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Title:

Facts and fictions about white non-Hispanic US-born domestic workers in the USA – are we missing something? Working paper.

Deliverable D5.1 within the MAJORdom project ¹

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Introduction

Paid domestic and care work as a labor sector employs at least 67 million people globally (ILO, 2018) and more than one million people in the USA (IPUMS 2017, Duffy, in print). Scholarship on this topic is focused on workers with racial minority or migrant backgrounds. Despite ethnicization and racialization of household work, workers who are white working-class women citizens continue to perform domestic and care tasks for private households (ILO, 2017). In the United States, M.Duffy's

¹ This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 799195. The title of the project was 'MAJORdom. Intersections of class and ethnicity in paid domestic and care work', it was a European Commission Global Fellowship within the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action Project ID: 799195, August 2018 – July 2021, at the Department of Sociology and Center for Women and Work, the University of Massachusetts Lowell, supervisor prof. Mignon Duffy, and at the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, supervisor prof. Sabrina Marchetti.



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analysis revealed 49.2% participation of White non-Hispanic women, while in the sub-type of care work characterized by personal contact (nurturance) the ratio was even higher, 57.4% (2005). In a European context, employment of white citizens was strengthened by the recent economic crisis (Di Bartolomeo, Marchetti 2016; EPRS 2015). However, these workers are not studied enough, which creates a gap in what we know about the domestic sector, labor market processes and issues of class, ethnicity and race.

The purpose of this working paper is to: 1. present the idea of the MajorDOM project, whose purpose is to address the above mentioned gap in research on domestic workers who are neither ethnic nor racial minorities' members, 2. to report on the project's activities so far, including working with activist organizations, qualitative interviews and statistical data analysis 3. formulate first thoughts and questions stemming from the research so far, which evolve around the issue of a gap or discontinuity between the racial and/or ethnic composition of household workforce, of the activist organizations, and the public perceptions of the sector.

Defining domestic work

In my earlier research I included both care (childcare, elderly care) and household-related tasks (cleaning, household management or housekeeping) under the common umbrella of paid domestic or household work (Kordasiewicz 2016). Inspired by the conceptualization of carework in a larger sense, as “building and maintaining human infrastructure” within and outside of household, partly delegated within a historical process to institutions within education, social care, healthcare (Duffy 2005, 2011, Duffy, Armenia, Stacey 2015) and also including care and household tasks under one over-arching term of (domestic) carework (Triandafyllidou and Marchetti 2015), I decided to focus on the household-based forms of carework.

In this paper and within the MajorDOM project I am interested in all the elements of carework that remain performed within household and are delegated for pay to paid household/domestic workers, like cleaners, nannies, household managers/housekeepers, personal incl. elderly caregivers, in short, in household-based care work.

Large part of care work, and especially, household based care work is also part of low wage work and gloves-off economy, and is especially prone to marginalization, with widespread informality and isolation of workers who are an invisible part of the *precariat* and secondary labor market (Dresser 2011).

The reason for this focus is the fact that the part of care work which remains within the household and within the personal employer – employee relationship, presents particular challenges to workers' rights issues, to formalization, and at times bears resemblance to former social historic forms of domestic work, namely servanthood. It is an important entry point to study intersections of social inequalities at work (Romero & Perez, Milkman, Duffy) that is at the same time fundamental



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and often – invisible. Paid household-based care work is particular both within larger care work and within law-wage sector. Some of the particularities and specific challenges are the isolation of workers, the intimate worker-employee relationship, and, in the United States – lack of coverage by the labor regulations in most of the states.

Race, ethnicity, citizenship in household work

Household-based carework is principally analyzed in the context of (women's) migration processes and ethnic labor stratification (e.g. Gregson, Lowe 1994; Willis, Yeoh 2000; Zanfrini 2004; Hochschild, Ehrenreich 2004; Romero 1992; Sarti 2004). The focus is on the employment of workers who are members of groups such as migrants, ethnic minorities, people of color, non-citizens, undocumented migrants etc. Two main arguments behind this focus are quantitative and theoretical. The quantitative argument could pertain to the sheer fact of numerical prevalence of these categories within the domestic sector (like for example is the case of Italy²) or to the fact of overrepresentation of migrants and people of color in carework, as for example is the case of the United States (Duffy 2005, especially within non-nurturant care work). The more analytical argument is to specifically look at the situation of most marginal and vulnerable categories, whose positionalities are formed at the intersection of multiple inequalities, pertaining to gender, class, race, lack of citizenship, that among others produce racial hierarchies in nannies' employment (MacDonald 2010) and ethnic stratification in domestic employment (Cox 1999).

As a consequence, in countries with diverse ethnic composition of workers engaged in household work, such as the United States and Italy, we mostly see studies focusing on a selected racial or ethnic group or nationality from migrant origin, such as a Latin American women (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001), African American women (Rollins 1985), or women from Eastern Europe (Miranda 2002). However, in both of the above-mentioned countries, workers who are not minorities' members, continue to play a role within the sector. Although Italian domestic workers are a minority within the household sector, in recent years the number of Italian domestic workers and especially care workers has grown by 13%, while the whole sector has shrunken by 3%³. In the United States, M.Duffy registered 49,2% participation of White non-Hispanic women, while in the sub-type of care work characterized by personal contact (nurturance) the ratio was even higher, 57,4% (2005). So to have a comprehensive picture of the sector, it is necessary to include both migrant, minority as well as "majority" citizen workers. There are some studies or analysis which point out to it, like Gregson and Lowe (1994), Kofman and Raghuram (2015), or my work on Polish and Ukrainian workers in

² In Italy, around 78% of 900 000 registered domestic workers are migrants, Italian Social Security Services Institute, <https://www.inps.it/webidentity/banchedatistatistiche/menu/domestici/>.

³ Italian Social Security Services Institute data available here: <https://www.inps.it/webidentity/banchedatistatistiche/menu/domestici/>.



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Poland (Kordasiewicz 2016), still, this category of workers requires more attention, both empirically and analytically.

The MajorDOM project

“The MAJORdom. Intersections of class and ethnicity in paid domestic and care work: theoretical development and policy recommendations based on the study of 'majority workers' in Italy and in the USA” is a study of white non-migrant women in the USA (~half of household workers) and in Italy (at least 10%) working in the household sector. Starting point was my research on Polish and Ukrainian domestic workers in Poland, where only around 10% of domestic workers are migrants.

The project is funded by a Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellowship from the European Commission, it is carried out between 1st of August 2018 and 31st of July 2021. During first two years of the project I am based in the USA at the Department of Sociology and affiliated at the Center for Women and Work, University of Massachusetts Lowell, with prof. Mignon Duffy as host professor. After that one or two years will be carried out in Italy at the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, supervised by prof. Sabrina Marchetti.

This project's contribution is a comparative perspective of “majority” workers in household based carework and through this, a disentanglement of migration/minority/class nexus, following the appeal not to lose the class dimensions from sight when studying domestic work (Milkman, Reese, Roth 1998). This challenges the common implicit assumption, namely, that ‘majority’ workforce in this sector will be replaced by migrants, which is neither universal nor irreversible (Di Bartolomeo and Marchetti 2016). When studies also include white working-class citizen workers, we may notice that there are underlying characteristics, inherent to the domestic employment as such (Kordasiewicz 2016). Evidence from Poland suggests that Polish women in household work, in comparison to Ukrainian migrants, might in fact be less covered by labor contracts due to the lack of non-negotiable incentives usually present in the case of migrants, who have to cope with inter-dependence between the visa or residence permit and a labor contract (Kindler, Kordasiewicz, Szulecka 2016).

The analytical idea behind the focus on the representatives of “majority” is to “strip” the category of household worker from dimensions commonly associated with marginalization, as if to investigate the class essence of the domestic employment, and see how race, ethnic background and class and gender all play in domestic work but from the vantage point of white non-migrant workers. How does the sector operate if we remove some of the social marginalization markers? Categories such as white privilege, status incongruence, tension between care and household tasks and ethnic and racial stratification will be employed and scrutinized. I hope to generate new insights about the intersection of class, gender, citizenship and race.

The overarching purpose of the study is to understand both the micro level of everyday working conditions, experience and characteristics of workers and the macro level, to potentially uncover underlying patterns and mechanisms channeling people into domestic work and responsible



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for privilege and marginality both for the migrants, racial minorities and for white non-Hispanic US-born workers. The recommendation goal of the project is to lay some ground for possibly better policies to address some more general social problems and to address the sector as a whole. The policy component of the project leads me to study the initiatives and activism in the household sector – based on the exploration so far, dominated by migrant of color leaders, which currently makes the “everyday working conditions” and the policy component separated from each other.

My positionality as a researcher requires a comment. I am a researcher from out of US, I may be considered a representative of country which could be associated with migrant workers (Poland), also specifically – migrant domestic workers (e.g. in Chicago, in New York City), at the same time – employed by an Italian University, but explicitly focusing on white American workers instead. I sometimes find myself managing these aspects by explaining that I came here to learn and I do not have answers or know better how to study the Americans or American society, but maybe I can offer a fresh perspective of an outsider. In interviews especially with workers I humbly ask to take into account that I am not a native speaker and may want them to explain something I do not fully understand. This happens very rarely, and overall, the recruitment and interviewing runs smoothly and I find it easier to make first contact (mostly through friend of a friend approach) and set up a meeting (most often in a café) than in Poland, where I had carried out most of my research so far.

I also explain to the interviewees and colleagues that I respect and am not trying to undermine the existing activism and critical scholarship – achievements of both of these strands are impressive. I always say that I am fascinated by the activism because in Poland there are no workers’ initiatives like that, but I hope to inspire some activity in the sector (I have some actions planned in Poland within the project). It is met with encouragement and enthusiasm. I also mention Italian domestic workers’ unions as another fascinating instance of activism. By a specific focus of my research I am also not trying to say that the whites are more important to study than other social categories, or that there is some sort of white oppression happening, which could lead to conclusions loaded politically in an undesired way – for example feeding white supremacy – I just point out to the gap that needs to be addressed. Also, my focus on white non-Hispanic US-born people versus all others does not mean that I am unaware that people of color and migrants are sometimes distinct, sometimes convergent but always internally diverse categories.

Another important aspect of my research is that I was cleared by the Institutional Review Board at UMass Lowell to conduct interviews but no observations. So when I have a chance to participate or watch the events organized by the activist groups I am careful to assume the role of an overt bystander, who does not take notes on everything that is happening and on individual people in particular, but rather considers these events as a learning and networking opportunity, identifying experts for interviews, and having a general idea about the event (for example, the workers’ rights training organized by Massachusetts Coalition of Domestic Workers was a great way for me to learn



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more about the state regulations but also, I noticed the training was conducted in Spanish and Portuguese – not English, which is a telling fact about the target group). Alternatively, I take up a role of a volunteer – taking pictures and helping with food, cleaning and anything necessary, like was the case at the International Nanny Training Day organized by Matahari Women Workers' Centre.

First responses of ordinary white people (non-academics) to the specific racial and (non-)ethnic focus of my study made me wonder if white non-Hispanic US-born workers even exist in Massachusetts. People were often surprised by this focus and either claimed I would not find participants in my study or said it is very atypical. One person even said “this is a very non-Caucasian job” (sic!). Like elsewhere (even in Poland, where majority of domestic workers are Polish), people seem to ‘mentally outsource’ work they consider demeaning to out-groups, in this case migrants and/or people of color. Also, the Google search for “domestic workers in the US” yielded results mostly tied to people of color and migrants, even at the very basic visual level (an illustration below):



Latino USA
latinousa.org



Domestic Workers: Size, contributions ...
wiego.org



Domestic Workers: Size, contributions ...
wiego.org



State to Pass a Domestic W...
idwfed.org

It seems that the public discourse and public image of the domestic workers in the US is made around migrants, and especially, migrants of color. These workers seem also very prominent in workers' activism (in Massachusetts and Connecticut, research in progress), which I already knew even before the commencement of my study.

Three basic methods components in my study are qualitative interviews with workers, employers and experts, analysis of available policies of the sector, and statistical data analysis. Below is the brief account of the project activities so far, within two principal components of the project: 1. Activism and policy initiatives, and 2. Everyday life and work of esp. white non-Hispanic workers, based on qualitative interviews and statistical data analysis (next part of the report).

Activism and policy initiatives



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When it comes to activism and policy initiatives, I have interviewed so far 2 activists and 1 nanny placement agency representative, that were involved in the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights campaign. I attended several meetings and events, and carried out a low-key webpage and social media screening and documents analysis. A useful review of activism within domestic sector in Massachusetts is found in the report by Tracy, Sieber, Moir, 2014, "INVISIBLE NO MORE: Domestic workers organizing in Massachusetts and beyond".

Massachusetts Coalition of Domestic Workers, <http://www.massdomesticworkers.org/about>, <https://www.facebook.com/massdomesticworkers/>, established in 2010, in 2014 Massachusetts DW bill of rights in Massachusetts passed the **Domestic Workers Bill of Rights** <http://www.massdomesticworkers.org/domestic-workers-law>

The Bill guarantees domestic workers the same level of worker's protection and rights like all other workers, provided they work for at least 16h weekly for one employer. The success of the DW bill of rights in Massachusetts and in several other states is a testimony to the peculiarity of the US context – only recently domestic workers are winning equal rights like all other workers, so these campaigns pertain to the very basic rights, but at the same time the bottom-up activism and the campaigns seem to be more successful in re-defining domestic employment in terms of workers' rights than some of the more sophisticated European policies.

Funding organizations of the Coalition are:

Matahari, Dominican Development Centre, Brazillian Women's Group + a lot of partner organizations.

Currently the coalition's steering committee consists of:

Brazillian Women's Group, Brazillian Workers' Centre, Dominican Development Center, Women Institute for Leadership Development and Mass COSH (Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health).

- **Dominican Development Center** (I have one contact so far), mainly concerned with caregivers
- **Brazillian Women's Group** (I am in touch with them, one interview), they especially reach out to Brazillian cleaners. I also took part in a radio show to talk about my research https://m.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=655443544897754&id=576943716081071
[b](#)

The Coalition has organized recently:

- Free "Roma" movie (directed by A. Cuarón) screening for domestic workers, on the 20.02.2019 <https://www.facebook.com/events/330699407544869/>,
- and a Workers' training by the Coalition 30.03.2019. Facebook album with pictures from the training: <https://tinyurl.com/yxor76d4>



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MCDW- Workers Training

Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights



Saturday, March 30st, 2019

Massachusetts Coalition of Domestic Workers
89 South Street- Downtown

Matahari (I am in touch with several activists and I have participated in their events) is a very active and diverse in terms of ethnic background group (women from Latin America, Caribbean, Asia, Africa), now they specialize in mobilizing migrant nannies and general issues of migrants' rights. Recently Matahari has left the Coalition (research in progress). The events I attended:

- Matahari general assembly, 11.11.2018 (worth to point out is the fact that there was a translation service provided in 7 languages)
- International Nanny Training Day, 13.04.2019 (translation services in 5 languages):



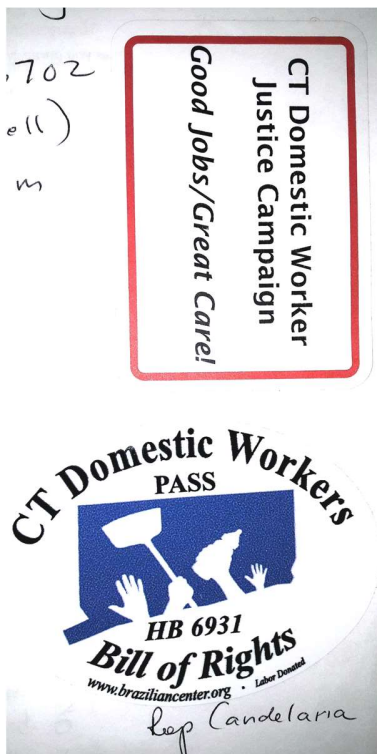
photo Anna Rosińska



I am also in touch with New England Jewish Labor Committee (reach out to employers) and Attorney General's office.

Outside of the state of Massachusetts:

- Currently there is an issue of the Connecticut Bill on domestic work – public hearing, big involvement of Massachusetts organizations – stickers and one of the testimonies:



Cheryl Gidarie Testimony In Support of House Bill 6931
Labor and Public Employee Committee
Date of Hearing

My name is Cheryl Gidarie. I have been a nanny for 22 years. I live and work in Greenwich currently. I am speaking today in support of House Bill 6931, An Act Concerning Domestic Workers.

Thank you to committee members for providing this public hearing where I have the opportunity to tell my story.

Twelve years ago, on April 10, 2006, I had been working for 11 months for a family with 2 young children; one child was 15 months old, the other was 3 months old. At the time, I had 3 children of my own. When the mother came home from work that day, she asked me to stay until 8 o'clock when her husband would be home because she could not take care of 2 small children by herself. I agreed and stayed until 8 pm that evening. On the way home I called my children to tell them I would be home soon. I told my oldest son to go to the corner store to buy dog food.

I got home from work and went about taking care of things in the house. I heard a knock at the door. It was a policeman who asked me if I had a son named Hezron. I told him that I did. The policeman asked me to sit down. He showed me a picture of my son lying on the ground and asked me if that was my son. I told him that it was my son. He told me that my son was deceased, that he had been murdered.

I called my employers, told them what had happened. The wife was very kind. She said she understood that it would be a difficult time, that I should take as much time as I needed before coming back to work to take care of her children. Four days later, on April 14, 2019, we buried my son. She attended my son's funeral.

Three days later, my employer (the wife) called and told me that they wouldn't need me anymore. I was left with 2 grieving children, my own grief, a mortgage to pay, and no job. It was a very tough period in my life. I looked for work, but did not find another job for months. I could not pay our mortgage in May, June, July, and August of that year. The bank foreclosed on me in October. We lost the house and everything. I was out of work and homeless with 2 children.

I eventually got help from Greenwich social services, found another nanny job, and was able to move into public housing in Greenwich. By the grace of God, my family and I were able to move on. However, I am not the only domestic worker that had no rights at a very difficult time in my life. We have been left out of coverage by the very basic labor laws that have protected

- The initiative of the Federal Domestic Workers Bill of Rights <https://www.domesticworkers.org/national-bill-rights-domestic-workers>
- There is also an interesting initiative – online service for paying for and claiming social benefits of workers, My Alia, elaborated by National Domestic Workers Alliance, promoted in Massachusetts e.g. by Matahari <https://www.ndwalabs.org/alia>

Work is in progress and I have more interviews scheduled for May, other contacts I will pursue after summer holidays.

Everyday life and work of esp. white non-Hispanic workers

Statistical data analysis: When it comes to the statistical data analysis, the aim was to explore data in



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decennial American censuses relating to the overlooked group – who are they, what are their basic characteristics? To what extent and in what aspects they are privileged and unprivileged (see next section in the report).

Qualitative interviews (core part of my study): I have carried out 4 interviews with workers so far, 3 nannies and 1 cleaner, and 1 employer. Participants in my study were:

- a. 40 y.o. employer, woman, Massachusetts, married, two children, both parents work outside of household. She has employed 4 nannies so far, all of them in their twenties, with college degree and white non-Hispanic US-born women. Before talking to me she was unaware of a racial and class pattern in the nanny employment. Employs nannies with a contract, which is in line with Massachusetts DW bill of rights and is handled by her family accountant.
- b. 26 y.o. nanny, woman, Massachusetts, college degree, works with a contract and through a placement agency, up to 30h a week (has a husband who is a professional and a principal breadwinner). Is involved in very active online forums and support groups mobilizing principally white US-born nannies – she assumes migrant nannies prefer to chat in their own languages.
- c. 48 y.o. nanny, woman, Massachusetts, has worked as a nanny for 12 years, 4 families, education in accounting, no contract, full time up to 55h a week, single. She is not aware of the DW bill of rights, but after short explanation at the end of the interview, considers it a good idea.
- d. 24 y.o. nanny, woman, in Connecticut, works 3 days a week as a full time nanny, and two days as pharmacy technician. No college degree, no contract (Connecticut), in a relationship with principal breadwinner. Treats nanny job as a life-stage occupation, has worked for 4 years for one family, now the younger kid goes to school and she will no longer be needed. She wants to continue education in the medical field.
- e. 62 y.o. cleaner, woman, Massachusetts, reportedly self-employed, no college degree, started cleaning 30 years ago, now cleans 5 houses per week. Earlier worked as a military educated medical technician, in a relationship, but living with her 30 y.o. son only. Claims that the economic crisis 2008 diminished the demand for cleaning and this pushed some of the white cleaners from the market, to other jobs, because they could no longer work for the satisfactory rates, leaving more space to supposedly cheaper migrant workers.
- f. 60 y.o. nanny, woman, Massachusetts, married, no children, husband is a retired deacon. 1981, aged 21, started to work as a *governess* (carework + education). Interrupted for several years to be a special education teacher (masters in special ed). Now works as a nanny + at school (contractor in special ed) + as an elderly careworker



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for an agency (!) + voluntary work at the church. Her current posting is with a family of doctors who adopted 3 children from Eastern Europe. Relationships – employee-like and family member.

So far, these two areas, of activism and everyday life of white non-Hispanic US-born household workers are very disconnected and divergent parts of the project. White non-Hispanic US-born workers are not involved in the activities of the Coalition; there are separate organizations of white nannies, and separate support groups like online forums for white nannies. One of the organizers said one of the organization mobilizing white nannies was reluctant to join the Coalition because it was considered “too political” – too involved in migration issues, currently a very urgent and dividing topic in the US.

White non-Hispanic US-born domestic workers – statistical data analysis⁴

The purpose of the statistical data analysis was to lay groundwork for further explorations, because – as limited as they are – at least we can have a general idea about the prominence of different ethnic and racial groups in domestic work, and about characteristics of these groups in comparison to one another. I was interested in looking at raw numbers, proportions between different categories within particular jobs in household work, and the relative characteristics of white non-Hispanic US-born household workers. The data I used were drawn from the database of U.S. census data for social, economic, and health research for 2017, the most recent available dataset (IPUMS 2017).

There are limitations of the statistical survey data in general – the most marginalized (and privileged) members of society are most often left out, hence the importance of bottom up studies that are more sensitive to undocumented and marginalized voices in domestic work (see NDWA 2012)⁵. The NDWA (2012) report included less white citizens than the general data, because of the specific profile of 14 cities included in the study and specifically reaching out to informal workers and undocumented migrants. We may suspect that the data analyzed in this report overlook the most marginalized workers, probably more so in case of migrants, especially undocumented, than citizens.

⁴ Based on a paper presented at Facts and Fictions: Narratives of Inequality and Difference, 2019 Annual Meeting, EASTERN SOCIOLOGICAL SOCIETY, Boston, March 14-17, 2019.

⁵ Some of the reservations are brought up by the NDWA (2012) report House economics, based on a bottom up, nation wide survey: “Two studies address the inadequacies of data collection in populations with large numbers of undocumented immigrants. Mary Romero, “Ethnographic Evaluation of Behavioral Causes of Census Undercount of Undocumented Immigrants and Salvadorans in the Mission District of San Francisco, California,” *Ethnographic Evaluation of the 1990 Decennial Census Report*, #18 (1992), www.census.gov/srd/papers/pdf/ev92-18.pdf, accessed 04/24/12; Nestor P. Rodriguez and Jacqueline S. Hagan, “Investigating Census Coverage and Content Among the Undocumented: Ethnographic Study of Latino Tenants in Houston, Texas,” *Ethnographic Evaluation of the 1990 Decennial Census Report*, #3 (1991), www.census.gov/srd/papers/pdf/ev91-3.pdf, accessed 04/24/12 ”



So the overall picture should be supplemented by studies like NDWA report, however the IPUMS data give insights into the general domestic workers' population, which includes a considerable number of white non-Hispanic US-born workers.

Following discussions and prior analysis by Mignon Duffy (2005, in print), I included following occupational categories within three main occupations:

- CLEANING: Maids and housekeeping cleaners (4230),
- CHILD CARE: childcare workers (4600),
- PERSONAL CARE: personal care aides (4610), personal care and service workers all others (4650), home health aides (3600).

Selecting the above listed occupations means we have a general variable that designates much of what is understood as care work in large, within and beyond private households (Duffy 2011). To identify those people who performed care work within household, I combined the above selection with industry code 'private household' (9290).

To obtain a variable that would identify white non-Hispanic US-born workers among other groups, I combined the variables of race, Hispanic background and place of birth that is identical with citizenship in case of US-born people. This way a variable was created that distinguished:

- **White non-Hispanic US-born**
- White non-Hispanic non-US-born (white non-Hispanic migrants)
- Black non-Hispanic (mostly US-born African Americans)
- Other non-Hispanic
- Hispanic (mostly non-US born)

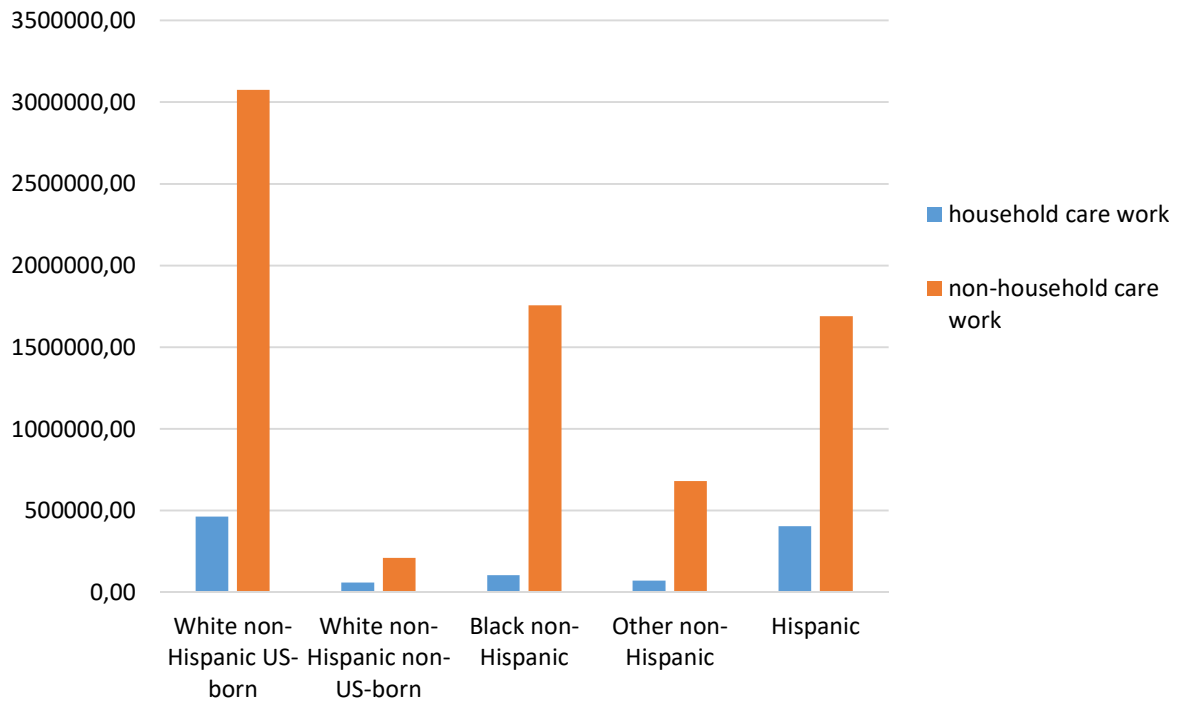
Categories other than white include both US-born and non-US born people for the sake of simplicity. Most people who are Black non-Hispanic are US-born (African Americans), and most Hispanic people are non-US-born (migrants). All data was weighted using the personal weight variable, so the figures show extrapolated results at the level of the whole US population.

Numbers: How many white non-Hispanic US-born (household) care workers are there?

If we look at the numbers both within and outside-of-household cleaning, childcare and personal care, we may notice that in net values in care work there are more white non-Hispanic US-born Americans than any other category, both in household and out-of-household care work. White non-Hispanic US-born workers are the largest group both in non-household carework (3 075 975.00 out of 7 413 348.00) and in household-based carework (462 838 out of 1 104 194.00). In both cases they constitute around 41% of the workforce. Within non-household carework, both Hispanic and Black non-Hispanic workers feature prominently, within household carework the role of Hispanic workers is substantial, and other categories are not very visible.



Different racial and ethnic categories in household and non-household carework, 2017

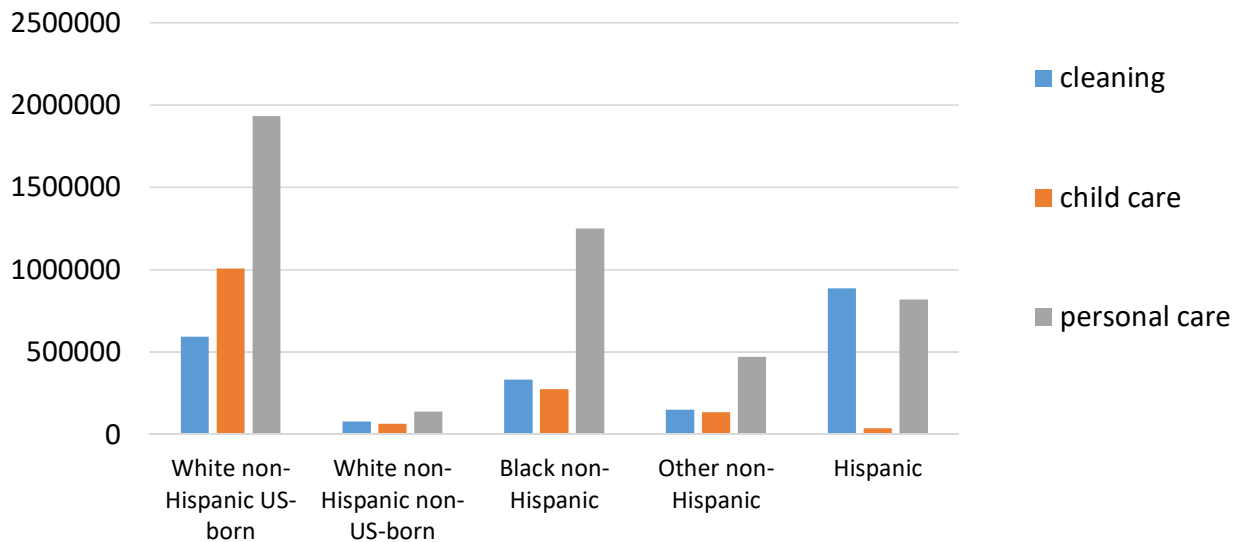


What are the proportions between different categories?

Going into household-based carework (henceforth I will analyze only data pertaining to domestic work), white non-Hispanic US-born Americans are the most numerous category in child and personal household-based care work, and second largest in cleaning (most numerous are Hispanic workers).

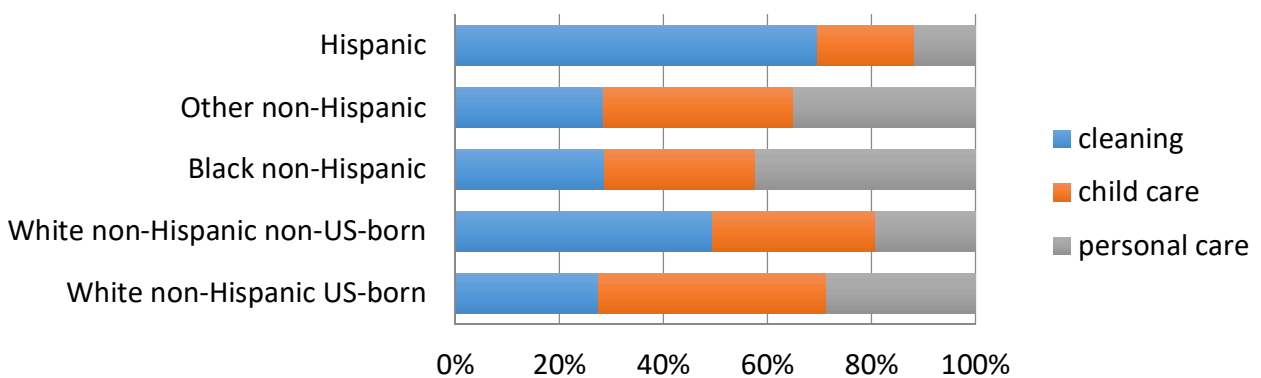


Workers in household carework according to occupations and racial and ethnic background, 2017



Putting it another way, among white non-Hispanic US-born domestic workers the most popular occupation is child care, followed by personal care and cleaning. Among all other categories it is cleaning (by far), childcare, personal care.

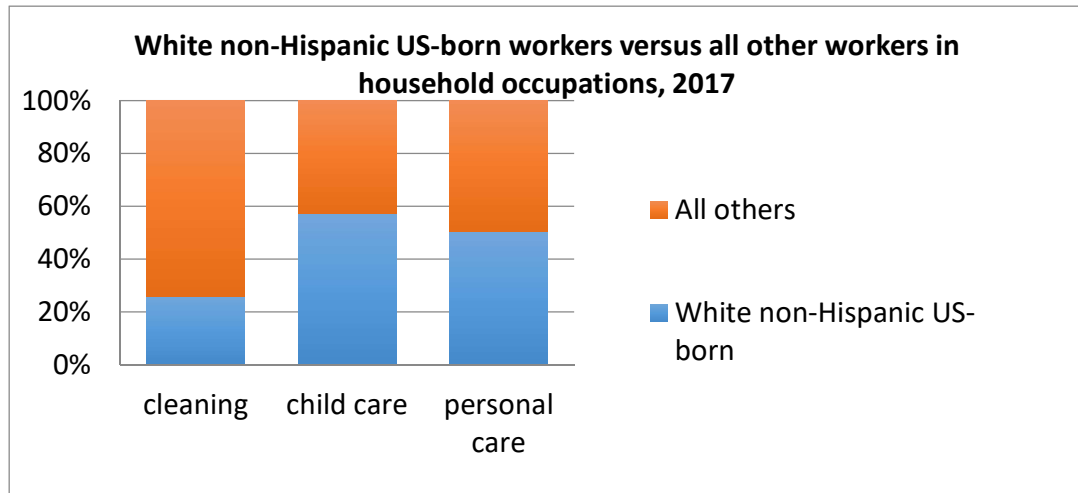
Proportion of household occupations among different categories, 2017



If we group all other ethnic and racial categories together and contrast them with white non-Hispanic US-born workers, it is telling that 57% of nannies are white non-Hispanic US-born, 50% personal care



workers and only 25% of cleaners (57% of cleaners are Hispanic)⁶.

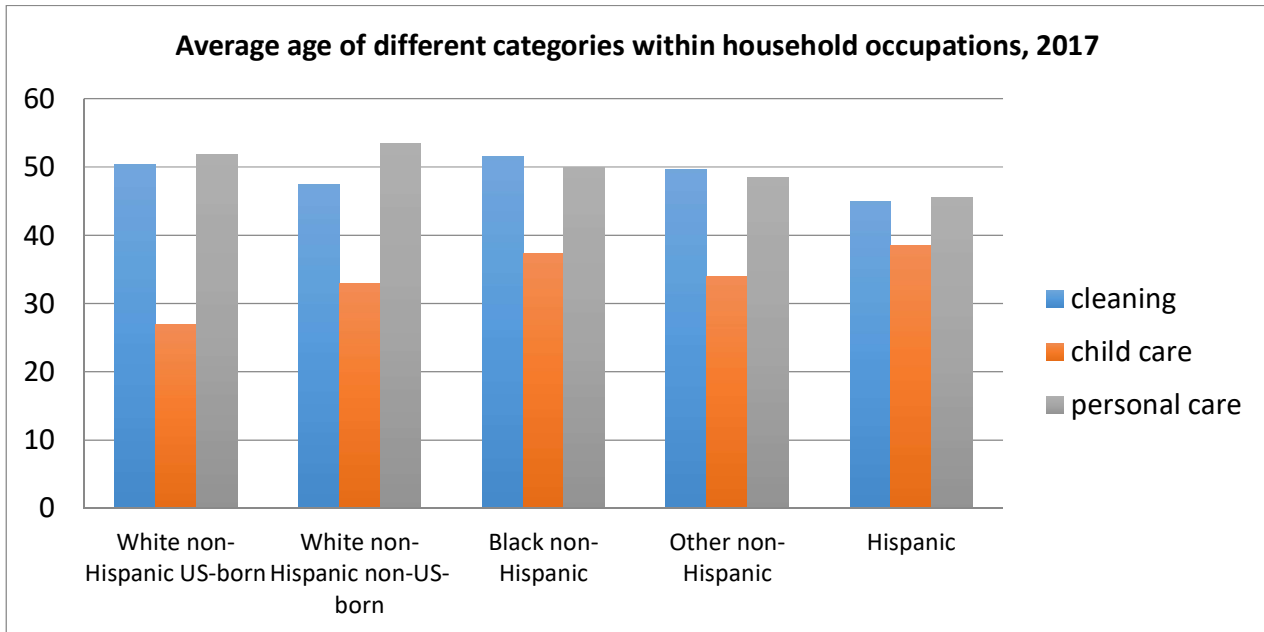


This occupational distribution among categories could point out to inequalities and privileges in the sector, if for example occupational categories were closely tied to different levels of earnings, e.g. if childcare was a better paid work in general we might assume this works to the advantage of white non-Hispanic US-born workers. The picture however is more complex (see following sections).

What are the basic characteristics of white non-Hispanic US-born domestic workers vis-à-vis other categories?

White non-Hispanic US-born workers in household care work are younger on average (41 years) than other categories (44 years). White non-Hispanic US-born child care workers are the youngest (in this case, nannying might be considered a stepping stone and/or a life-stage occupation), but white cleaners and personal care workers are among the oldest. Only 25% of white non-Hispanic US-born child care workers are older than 29 y.o. Half of the white non-Hispanic US-born cleaners are older than 52 y.o. and half of personal care givers are older than 55 y.o. More consistency here is shown within the occupational categories than ethnic and racial groupings.

⁶ In comparison with 2007, in general, there are less cleaning workers of both categories, more personal care workers of both categories as well as less white and more all other workers in child care.



Gender, education, hours of work

When it comes to some other social and economic characteristics, white non-Hispanic US-born household workers have a similar gender distribution within occupational categories:

- 95% female in cleaning (all categories 94%),
- 97% in childcare (all categories 97%) and
- 83% in personal care (all categories 85%).

They have a slightly higher educational attainment (grade 12 – grade 11 in all other categories).

White non-Hispanic US-born people work less hours per typical week than all other categories (18h – 25h a week in cleaning, 22h – 27h in child care, 25h – 27h in personal care).

Health insurance coverage

Health insurance coverage is an important approximation of the degree of security on the labor market. Lack of any insurance coverage is a symptom of severe marginalization. Domestic work is one of the sectors where this is a widespread phenomenon. For example, in cleaning, as many as 37% of all workers have no health insurance: 22% of white non-Hispanic US-born, 20% of black and other non-Hispanic, 38% of white non-US-born and as many as 46% of Hispanic workers (!).

In general, the least covered ethnic and racial category in all occupations are Hispanic workers but there are some nuances: in cleaning, white non-Hispanic US-born workers are slightly less covered than black and other non-Hispanic workers, yet more covered than white migrant workers. In



personal care, white non-Hispanic US-born workers are less covered (16% do not have any insurance) than white non-US-born (11%) and slightly more than black and other non-Hispanic (18 and 17%) but much more than Hispanic workers (23% with no coverage).

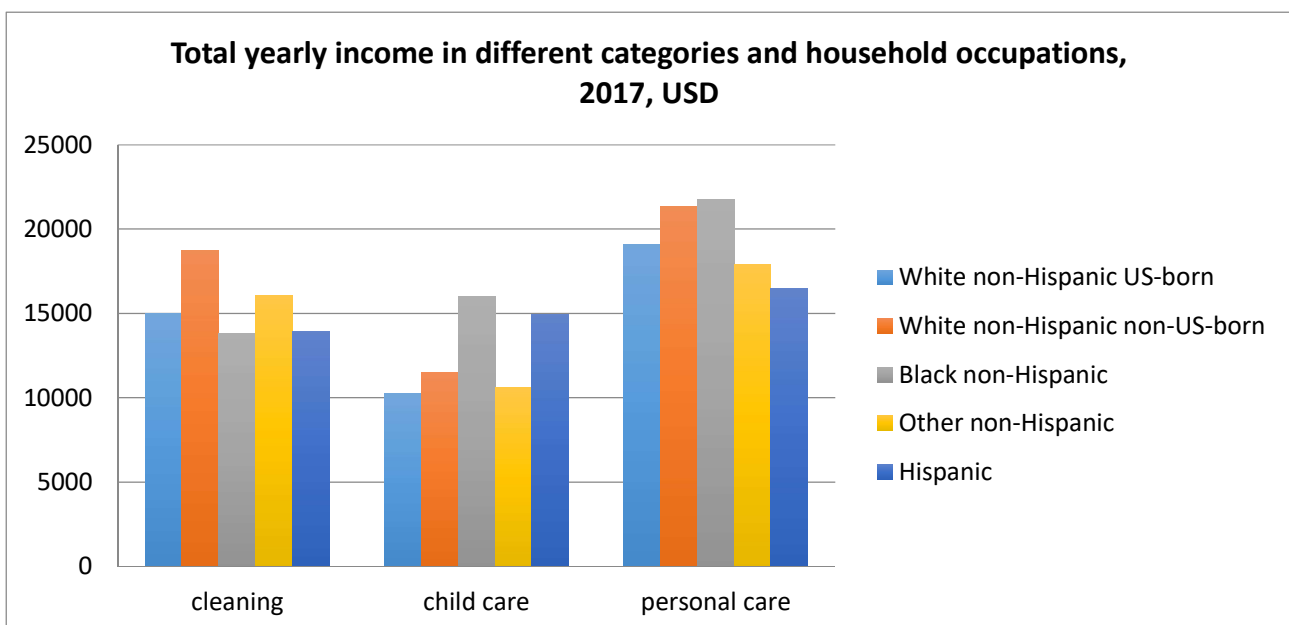
This particular pattern of insurance coverage of migrant workers, especially in personal care might be connected to visa requirements (some types of visa have a compulsory insurance requirement) and/or specific channels of recruitment for personal care.

Income and hour rates

White non-Hispanic US-born Americans earn more on average than all other categories in terms of total yearly income. Hispanic workers earn the least on average. In childcare there is the greatest convergence in wages; the biggest differences are in cleaning. Personal care and cleaning are the occupations where there are also biggest polarities within categories, esp. among the white non-Hispanic US-born workers.

Side note: it is not clear what is the role of gender in earnings and income levels, because the data for men are scarce, but according to raw data (not weighted), differences between men and women are always bigger than between any of the ethnic and racial category, to the men's advantage.

In the NDWA (2012) survey found out that in most cases white citizen workers earned more than any other group. The results of this analysis present a more complex picture, however these data may not include some most marginalized workers.

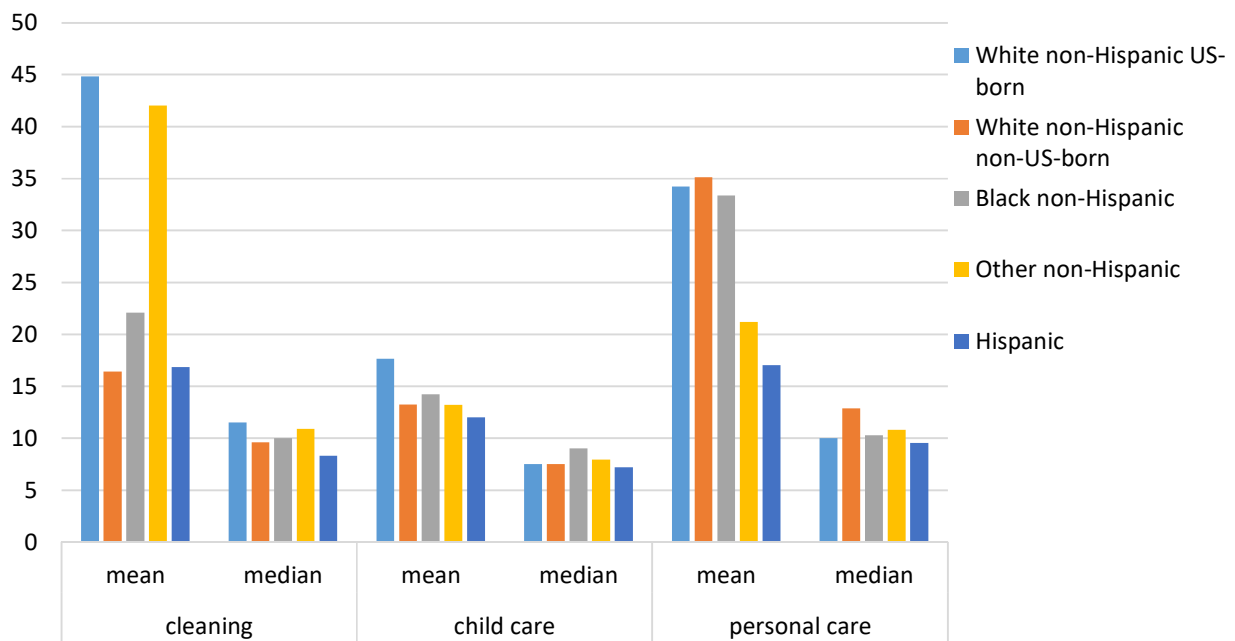




The mean hour rates⁷ are also highest for white non-Hispanic US-born workers within every category, most prominently within cleaning, less so in childcare and in personal care in which case the average hour rates are similar for this group and for white migrants as well as African Americans.

However, if we look at the median values this seeming hour rate privilege dissolves: half of the people of all categories within all occupations earn very little by the hour and it is consistent throughout the whole sector.

Mean and median hour rate in different categories and household occupations, USD, 2007



For further exploration: the regional dimension of white non-Hispanic US-born workers – some parts of the country are generally less diverse racially and in terms of migrants' presence (Midwest? States like Maine or New Hampshire) so if there is domestic employment, it necessarily involves mainly workers available locally.

Conclusions – multidimensional gap between the activism and everyday domestic work

White non-Hispanic US-born workers continue to be a substantial category in household work. It is

⁷ The variable `hourrate=inctot/wkswork1/uhrswork`.



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difficult to claim that they are a coherent group – there are internal diversities and polarities. White non-Hispanic US-born domestic workers seem to be privileged in some respects or occupations, underprivileged in others. The privilege is rather modest and within an overall low wage pattern of the sector. I argue there may be more similarities within household occupations (in respect to earnings or even demographics, e.g. age) than within racial and ethnic categories. This is another argument to study the class dimension of household work as probably there may be more similarities among at least some of the “majority” and “minority” workers than we would suspect.

However, the overall political climate in the US makes the rights of migrants the frontline and the most urgent issue for many organizations, hence some of the movements explicitly focus more and more on the migrants’ rights and less on workers’ rights, which makes such a potential class-based alliance more difficult. One of the factors that could weigh on this is the potential reluctance of the domestic workers’ movement to be ‘hijacked’ by white middle class feminism, a tension that played out in the organization of the recent Women’s march in Boston in 2019.

The polarization among white non-Hispanic US-born workers shows even in initial several qualitative interviews: some of the nannies I talked to are young, college educated, work with a contract or consider their nannying as a side activity, because they rely on other sources of income and draw economic stability from their spouses / partners, and one person considered being a nanny a temporary job. At the same time, some of the workers are middle-aged, have worked in the sector for many years, rely on this income exclusively, work without a contract and any benefits, and are not aware of their rights as workers.

Especially the latter could benefit from a wider, more inclusive reach out of the organizations, like Massachusetts Coalition of Domestic Workers, which, even if established by migrant organizations, is supposed to serve all the domestic workers in the state. However, the organizations either focus on migrants in general, or specific ethnic and occupational jobs, especially in the light of current political climate, and consider a priori white workers as privileged, well off and not in need of their outreach because they at least have some basic rights as citizens. It may be a strategic decision for the organization to focus on the harshest abuses (like for example the testimony of Cheryl Gidarie in Connecticut). Also, given the current political climate it may be crucial for them to organize around promoting a positive migrant identity.

There may be also factors inhibiting a joint agenda on the part of white non-Hispanic US-born workers: maybe they, or some of them, do not identify as household workers? And they do not see there is a common struggle with people of different backgrounds? Or maybe they already feel comfortable with their modest privileges? Also (work in progress) there is a hint of reluctance from the part of at least one organization focusing on white nannies to be involved in the Coalition because the Coalition, with the migrants’ rights agenda is considered too political.

There is at least a partial gap between public image, scholarship and activism, on the one hand, and the reality of household workers, on the other. Minority (Nadassen 2015) and migrant activists



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have promoted regulations of the sector and achieved amazing results, however questions remain:

- Is addressing only the harshest abuses in paid household work, based on migrant and minority cases, enough to improve working conditions of the sector for good, in the long run and for everyone?
- Taking into account that white non-Hispanic US-born workers benefit from this activism, is it a fair social division of the struggle for household workers rights?
- If the public face of the sector was more diverse and included also a white variant – could it be also beneficial for the whole sector, not to be associated only with migrants of color, in the light of a widespread public assumption that migrants are able to cope with harsher working conditions and worse pay, and racism?

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