market in Argentina or into Argentina's free public education once the kinship obligations are fulfilled.¹⁵³ Besides the society's over-emphasis on domestic labor for women, other societal pressures contribute towards domestic labor's exploitative nature.

The social norm to keep domestic employment experiences private is another structural force that acts against domestic laborers. What distinguishes a "good" employer from an exploitative employer are timely pay, generous bonuses, remunerations, and work autonomy.¹⁵⁴ Unfortunately, female migrants new to domestic work in Argentina are misled by the lack of care labor reality. *No dicho*, or "not said," describes the hidden nature regarding domestic employment.¹⁵⁵ It is common for migrant women not to share exploitative conditions of domestic work experiences; thus, most are not informed of the vulnerable conditions they will face.¹⁵⁶ Employers take advantage of new migrants' naiveté and docile demeanors with especially exploitative conditions because regulatory bodies are not present to report these practices.¹⁵⁷ Thus, newer

¹⁵² Recalde, "Renegotiating Family and Work," 11.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

migrant groups such as the Peruvian workers seeking domestic labor employment are treated worse than their more-established Paraguayan counterparts despite demonstrating generally higher levels of education.

Internally, domestic laborers battle domestic labor's injustices alone. While the female migrant is expected to provide for her family back in the home country, "suffering in solitude" is a cost she struggles with due to "social marginalization and economic exploitation while lacking access to networks of trust" despite "a process of personal growth, increased autonomy and financial independence."¹⁵⁸ To project a stable image and assure the family, migrant mothers oftentimes deal with domestic labor's discriminatory practices on their own, keeping their suffering secret from their families. Poor working and living conditions are shielded by the financial relief that the work provides. Yet, this falsified projection is not sustainable and takes a toll on the migrant mother's physical and mental health. Unfortunately, legal and state protections produce their own structural discrimination on top of these societal forces.

Lastly on gender inequality, we will examine the governmental discrimination produced by globalization that affect female migrant domestic workers. This type of discrimination falls under two categories: legal and state law. For example, the 2002 MERCOSUR Free Movement and Residence agreement permits MERCOSUR citizens, Chileans, and Bolivians automatic visas and freedom to work and live in Argentina if migrants have no criminal record in the last 5 years.¹⁵⁹ Initially, this act pertained to the 4

¹⁵⁸ Recalde, "Renegotiating Family and Work," 13.

¹⁵⁹ Maia Jachimowicz, "Argentina: A New Era of Migration and Migration Policy," Migration Policy Institute, last modified February 1, 2006, accessed October 16, 2006,

MERCOSUR member states including Paraguay. Then, it extended the benefits to the latter two countries and associate member states, including Peru.¹⁶⁰

On paper, Paraguayans and Peruvians benefitted from the 2002 MERCOSUR Freedom Movement, and the Residence agreement regularized regional unauthorized immigrants.¹⁶¹ However, this particularly perpetuated Argentina's policy problems. Policy issues mainly involved the poor implementation of laws into practice. As mentioned earlier, domestic work is structurally more difficult to regulate due to issues of household privacy that conflict with regular inspections and oversight. In this way, laws are lenient and ultimately at the discretion of each individual employer. Lack of legal checks and oversight breeds exploitative practices and poor working conditions for migrant care laborers. Additionally, many migrants that Cerrutti interviewed stated that as undocumented workers, they were persecuted by security forces themselves and many admitted to bribing the police to avoid harassment.¹⁶² Thus, migrant domestic laborers are not protected by labor laws because they are not recognized as true citizens if they are undocumented. Citizenship documents were considered an important tool to assimilate into the Argentine society because, as one female migrant claimed, to be working in the capital without regularizing their migratory documents would make them delinquent.¹⁶³ Unfortunately, obtaining these citizenship documents is difficult due to the financial and

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/argentina-new-era-migration-and-migration-policy>.

¹⁶⁰ Diego Acosta, "Free Movement in South America: The Emergence of an Alternative Model?" Migration Policy Institute, last modified August 23, 2016, accessed November 20, 2017, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/free-movement-south-america-emergence-alternative-model>.

¹⁶¹ Jachimowicz, "Argentina."

¹⁶² Cerrutti, "La migración peruana a la Ciudad de Buenos Aires," 22.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

structural barriers blocking entrance to the formal sector. Poor migrant care laborers are left in the hands of weak labor laws and protections that discriminate against their lack of citizenship. These poor conditions create greater discrimination due to weak state efforts that are responsible for keeping the state accountable to domestic work employers.

State discriminatory practices reinforce domestic labor's exploitative nature. The state should provide social welfare and labor protections as basic human rights. However, domestic workers' incomplete citizenship status and tendency to work in the informal sector creates a barrier to access. By this logic, the state deems care laborers as subhuman. Yet, female domestic laborers are expected to meet labor market demands that are subject to increasingly competitive neoliberal standards. For example, due to the increasing flexibility of domestic labor, female care workers witnessed a shift to work on an hourly basis.¹⁶⁴ Hourly pay makes it easier to add extra hours to an already long, unregulated work schedule, rather than a fixed schedule. Domestic laborers are forced to expend their efforts to increase inputs, often at the expense of their own health and personal family time. Juggling multiple jobs as live-out domestic workers is common in Argentina, but the high turnover of jobs due to no state-mandated job security forces these migrant workers to keep looking for new job opportunities. In the informal sector, social networks become even more important in finding the next job and there is no uniform system or settlement program to help domestic laborers transition into Argentina's domestic labor market.

The host country's failure to provide legal and state protections and oversight for domestic work fosters a social norm of noncompliance among employers. An example of

¹⁶⁴ Canevaro, "Migración, crisis y permanencia de la migración peruana," 12.

exploitative labor is an employer's practice of firing care workers who need sick or maternity leaves because they see this as a sign of laziness.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, domestic laborers are vulnerable because they do not have the necessary protections and benefits that higher-status jobs receive.

Several research challenges surfaced during the undertaking of this thesis. Due to domestic labor's vulnerable and exploited nature, several obstacles obscure some research areas, but the overall argument upholds. Research challenges include the sensitive nature of exploited workers, limited literature on my topic, discrepancies in statistics, and personal Spanish translation abilities. I mainly relied on secondary sources because interviewing Latin American domestic workers would be logistically difficult and require careful research ethics to minimize the psychological impact of disclosing sensitive information of domestic labor. Thus, I used secondary sources from professionals who were equipped with the necessary research ethics training and proper research methods for data on care workers.

Domestic laborers may share private information such as exploitative working conditions, domestic violence experiences, and mistreatment from employers that could jeopardize existing domestic work relationships and impinge on their self-dignity. On the other hand, care laborers may filter their stories to protect their safety and identity. I encountered all of these ethical questions when I proposed to conduct similar research on Filipino female migrant domestic laborers in Singapore, so I chose a different topic in the end. I interned in Singapore this past summer and lived at a family friend's house who had a Filipina live-in domestic worker whom I befriended. While she enjoyed working

¹⁶⁵ Recalde, "Renegotiating Family and Work," 11.

for this family, she later expressed other concerns to me in private. I began to realize the unbalanced power dynamics in employer-employee relationships and possible implications if I illuminated her domestic work narrative, even if just for academic research. My research mentor explored domestic labor by interviewing employers of domestic laborers in Singapore, but this perspective of care labor is subject to the biases of employers and may not reflect the employee's experiences. I imagine that the same obstacles I faced are met by many researchers and could deter many researchers from exploring domestic work.

Another cause of my research challenges is the specificity of the topic I chose. Although Latin American care workers is a narrow topic, Paraguayan and Peruvian migrant domestic laborers in Argentina still provide strong case studies to examine globalization's discriminatory effects. Since Paraguayan domestic workers are more established in Argentina, more literature was available about this migrant community than that of Peruvians. Additionally, the gendered work of domestic service and transformations that occurred among Peruvians from the 1990s second wave of migration to Argentina has hardly been explored.¹⁶⁶ However, I was able to find statistics about Peruvian domestic workers through sources that compared Paraguayan domestic workers with other Latin American workers. Nevertheless, the statistics on Paraguayan and Peruvian care laborers are subject to structural flaws.

Mainly, the discrepancies in domestic worker statistics challenge this research. In the Peruvian case study, the reported number of migrants conflicts with actual numbers because of issues with the regularization of migration, and estimations among various

¹⁶⁶ Canevaro, "Migración, crisis y permanencia de la migración peruana," 7.

Peruvian institutions and organizations in Argentina support varying official numbers.¹⁶⁷

Within a larger context, this representational issue applies to general statistics on domestic workers because it is difficult to completely account for informal female domestic laborers. Statistics also vary among migrant groups, specifically in female migrant care workers. Nevertheless, for the statistics based on particular migrant groups working in the domestic service in Argentina, the inclusion of men is not statistically significant because almost no men participate in the domestic labor force, as seen in Table 2 of the Paraguayan case.

Lastly, another research challenge involves my personal Spanish language abilities to comprehend some of the literature. My ability to understand articles in Spanish is limited to my proficiency in Spanish as my 3rd language. I have taken Spanish for 4 years, including a semester abroad in Buenos Aires, Argentina where all classes were conducted in Spanish. All translations are subject to my translation and interpretation of the text. I also consulted online Spanish dictionaries to supplement my reading comprehension. Ultimately, the research challenges I encountered do not conflict with the overall argument that globalization's negative effects outweigh the benefits of transnational domestic labor.

Given the positive and negative forces driving the domestic labor market in Latin America, more research is needed to explore other realms of this under-researched topic. Future research should explore the trajectory of migrant domestic workers in relation to real improvements in living and working conditions. Regional emphasis should include migration patterns in other parts of the world such as Asia, North America, and Europe.

¹⁶⁷ Canevaro, "Migración, crisis y permanencia de la migración peruana," 6.

Race, class, and gender intersectionalities could examine other systemic forms of oppression with domestic labor in different cultural contexts.

More research could also focus on the second wave of Peruvian female migrant domestic workers from the 1990s to the present. Another interesting topic is the impact of new communication technologies as a tool to virtually participate in family life for care laborers. Do these technologies enable care workers to endure exploitative conditions longer, and if so, at what cost? Alternatively, what are the existing labor organizations that support domestic labor and how have their contributions and strategies been effective? Have employers' attitudes and treatment of domestic workers improved recently? Is domestic labor integrated into the greater human rights movement for labor rights? In a greater sense, we must raise our critical consciousness about the sources and conditions from which our goods and services are produced. This is not only to be conscious consumers but also to be able to make educated decisions that promote positive change for future generations to come rather than perpetuate social exploitation unknowingly.

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