

BRINGING RIGHTS TO THE TABLE: DOMESTIC WORKERS'
EXPERIENCES DEFENDING LABOUR RIGHTS IN BRAZIL

by

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Bringing Rights to the Table: Domestic Workers' Experiences Defending Labour Rights in Brazil

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Abstract

Are changes to labour law legislation still relevant today when neoliberalism is curtailing industrial citizenship? And, where progressive changes are introduced, what evidence exists, if any, of changing relations between marginalized women workers (e.g. “*domésticas*”) and their employers? In 2013, the Brazilian government passed a Constitutional Amendment Bill n°72/2013 (also referred to as *PEC Das Domésticas*), a set of labour laws harmonizing domestic workers’ rights to that of workers in other occupations. This study examines the new legislation of the *PEC* and ascertains its significance to improve the terms and conditions shaping the everyday experiences of *domésticas*. Using qualitative methodologies grounded in feminist theories of intersectionality and affect, I critically analyze the holistic experiences of women domestic workers, understood as overlapping and intertwined realities of class, gender, and racial identifications. By weaving domestic workers’ narratives into an intersectional analysis of domestic work as affective labour, I expose the multiple forms of historically derived oppressions, as well as strategies of resistance arising to contest the exploitation of their labour. This research then argues that labour rights alone are insufficient to address the vulnerabilities and challenges experience by women domestic workers. Domestic workers’ experiences suggest the struggle for better working conditions and social recognition is implicated in contemporary frictions between cultural notions of servitude and the exercise of citizenship by the working classes. While Brazil’s recent policy reform reveals persistent bourgeoisie discourses resisting treating domestic work as work, it also serves to bring domestic work to greater visibility and a renewed political consciousness about identity and workplace issues. The present study contributes to the ongoing scholarly debates on how structural inequalities based on gender and race influence labour market segregation and reinforce the undervaluation of care and domestic work.

Preface

This research project and thesis is the product of original, unpublished, and independent work by the author, Marina Prado Nogueira. The field research and all qualitative data that informs my empirical discussion was covered by the University of British Columbia – Okanagan Behavioural Research Ethics Boards certificate H15-00144.

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List of Abbreviations

CUNHÃ	Cunhã Coletivo Feminista
DIEESE	Departamento Intersindical de Estatística e Estudos Socioeconômicos
FENATRAD	Federação Nacional das Trabalhadoras Domésticas
FGTS	Fundo de Garantia por Tempo de Serviço
IBGE	Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística
INSS	Instituto Nacional do Seguro Social
ILO	International Labor Organization
IPEA	Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada
PEC	Proposta de Emenda à Constituição
PNAD	Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios
PT	Partido dos Trabalhadores
SPM	Secretaria de Políticas Públicas Para Mulheres

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to:

- ❖ The women who participated in this research, who trusted my good intentions, and who carved the time in their already full lives to sit with me and talk;
- ❖ My dad, Luciano, who long ago started to encourage me to think critically, and for the generous and steady support that gave me the opportunity to embark on this journey;
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To the yearning of justice, the encounters, and crossroads that pave the way of our belonging.

For the caring of life and one another.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Consider the following cartoon released on a social media platform earlier this year: a white woman with long and wavy hair marches carrying a protest sign that reads “Justice for Brazil.” She is carrying a handbag, wearing a green outfit, a large pair of sunglasses, and a flashy pair of earrings. A few steps behind her is a black woman of smaller stature pushing a baby stroller. Her dark hair is tied back and her body is bare of adornments. She is wearing a white skirt, a white pair of shoes, and a yellow t-shirt with the price tag attached. On any given workday her t-shirt would have matched the white clothes and shoes, thus composing the all-white maid’s uniform. The tag implies a new purchase, perhaps a last minute buy, a gift from her employer, the upper class woman marching ahead. This cartoon raises the irony of white middle class privilege and its notion that justice is exclusive. The image went viral in March 2016, around the one-year mark of a series of public demonstrations¹ initiated in 2015 and culminating in the impeachment of former president Dilma Rousseff² (effective as of August 31, 2016). A week after this image was released on Facebook; a photograph taken in Rio de Janeiro depicted a remarkably close rendering.

On March 13, 2016 Brazilians across the nation took to the streets³ in a series of protests suggesting a politically engaged population who is nevertheless marked by a socio-economic divide. Protestors wearing green, yellow, and blue stood against the Workers Party and in favour of impeaching President Rousseff (Watts 2016). Protestors wearing red and white, the emblematic colours of the Workers Party, marched against what they considered an undemocratic and opportunist political move against the President, a *coup d’état* orchestrated by Brazil’s political elite (Barcia 2016; Ferraz 2016). *The Economist* labeled this series of manifestations as ‘the cashmere revolution’ to highlight its white and bourgeois constituency taking to the streets to push for impeachment. On that same day a *carioca*⁴ couple was photographed walking from their

¹ See the MA thesis ‘Contentious politics in Brazil: The evolution of the public demonstrations from June 2013 to August 2015’ (Pacca 2016) for an analysis of the mass protests and the potential ways in which they might influence the development of Brazil’s civil society.

² See the article ‘Crises and Integrity in Brazil’ (Melo 2016) for an analysis of former president Dilma Rousseff’s impeachment proceedings.

³ For an overview of this event see article on ‘The Carnival is Over: Brazil sees the biggest protest since the end of its military dictatorship’ (The Economist March 2016) Retrieved on June 10, 2016: <http://www.economist.com/news/americas/21694829-protesters-call-elections-markets-and-political-allies-waver-their-support-dilma>

⁴ *Carioca* is a term commonly used when referring to individuals who were born in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

home in the affluent neighbourhood of Ipanema towards Copacabana. It was in the latter location that the protests took place. On the walk the wife held a dog on a leash. A few steps behind them, a black woman pushed a double stroller wearing an all-white uniform and hair pulled back to a ponytail. This photograph went viral on various news and social media outlets with a flood of re-posts and comments⁵. Shortly thereafter an article in the *Globe and Mail* considered it “the emblem of Brazil’s political turmoil” and included one of the comments that accompanied a re-post: “Speed it up, there, Maria, we have to go out to protest against this government that made us pay you minimum wage” (Nolen 2016). This picture and the reactions it triggered reveals a society built on deep seated inequalities, an elite with a strong hold on its privilege, and a troubled democracy where notions of citizenship and rights have yet to bridge the fundamental question of justice.

The present study departs from a landscape where Brazil’s economy and social fabric, including the meaning of democracy, the Left, and the exercise of citizenship, are at a crossroads. I engage with this moment of “re-existence” inspired by an interview with the Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos who says that “[p]erhaps at this point we have the key for an epistemology of the South. We need to be less confident that new ideas generate new realities. [...] The new realities are made by people on the streets, in the struggle, they are the ones who are actually innovating – not you, with the theory” (Santos in *Outras Palavras* 2016). One of the social spaces where a new reality is being invented, where justice is being demanded, and where change is underway, is in the middle and upper class households where working class women labour as domestic workers. New legal frameworks are meant to re-configure employer-employee relations, and perhaps bridge the private-public divide in which this form of employment is implicated. In this opening chapter I provide a brief overview of the demography of paid domestic work in Brazil, followed by an explanation of the context from which the latest policy reform for domestic work was approved. Next, I describe the over-arching themes and research questions that inspired my fieldwork and subsequent analysis. Those questions emerged from the gaps I identified in the literature, and they define the scope of my thesis, the demographic details of the workers I interviewed, and the theories and methodologies applied in this

⁵ See Blog post ‘Gambiarra’ written by M. Janeiro (2016). Retrieved from: <https://nagambarra.wordpress.com/2016/03/21/tem-gente-que-ainda-nao-aceitou-a-lei-aurea/> and BBC trending post by L. Barrucho. Retrieved from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-35824122>

study. Finally, I provide a note on epistemic privilege and terminology, followed by a brief outline of the chapters composing this thesis.

1.1. Who Is Doing the Work: The Demographics of Paid Domestic Work

Worldwide, domestic service and care work are predominantly female occupations (Brites 2013, De Souza 1980, DIEESE 2006, Parreñas 2001; Preuss 1997). In Latin America, the demographics of this sector show that, for the most part, domestic workers are women of colour from poor backgrounds with low levels of education (Brites 2013; Monticelli 2013; Sopcich 2015). In 2011 an estimated 7.2 million people laboured as domestic workers in Brazil, of this total 93 per cent are women and 62 per cent of them are women of African descent (*Instituto Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada* – IPEA 2011). Domestic workers represent 18 per cent of women who are active in the labour force (DIEESE 2006), and the wages of Afro-Brazilian women working in the sector are 15.6 per cent lower than those of non-black women (Brites 2013). These statistics reveal the overwhelming number of individuals engaged in domestic work, an occupation highly undervalued and marked by low economic and social status (Gomes and Bertolin 2011). These statistics show that domestic work remains almost universally performed by women since this fact is linked to the hegemonic discourse that identifies house and care work as women’s work, whether paid or unpaid (Bernardino-Costa 2014; Gomes and Bertolin 2011; Pereira de Melo in Chaney and Castro 1989). It also demonstrates that Brazilian women of African descent continue to be over-represented in what is considered one the lowest segments of the Brazilian labour force (Caldwell 2007). Historically, domestic work has been treated as a private matter and shaped by hegemonic narratives, practices, and structures sustaining a relationship of subordination between employee and employer (Bernardino-Costa 2011). And despite increasing legal recognition, especially since the Brazilian re-democratization period starting in 1985, domestic work remains largely outside the purview of the law with high levels of informality (approximately one quarter of domestic workers have an employment agreement, or their *carteira de trabalho*⁶ signed), and evidence of persistent cases of discrimination and abuse⁷ (Casagrande 2008; Gomes and Bertolin 2011; Vieira Gonzalez 2013).

⁶ *Carteira de trabalho* translates as work card and is the equivalent of an employment agreement or contract in Canada.

The statistics presented above hold the power of identifying a marginalized and racialized group of working class women within the context of a stratified labour market and stark socio-economic inequality. But statistics also carry the risk of over-simplifying more than a century of *historically derived* and *culturally denied* racial discrimination and gender oppression, and in doing so perpetuate the disadvantages poor women of colour experience in Brazil. The present study departs from the broad strokes painted by these statistics to challenge the way in which they represent a static picture of the multiple effects of gender, racial, and class oppression in contemporary Brazil.

1.2. Brazil's Policy Reform for Domestic Work

Domestic work is arguably one of the most challenging sectors to organize due to workers' isolation, lack of common workplace, long hours of work, stigma associated with their occupation, and the complex nature of their relationship with employers (Swider in Ferree and Tripp 2006). On top of the precarious conditions and the vulnerable characteristics of domestic workers, the numbers of unionized workers are incredibly low. In 2011 approximately 133,000 domestic workers had union membership, representing just 2 per cent of all individuals in the occupation (IPEA 2011 in Bernardino-Costa 2014). But in spite of low levels of unionization, paid domestic workers that are engaged militants, activists, or *trabalhadoras sindicalizadas* (unionized workers) have displayed a "tremendous force" in collective bargaining for wage improvement and better work conditions especially in the last decade (Brites 2013:431). Cornwall and Sardenberg (2014) remark that while historically domestic workers have been largely estranged and excluded from working class solidarity and labour politics to the detriment of their recognition as workers with rights, domestic workers nevertheless managed to secure substantial gains under Brazil's successive Workers Party governments⁸.

The first Workers Party⁹ (*Partido dos Trabalhadores* – PT) president to be voted into political office was Luis Inácio "Lula" Da Silva in 2003. Lula was a former trade union leader of the Metalworkers union in the

⁷ For a study examining the issue of sexual harassment and the vulnerability experienced by live-in and live-out domestic workers, see the article 'From the Kitchen to the Bedroom: Frequency Rates and Consequences of Sexual Harassment Among Female Domestic Workers in Brazil' (DeSouza and Cerqueira 2008).

⁸ These include Law n° 11.324/2006 and Bill 72/2013. For more details see article "Evolução do Direito Trabalhista do Empregado Doméstico De 1916 à 2013 – PEC Das Domésticas" (Damaceno and Chagas 2013).

⁹ The Workers Party was founded in 1980 as a coalition between labour militants and activists engaged in other social movements, such as the movement for liberatory theology, who stood in opposition to the military dictatorship that ruled Brazil from 1964 until 1985 (French and Fortes 2005).

state of São Paulo (French and Fortes 2005). In what was an optimistic but premature celebration, the rise of Left was considered to be “the most profound and durable process of democratization yet seen in Brazilian history” (French and Fortes 2005:17). The Workers Party administration gave impetus to the organizing efforts and collective bargaining by the National Federation of Domestic Workers (FENATRAD) and their political allies (Gonçalves 2010). In 2006, during the Workers Party’s first administration, the government passed the law n°11.324 establishing the right to thirty days of paid vacation, as well as mandating statutory holidays, maternity leave, and prohibiting employers from recouping costs for meals, housing and hygienic products from employees’ pay cheques (Gomes and Bertolin 2011). When the law was passed, domestic workers had access to ten of the twenty-nine rights considered fundamental labour rights in Brazil (Gomes and Bertolin 2011). Their push for a more substantive labour policy reform was further propelled by the International Labour Organization (ILO) convention in 2011 which emphasized domestic workers’ struggle for labour rights as a question of human rights (DIEESE 2012; Gomes and Bertolin 2011; Vieira Gonzalez 2013). With that in mind, this research follows in the footsteps of De Souza (1980) and Brites (2003) who argue that the struggle for decent working conditions and labour justice is a *fundamental question of rights*, as in access to labour rights, and the exercise of citizenship of women of colour in Brazil.

In March 2013 the Brazilian Senate unanimously approved a Constitutional Amendment with Bill 72/2013 (subsequently known as the *PEC Das Domésticas*¹⁰) harmonizing domestic workers’ rights to that of workers in other occupations. The Amendment Bill 72/2013 modifies article 7° of the 1988 Federal Constitution by extending all fundamental labour rights to domestic workers (Gomes and Bertolin 2011). The new labour rights afforded to domestic workers include the following provisions: Guaranteed Fund for Time of Service (FGTS); worker protection from arbitrary or unjustified dismissal (*relação de emprego protegida contra despedida arbitrária ou sem justa causa*); unemployment benefits; family salary for low income workers with children and dependents (*salário Família*); a maximum of 8 hours a day and 44 hours a week of work (with overtime payment in case of exceeding); 50 per cent overtime pay for night time work; insurance protection for accident in the workplace; access to monthly salary in accordance to the national minimum wage;

¹⁰ *Proposta de Emenda à Constituição* translates as a Proposal for Constitutional Amendment.

protection against employment discrimination; and others¹¹. The role of domestic workers' unions, local Ministries of Labour, and other social movement organizations supporting workers and advocating the enactment of this legislation is significant in providing resources, making these rights accessible, and developing strategies to empower domestic workers' ability to defend those rights (Bernardino-Costa 2011, 2014; Gonçalves 2010; Harrington 2015; Vidal 2009).

Previous achievements in the legislative field demonstrate that access to labour rights carries the power to change domestic workers' perceptions of themselves as legal subjects (Vidal 2009:33) and to "forge a collective political identity as workers" (Nadasen 2015:4). However, while militant domestic workers, activists, allies, and trade unionists, celebrated the passing of this law as a historical moment of political redress, they also recognized that the enactment of a law does not guarantee its dissemination and/or enforcement in the areas it is meant to cover. In order to reach a larger segment of the occupation and strengthen the sense of collective political consciousness amongst its constituency, domestic workers' rights need to be disseminated beyond labour unions. Alternative strategies of dissemination and mechanisms to ensure labour protections need to be revisited to reflect the precarious nature of their work, and to bridge the divide between law enforcement and work relations in private households. Consequently, I support the argument that reforms aimed at establishing legal equality for domestic workers are not sufficient to address the conditions that affect the working lives of domestic workers; proactive legal enforcement is "just as critical" (Blofield 2012:68). While access to rights is a significant pillar in the ongoing struggle for better working conditions, a rights-based approach alone is insufficient to address the ideological imprints and vulnerabilities that characterize the domestic work occupation.

One of the greatest challenges of democratizing this segment of work is to reconcile workers' rights with cultural ideologies of servitude (Vieira Gonzalez 2013). The informal and personal nature of this work relation poses challenges to regulating and enforcing legal rights. Ending the devaluation and discrimination endured by domestic workers depends on challenging the hegemonic attitudes and mentality of the Brazilian middle and upper classes (their employers) who continue to resist in seeing domestic work *as work*. The

¹¹ For a full description of these provisions and set of labour rights afforded to domestic workers in Brazil, see the publication *Trabalhadores Domésticos: Direitos e Deveres* (Ministério do Trabalho e Previdência Social 2015) Retrieved on September 1, 2016: <http://www.esocial.gov.br/doc/cartilha-simples-domestico-v1.1.pdf>.

provisions brought forth by the *PEC*, which are considered ‘basic labour rights’ and enjoyed by the majority of formal workers in Brazil, when extended to regulate domestic work generated considerable controversy, debate and resistance from middle class households claiming future unaffordability in hiring domestic help. According to Gonçalves (2010:66) from the time the *PEC* was crafted and negotiated, the “conservative sectors of society,” including Brazil’s main broadcaster and media companies, stood in unison in opposition to the *PEC*. They argued that labour costs would be unsustainable for employers’ ability to hire help, and that increased labour regulations could trigger job losses and potentially increasing hostility between employers and *domésticas*.

In light of diverging opinions regarding the implementation of expanded labour regulations, the low levels of unionization within the occupation, and considering that the *PEC* is aimed at improving the conditions of work for a large segment of marginalized women workers in Brazil, my research set out to examine the significance and impact of this legislation in the occupation. I do this primarily through the accounts of women domestic workers gathered during a two-month long fieldwork trip in São Paulo, which I describe in greater detail in chapter three. At a moment when domestic workers are coping with the uncertainties of the legislation’s initial stages and erratic and irregular enforcement of its clauses, I focus on the potential (or not) of the law to elevate domestic work to the category of real work and thereby improve the working conditions and lives of domestic workers in Brazil.

It is worth noting that not only has domestic work been “a staple in Latin American society” (Sopcich (2015:1) but the affordability of live-in domestic help among urban middle class households continues to be rather common. This is the case particularly in wealthier nations, such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Venezuela, where socio-economic disparity, both within and across borders, create a demand for and a workforce of women from poor backgrounds (Tokman 2010). These migration flows take shape internally, from rural to urban areas, and internationally, through intra-regional migration flows. As noted by Courtis and Pacea (2014:25), the presence of female migrant domestic workers moving across borders as undocumented workers in Latin American is “an expression of workforce flexibilization and cost reduction achieved by labour markets through the articulation of gender, ethnic and class relations.”

1.3. Research Questions

This thesis is organized by two over-arching themes that provide us with the opportunity to engage with how the experiences of women domestic workers and their struggle for decent working conditions are implicated in contemporary frictions between cultural notions of servitude and the exercise of citizenship by members of the working class. The first theme considers labour law changes, specifically those brought forth by the *PEC* and the latter's significance in the lives of women domestic workers. I explore this theme through the following research questions:

- To what extent has the *PEC* served to improve the everyday lives and working conditions of domestic workers in Brazil?
- Once holding knowledge of their rights, what are domestic workers' experiences 'bringing rights to the table' in their workplace?

The second and final theme focuses on workers' processes of identity construction and everyday experiences as it relates to the theoretical contributions I seek to make:

- How does an understanding of domestic work as affective labour illuminate the diverse subjectivities influencing women domestic workers' identities and experiences?
- How does an intersectional sensibility advance the analysis of the dynamic interplay between class, gender, and race in shaping workers' experiences of subordination and empowerment?

My research questions were designed in response to the socio-political climate of the *PEC* characterized by hope and uncertainty, but undeniably propelled by a sense of urgency in transforming the social relations that influence the labour, dignity, and valorization of domestic workers. Considering the low level of unionization in the sector, I decided to look beyond official labour affiliations. This led me to focus on the lives of non-unionized women domestic workers in São Paulo and their perceptions of working conditions, employment relations, and effects of labour legislation. As this study demonstrates, the *PEC* symbolizes a moment of historical reparation. And while it seems too early to draw hard lines and conclusions, the process of thinking through this legislation and analyzing workers' perspectives on it, proves itself significant for the continuous development of policies and social dialogue aimed at improving the lives of *domésticas*.

1.4. Background Literature

This study engages primarily with three bodies of work within the literature on paid domestic labour: (1) research that examines the interpersonal nature and power dynamics that characterizes employer and employee relations (Bernardino-Costa 2013; Brites 2003, 2007, 2008, 2013, 2014; De Souza 1980; Amaral dos Santos 2012; Goldstein 2003; Harris 2007; Pereira de Melo 1998; Preuss 1997); (2) studies focusing on the role of local unions, the National Federation of Domestic Workers (FENATRAD), and other social movement organizations supporting and organizing domestic workers (Barbosa 2013; Bernardino-Costa 2007, 2011, 2014; Gomes and Bertolin 2011; Gomes e Puig 2013; Gonçalves 2010; Harrington 2015; Vidal 2009); and (3) an emerging scholarship deploying intersectionality as an analytical tool and/or theoretical underpinning in studying the sources of oppression and avenues of empowerment and collective mobilization affecting the lives of domestic workers in Brazil (Bernardino-Costa 2014, 2015; Gonçalves 2010; Harrington 2015; Macedo 2015). The last two segments of the literature are largely representative of the perspectives of militants, activists, and/or workers with union membership, suggesting that scant attention has been given to non-unionized domestic workers' experiences in defending labour rights.

Domestic workers' organizing in Brazil are part of a broader political movement for empowerment and emancipation, or what is considered a "de-colonial project" (Bernardino-Costa 2015). Research demonstrates that powerful alliances and strategic coalitions are being forged between trade unions and other civil rights movements, such as the Brazilian Black Front, the Unified Black Movement, the Young Christian Workers, and feminist organizations such as the SOS Body (Gonçalves 2010). By incorporating "a host of dimensions of life as a domestic worker" (Cornwall and Sardenberg 2014:76) into their struggle for labour rights, new possibilities emerged for bonds of solidarity along the lines of class, gender, and race. Describing domestic workers political action as broad and inclusive along the lines of class, gender, and race perspectives, Bernardino-Costa (2014:8) writes: "the black feminism of the domestic workers' movement blackens and feminizes the demands of the union movement." This suggests that, in the past, a one-dimensional approach isolated domestic workers from other forms of political action, preventing them from establishing gender, class, and/or race-based collaborations. The same way one-dimensional forms of organizing are insufficient to advocate for domestic workers rights and to transform labour relations; traditional approaches to labour

regulation “are unlikely to yield the desired results given the peculiarities of domestic work and domestic workers” (Gomes and Bertolin 2011:230).

Recent studies applied an intersectional perspective to the following realms of study within paid domestic work: workers’ political consciousness and labour organizing around trade unions (Harrington 2015); the historical contingencies of domestic work and the ways in which social categories of difference construe avenues for empowerment and mobilization (Bernardino-Costa 2014, 2015); the ways in which class, gender, and race intersect at various ‘crossroads’ shaping inequalities and oppressions experienced by women domestic workers but giving rise to processes of collective empowerment (Gonçalves 2010); and finally, the trajectory of a domestic worker who transitions to a nursing occupation, where professional development and access to material goods depict how social categories of difference influence life opportunities (Macedo 2015). These studies demonstrate that domestic workers have succeeded in voicing an intersectional, de-colonial, and anti-racist discourse that fortified their political agency and collective empowerment. And yet, ‘on the ground’ experiences, the intimacies and affective textures that influence workers’ labouring and private lives remain largely unexamined by studies within this theoretical orientation. The specific challenges, forms of resistance, and possibilities of agency domestic workers may deploy outside formal, unionized, and institutional dimensions of labour rights are yet to be accounted for. I also recognize a greater need to portray the plurality of workers’ experiences and the various ways in which class, gender, and race, operate and affect their processes of identity construction and self-representation.

Finally, the notion of domestic work as affective labour most often portrays the experiences of undocumented migrants from the South employed in affluent households of the global North (Colen 1995; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010; Hairong 2008; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Meghani 2015). The particularities of transnational migration flows place migrant domestic workers at a dynamic crossroads where the exploitative nature of their labour is heightened by lack of citizenship status, isolation, and cultural alienation, in an already challenging set of intersections. And yet, I started considering how women domestic workers who are native to Brazil are confronted with similar forms of political and social exclusion. On this vein, Caldwell (2007:137) explains that domestic workers “continue to be disrespected and to have their rights violated (...) as human beings and workers.” This exclusion takes place in what she considers “the informal and everyday dimensions

of citizenship” (Caldwell 2007:137). By this Caldwell means that the historical oppressions that influence *domésticas*’ life trajectories and opportunities, speak of a subaltern status and a differential notion of citizenship with limited access to and exercise of rights.

1.5. Epistemic Privilege and a Note on Terminology

A prominent segment of the social science literature on domestic work in Brazil is committed to unearthing the perspectives of women domestic workers based on interviews and firsthand accounts¹² (Bernardino-Costa 2011, 2014; Brites 2008, 2013, 2014; Amaral dos Santos 2012; Goldstein 2003; Gonçalves 2010; Harrington 2015; Harris 2007; Monticelli 2013; Velho 2012). Others have explored participatory methodologies in an effort to convey the social textures and intersections influencing workers lives (Cornwall, Capibaribe, and Gonçalves 2010; Cornwall and Sardenberg 2014). My research builds on this commitment by employing a methodology that engages with research participants through the act of witnessing¹³ to map the intersections that give agency to women domestic workers in Brazil. By understanding domestic workers’ experiences as holistic, where gender, class, and race processes are implicated and inseparable from their working and private lives, I invoke the “elasticity” of intersectionality (Chikwendu 2013:35). By integrating the notion of affective labour in the analysis of their experiences I underscore the significance and vital force of the labour processes they deliver. My empirical analysis of workers’ trajectories and daily experiences through a prism of intersectionality led me to a conceptual place where the affective and the political contingencies of their labour merged in an inevitable and illuminating way, presenting some of the shortcomings of the legal reform.

The notion of epistemic privilege¹⁴ influences my methodological and theoretical approaches in this study. The premise that knowledge reproduces and is embedded in power relations motivates a paradigm shift, a change in perspective, a possibility of challenging hegemonic narratives (Fernandes 2003). It reminds us that the personal is undeniably political. And knowledge, as we produce and consume it, is political. By seeking for *alternative ways of knowing*, we encourage the possibility of alternative ways of relating to each other

¹² See *A Luta Que Me Faz Crescer* (Parisius 1999) for an example of literary work based on the testimony, life experience, and political trajectory of a militant woman and former domestic worker in Brazil,

¹³ See *Transforming Feminist Practice: Non-Violence, Social Justice, and the Possibilities of a Spiritualized Feminism* (Fernandes 2003) for a discussion of the politics of representation that advocates for an ethical/spiritual responsibility towards liberatory forms of knowledge production.

¹⁴ See *Black Feminist Thought* (Collins 2000) for a discussion of epistemic privilege and the notion of *outsider-within*.

and of living in this world. I engage with the notion that identity is “socially produced” and implicated in a web of power relations (Collins 2011:71) in order to emphasize the political agency, insider perspective, and valuable knowledge that research participants contributed to this analysis. Further, I propose to add a layer where processes of identity formation are understood as “politically contested and historically unfinished” (Clifford 1988:9) as well as implicated in a future that is unwritten. In this sense, workers’ individual and collective identities, as well as the relationships between women domestic workers and employers, are understood here as fluid and dynamic processes embedded in a constellation of intersecting oppressions.

Historically, working-class and poor women of colour have been objectified, discursively constructed, and treated as marginal others. Collins (1986) articulates how this social location of disadvantage can also be seen as a site of epistemic advantage from which the effects of power structures of colonial/white/male supremacy and domination are felt and seen. On a similar vein, Bernardino-Costa (2011) argues that unionized domestic workers have re-defined themselves as a professional category by articulating categories of class, gender, and race inequalities in light of their perspective as subalterns. The intersections of these categories, he argues, produce both workers’ experiences of discrimination, disempowerment, subjugation, and oppression (in the workplace), but also present emerging possibilities for empowerment, political agency, democratic mobilization, and a re-signification of domestic work as a professional class in the framework of unions and in broader Brazilian society (Bernardino-Costa 2014).

In this study it is the women who are the experts in their lives in and out of their paid place of employment. Recognizing the epistemic privilege of domestic workers substantiates the belief that feminist theory needs to be “put to work” (Pratt 2004), by which she means engaging scholarly debates in a constant dialectic relationship with the everyday struggles of the people we research and whose lives we study. The theories and conceptual frameworks we apply need to resonate with strategies, meanings, and experiences of our research participants (Smith 1987). Given the exploratory nature of this research and the small sample of participants, I do not claim to draw an encompassing representation of the status of domestic work in São Paulo, let alone Brazil. Instead, my intention is to gain depth and insight into their lives via the narrative they construct and by applying an intersectional analysis to their dynamic identities and the affective qualities of their labour. The multiplicity of workers’ identities arise as carriers of political knowledge, agents of resistance

and change, as women domestic workers who are sensitive to the discriminations that perpetuate the marginalization of their labour, and who are, in the diversity of their opinions, aware of the challenges that persist. Workers' perceptions of labour rights merge with issues of informality, as well as the invisibility and social devaluation of their labour, as it becomes evident in the remainder of this thesis. In order to re-imagine a politics of social transformation I strive to portray their individual stories "as closely to their full complexity as possible" (Grillo 1995:22) so that together they represent a mosaic of collective narratives.

Historically, women performing domestic work have been called *criadas* (servants). Over the years this word became obsolete and Brazilians adopted the term *empregadas*, or *empregadas domésticas* (maid). More recently, socially and politically conscious individuals started using the term *funcionárias* (domestic employee), or *trabalhadoras domésticas* (domestic worker), to denote a professional or contractual relation like that of other occupations. This "progression" is embedded in a "politics of naming" and a change in the language or term used to refer to domestic workers does not necessarily mean a "change in the working conditions and social dismissal attached to this labour" (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010:164). Gutiérrez-Rodríguez (2010:114) invokes the "power of naming" by reminding us that the role of the domestic worker within the household is identified and situated by a set of social relations. These social relations are larger than a single word and based on a cultural system of meaning which creates the worker subordination in the first place. Thus, although this "progression" in naming might be indicative of a transition from forced to low-paid labour, domestic work remains undervalued and marked by racialized and gendered boundaries (Harris 2007; Pereira de Melo 1998; Preuss 1997). In the remainder of this thesis I adopt the term 'domestic worker' and interchange it with the use of a more colloquial form in Portuguese, '*domésticas*', which the majority of the women who participated in this study also used to refer to themselves.

1.6. Thesis Overview

In chapter two, my literature review, I begin to unpack hegemonic narratives underlying the undervaluation and invisibility of domestic work by examining dominant discourses on gender and race that mark historical and contemporary trajectories of women of colour in Brazil. While a thorough examination of the genesis of

domestic service and the labour of enslaved African women¹⁵ is outside the scope of my thesis, I look at the historical contingencies as they relate to stereotypes and hegemonic discourses serving to maintain Afro-Brazilian women in low-skill and low-paying jobs. To bridge the significance of this historical context to the main arguments of my research, I examine the notion of a racial democracy (Freyre 1933) as it relates to a selected body of research on racial politics primarily concerned with Afro-Brazilian women's identities, consciousness, and experiences (Caldwell 2007; Henery 2011; Lebon 2007; Pravaz 2009). *Of Masters and Slaves*, the seminal work of Gilberto Freyre (1933), and the critiques that followed on the myth of a racial democracy, provide a fertile ground for an analysis of how gender and race constructions operate in Brazil as a marker of social status on an institutional level, as well as in everyday social relations.

Secondly, I review the paid domestic work literature and identify key academic debates on how social scientists have engaged with the themes that concern this study. This section gives texture to the static picture of the statistics presented in the opening of this chapter. This body of work helps me identify the challenges faced by domestic workers in regards to working conditions, relations with employers, and their struggle for labour rights, dignity, and valorization. Ultimately this informs my understanding of the ways in which domestic workers and employers relate as inter-dependent but uneven subjects, under the influence of a power dynamics that affects their encounters and commitments. This relationship is a central element in the study of paid domestic work as affective labour and equally significant if we hope to achieve a more nuanced understanding of workers' political agency and experiences defending labour rights. In addition, I identify the ways in which Brazil's economic development and neoliberal ideologies help us think through some of the recent changes in the configuration and fragmentation of domestic work. Specifically, I review the emerging debate on whether increasing regulation and professionalization (in a neoliberal sense) serves to improve the conditions of this form of employment that has been historically characterized by informality. Finally, I describe my theoretical framework anchored in feminist theories of intersectionality (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013; Cerwonka 2011; Chikwendu 2012; Ferree 2008; McBride et al. 2015; McCall 2005) and affective labour (Ahmed 2010; Emboaba da Costa 2016; Gutierrez-Rodriguez 2010, 2014).

¹⁵ See Lauderdale Graham (1992) for a vivid socio-historical account on the lives of domestic servants as it relates to the transition from slavery to free labour.

In chapter three, I delineate the methodological steps undertaken and feminist orientations that inspire my research and thesis. I address the preliminary organization of my fieldwork vis-à-vis the reality of being in the field, the challenges in reaching research participants and conducting interviews with women domestic workers who juggle their time between demanding work schedules and their private lives. I describe the dynamics of conducting the interviews, the process of transcribing, translating, and analyzing the content of our conversations. In addition, I provide a breakdown of the secondary sources and relevant literature that sustain an analysis of the empirical fieldwork data. Finally, a subjective and introspective account explains the ways in which this project is connected to my place of origin and personal experiences in being raised in a household that employed domestic workers.

In chapters four and five I shift the focus onto the narratives of the women who participated in this study. The empirical data presented in these two chapters inform substantially the basis of my inquiry. For the sake of clarity, I divided the empirical data into two separate chapters. That being said, the themes, which I identify under the broader umbrella of affective textures of domestic work and labour rights, are certainly not discrete. In fact, these themes emerged after I returned from my fieldwork in the process of transcribing and analyzing the interviews. As you will notice, workers' narratives weave through task-based, relational, and legal aspects of their labour in ways that were, at times, impossible to disjoint one from the other. At times, workers deliberately place emphasis on the inter-personal and relational aspect as it relates to the condition and contractual nature of their employment. In response, even though I chose to write the empirical data into separate chapters, I make these cross-references and allow themes to spill over onto each other. In so doing I provide a closer representation of how women spoke about the issues raised in discussion. These chapters are an effort to think through the affective textures and legal dimensions of paid domestic work by bridging the private and working lives of the women domestic workers who participated in this study.

In the closing chapter I offer an explanation of how my research contributes to the study of paid domestic work in Brazil. Specifically I summarize the ways in which an intersectional analysis of domestic work as affective labour contributes to our understanding of workers' political agency beyond the obvious political and union spaces where activists organize. I then address the research questions delineated in the previous section based on my empirical findings and discussions. Again, underscoring *domésticas'* views in

terms of their working and private lives vis-à-vis the political reparation the *PEC* is supposed to bring forth. I conclude with thoughts on some of the challenges and limitations I encountered in designing and applying a feminist orientation in this study and on the prospects of continuing to experiment with intersectionality and affective labour conceptualizations in future studies in the field of paid domestic work and labour legislation in Brazil.

Chapter 2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I situate my research within the literature on paid domestic work in Brazil and describe the feminist theoretical underpinnings of affective labour and intersectionality, which serve as a foundation for the subsequent empirical analysis. This review addresses the historical contingencies, contemporary demographics, and labour conditions of domestic work. I begin by discussing how Brazilian ideologies of *mestiçagem* and ‘racial democracy’ are essential to understand the ways in which race and gender discrimination operate in reproducing socio-economic inequalities and racial hierarchy in the country (Caldwell 2004; Henery 2011; Lebon 2007). The myth of a racial democracy influenced the development of racialized and gendered discourses (Lebon 2007; Pravaz 2009; Viotti da Costa 2000) that continue to this day to subjugate Brazilians of African descent to low-skill and low paying jobs, such as domestic service. In other words, the undervalorization of domestic workers and the invisibility of their labour are linked to Brazil’s colonial past and its racial ideology (Bernardino-Costa 2014; Casagrande 2008; Gonçalves 2010; Vieira Gonzalez 2013). Expanding on how gender and race discrimination is reflected in the subordination of domestic workers in Brazil, I discuss how we generate a more nuanced understanding of everyday experiences, social relations, and material inequalities that are relevant in the lives of domestic workers.

Here I review contemporary research on paid domestic work in Brazil with the purpose of identifying key concepts and debates already examined in the literature. First, I review previous studies that point to the ways in which domestic work is representative of a friction between modernity and a lingering culture of servitude. Second, I profile the demographics of the occupation, the different arrangements and types of employment within the occupation, and the challenges faced by women domestic workers regarding their working and private lives. Third, I discuss how neoliberal economic reforms and ideologies help us understand some of the changes in the configuration of domestic labour in Brazil. Taking into consideration an emerging academic debate that seeks to examine whether evidence of increasing professionalization of domestic work (Álvaro 2012) and regulation of the occupation (in a neoliberal sense) necessarily serves to create more secure work arrangements for marginalized workers (Brites 2008; Harris 2007). Specifically, I seek to understand the ways in which neoliberal reforms affect the labour and employment relations of paid domestic workers.

The last section of this chapter describes the theoretical framework inspiring and informing the present study. As noted in chapter one, this research is a case study that begins from the standpoint of women domestic workers¹⁶ and weaves their narratives into an intersectional analysis of the dynamics of power, and the potential for empowerment in the context of new labour rights. Based on qualitative methodologies¹⁷ and grounded in feminist theories of intersectionality and affective labour, I critically analyze the holistic experiences of women domestic workers as overlapping and intertwined realities of class, gender, and racial identifications. By weaving domestic workers' narratives into an intersectional analysis, I hope to expose the multiple forms of historically derived oppressions and the strategies of resistance arising from the exploitation of their labour power.

2.1. *Mestiçagem* and Racial Democracy in the Making of Modern Brazil

In 1933 Brazilian social scientist Gilberto Freyre published his seminal work, *The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization*¹⁸ portraying a vivid description of the relations between masters and slaves in traditional plantation societies in the Northeast region of Brazil. Freyre was concerned with the intricacies and the visceral character of Brazilian culture, emphasizing, for example, the significance of African heritage in colonial households (Dunn 2001). In his book, Freyre ([1933]1964) writes a narrative that is arguably privileging the perspective of the male figure, or the patriarch, who exercised dominance in the realm of the *casa grande/senzala*. Historian Lauderdale Graham's book (1988), *House and Street*, serves as a counterpart to Freyre's narrative by portraying the female subaltern perspective of household servants in the turn to nineteenth century Rio de Janeiro. While Graham (1988) highlights the diversity of experiences, and measures of agency and resistance deployed by free and enslaved women alike, Freyre's ([1933]1964) depiction of colonial Brazil suggests that Portuguese settlers were more tolerant of racial and ethnic differences, and supports the notion that "the institution of slavery in Brazil was more benign than elsewhere" (Levine and Crocitti 1999:91). Freyre's interpretation that slavery in Brazil was more benign than in other European

¹⁶ This study strives to consider participants to be partners in debate, and "multi-dimensional characters who are not easily 'dominated' by the dominant classes" (Brites 2014:63).

¹⁷ See chapter 3 'Methodology'.

¹⁸ The original book, *Casa Grande e Senzala*, was first published in Brazil in 1933. In 1946 the book was translated into English and entitled *The Masters and the Slaves*.

colonies has been widely criticized (Dunn 2001; Isfahai-Hammond 2005; Marquese 2006; Klein and Luna 2009; Parker 2009). Nonetheless, there is evidence that rates of miscegenation between European settlers, Indigenous peoples, and later, African slaves, were much higher in Brazil than in other colonies of the Americas and the Caribbean. This “intermixing” is the undercurrent in the formation of a mixed race, or a *mestiço*, population in Brazil (Hasenbalg and Huntington 1982/83)¹⁹.

Over the years researchers have been concerned with exploring the myth of racial democracy (Da Costa 2000; Haag 2007; Hasenbalg and Huntington 1982/83; Pravaz 2009; Sheriff 2003), denouncing the nature of sexual encounters between masters and slaves (Isfahani-Hammond 2005), and debating how this has served to solidify white hegemony while hindering race-based politics (Caldwell 2004; Maia 2012; Mikulak 2011; Sousa and Nascimento 2008). This scholarship on the unveiling of Brazil’s race relations, discrimination, and social inequality, gained traction after the re-democratization period in Brazil beginning in 1985, when scholars, activists, and politicians, initiated the production and mobilization of knowledge of a more complex understanding of race relations (Lebon 2007). This body of work countered, reacted, and even supported the argument of a ‘racial democracy’, along the way enhancing our understanding of race relations. It also bolstered recent developments in labour consciousness and political activism grounded in a historically sensitive approach to gender and race-based discrimination.

Whereas this ideology resonated with the social reality of the time or was deliberately created by the political elites in order to obscure widespread racial oppression, the desire to proclaim the country’s identity as a racial democracy was largely embraced by Freyre’s generation of whites, blacks, and *mulatos*. But subsequent generations were troubled by the myth and more aware of the realities of discrimination and prejudice that permeates Brazil’s social fabric (Da Costa 2000). According to Da Costa (2000) those two interpretations fail to account for changing perceptions of race. Thus, she proposes an alternative perspective by situating the discourse of a racial democracy within a global framework in which the Brazilian elites were driven by a desire to re-articulate prevalent notions of race and white superiority by re-working a fit between their social reality and the presumed worth of a *mestiço* nation vis-à-vis their European counterparts.

¹⁹ The offspring of mixed unions were considered *crioulo* (children of African slaves who were born in Brazil), *mulatos* (children of black slaves and Portuguese settlers), *cajuço* (children of black slaves and Indians), and *caboclo* (children of Portuguese settlers and Indians).

The idea of *mestiçagem*, also known as the Brazilian meta-race, or the ‘fusion of three races’ (Indigenous peoples of Brazil, Portuguese settlers, and African slaves) (DaMatta 1997), permeates the formation of Brazil’s national identity as a ‘racial democracy’ (Bailey and Telles 2013). Lebon (2007) says that the inception of *mestiçagem* as Brazil’s founding narrative created a common sense and manifestation of what makes Brazil Brazil. Emboaba da Costa (2014:25) supports the argument that the notion of racial democracy “has long occupied the minds of Brazilians, whether as ideology, myth, ideal and/or future hope.” And yet, this discourse undermines the significance of race in influencing the identity and lives of Brazilians, and denies “the existence of racism and racial inequality” (Bailey and Telles 2013:25).

During the 19th Century, numerous crossroads of national and political renewal influenced the making of modern Brazil. This trajectory led Brazil from the Old Republic to a populist authoritarian regime promoting liberal reforms and favouring industrial development and the establishment of a short-lived democratic administration (Hagopian 2007). In spite of sustained efforts to undermine the connection between skin colour and race as it relates to the existence and persistence of discrimination in Brazil, in the late 1970s scholars began to investigate the roots of material inequalities largely affecting the life chances of racialized Brazilians of African descent, and the lower segments of the population (Lebon 2007). But Lebon (2007) writes that it was not until the mid-1980s that the dissemination of knowledge about the effects of gender *in relation to* racial discrimination emerged, creating a political space for women activists and leaders to revisit the origin of Afro-Brazilian womanhood and social subjugation.

The extent to which the notion of a ‘racial democracy’ carries relevance in the development of social imaginaries, popular beliefs, behaviors, and practices in Brazilian society is debatable. Caldwell (2007), nonetheless, argues that the implementation of a *mestiço* discourse into Brazil’s national identity carries cumulative and deep-seated implications for the development of progressive antiracism. The myth of a racial democracy supports the idea that racism against blacks in Brazil is either non-existent or a subtle and interpersonal enactment denying the existence of institutional, political, and everyday forms of discrimination (Henery 2011:88). Mikulak (2011) defends the argument that this ideology generated “a particularly virulent, yet silent form of racism” (62). And, Pravaz (2009) and Viotti Da Costa (2000) argue that Brazil’s emphasis on phenotype and skin colour as social identification (rather than racial or ethnic identification), created a system

that concealed the ways in which race and ancestral origins were implicated in the economic deprivation and material inequalities experienced by the lower segments of the population. This ‘concealment’ remains (as I show below) and largely explains the entrapment of poor black women in domestic work in Brazil.

2.2. In the Margins and At the Centre: Afro-Brazilian Women’s Struggle

In Brazil anti-black discrimination was never institutionalized in the same way it was in South Africa through Apartheid (Smith 1990), or in the United States via Jim Crow laws (Lewis and Lewis 2009). And yet, Brazil’s social landscape is marked by segregation, in private households (with the presence of servants and later domestic workers) and in public spaces where the “nobodies” and the “somebodies,” or the “haves and the have-nots” (Sansone 2004) are constantly screened, gazed, admitted, or banned, in a covert politics of racial and social status. The circulation of hegemonic discourses of social status influence notions of womanhood and femininity in ways that affect discursively and materially the life chances and experiences of Afro-Brazilian women in contemporary Brazil. Afro-Brazilian women have been, for example, symbolically constructed as bearers of the *mestiço* nation and as the sexualized icon of the *mulata*. In fact, Lebon (2007) writes that the marginalization of Afro-Brazilian women, in systems of education, as well as access to housing, health and labour opportunities, stands in sharp contrast with the highly eroticized image of the *mulata*. While Afro-Brazilian women are at the center-stage of the social reproduction of the nation and in the imaginaries of nationals and foreigners alike (Pravaz 2012), they remain at the bottom of the labour market largely concentrated in low-skilled, low-paying occupations like domestic service (Caldwell 2007; Da Costa 2000). This fact resonates with the notion that “what is socially marginal is often symbolically central” (Babcock 1978 in Pravaz 2009:80). My research focuses on bringing domestic workers experiences from the margins to the center by examining the points where racial categories and social constructs intersect with gender, and how class influence those identifications and affect their everyday experiences in exercising citizenship.

The identities, bodies, and labour of Afro-Brazilian women are affected by an interlocking system of oppression, dehumanization, and exploitation similar to African-American women in the U.S. where dominant discourses of the latter remain linked to denigrating colonial images and racialized stereotypes (e.g. Black Mammy). In Brazil the percentage of black women engaged in domestic work is higher than that of

white women and those who consider themselves *parda*²⁰. To this point Burdick (1998) adds that black women's presence in domestic work "reinforces and is reinforced by the image of the simple, robust, noble, loving *preta* maid, which originated under slavery" (47). Similarly, in a study of the body politics of black womanhood in Brazil, Caldwell (2004) explains that in spite of the notion of a racial democracy, derogatory images of Black women in popular culture demonstrates a widespread anti-Black aesthetic. In the context of the U.S., Collins (2000) also examines the compounding effects of those stereotypes and externally defined images. She notes that gendered and racialized stereotypes function as an assertion of the superiority of race and class hegemony. For example, stereotypes that portray African American women as the negative other, whose beauty, sexuality, and social worth is considered 'lesser', function to re-instate hegemonic notions of whiteness. In Brazil and the U.S. these stereotypes are examples of powerful tools of social domination. They affect dominant cultural behaviour and idealizations, and the life chances and experiences of marginalized women of African descent (Da Costa 2000). Thus, dismantling the notion of a 'racial democracy' and rejecting those stereotypes becomes essential to re-claiming the identity of Afro-Brazilian women and the dignity and political consciousness of women paid domestic workers.

In her ethnographic study of '*mulheres negras*'²¹ Caldwell (2007) weaves life narratives with an insightful analysis of the power of identity, self-representation, and collective action. Caldwell (2007) argues that in contemporary Brazil collective identity construction is pivotal to substantiate the historic oppressions that work to place women of colour in subordinate positions. And, the relationship between experiences and practices of self-identification is "a process of accepting and embracing blackness on a deeply personal, psychological level" (Caldwell 2007:182). This form of group-based racial and political identification brings forth black women's appearance, ancestry, social location, and experiences to forge a sense of collective political consciousness (Caldwell 2007). In sum, Caldwell (2007) considers the *mestiço* essentialism to be at once the cause of overt discrimination and the source of transformative potential to re-instate and assert a positive black subjectivity and culture consciousness in Brazil.

²⁰ In the colour spectrum *parda* is considered neither black nor white but closer to the former.

²¹ One of the important sources supporting this argument is the book by anthropologist Kia L. Caldwell (2007), *Negras in Brazil*. Based on first hand narratives of women of colour in the city of Belo Horizonte, Caldwell suggest that their self-identification, as *mulheres negras* (black women) is an appropriate terminology and I will attend to the relevance of the term for women domestic workers in São Paulo.

Brazilian sociologist Bernardino-Costa (2011) is one of the few scholars concerned with how unionized domestic workers in Brazil are re-defining themselves as a professional category by articulating a subaltern perspective on the ways in which forms of class, gender, and race domination influence their identities and experiences. Specifically, he is concerned with studying domestic workers' political struggle and perceptions of race relations in such a way that his research engages with a dynamic process of knowledge formation where the act of speaking becomes part of the political redress, legitimizing subaltern knowledge as a part of a collective narrative. Countering these forms of domination and invisibility within public and social institutions, domestic workers, their supporters, and allies developed political resistance identifying the sources of their oppression to then articulate a counter-hegemonic narrative of self-worth and valuation anchored in demands for respect, dignity, and rights in their workplaces. In her critique of Bernardino-Costa's (2011) work, Brites (2013:433) says that he conceptualizes the subaltern voice of women domestic workers as part of "an unfinished project of decolonisation." According to Brites (2013:434) this renewed political narrative carries "a possibility to propose estrangement/rupture in the hegemonic narrative of the racial and seigniorial democracy²², fostered by the colonial legacy" of Brazil. Lebon (2007:55) says that this positioning relates to the cumulative effect of racial exclusion where discrimination "takes place both over generations, and over the life cycle of disadvantages." Militant domestic workers situate their struggle for labour rights within a discourse of human rights, and mobilize for political redress of generations of domestic workers in slavery and labour exploitation.

In a recent publication, Bernardino-Costa (2014) challenges dominant ideologies legitimizing class difference and marginalizing Brazilians of African descent. In doing so he uses an approach known as "ethical listening,"²³ a post-colonial methodology that "recognizes the existence of the ones who were faded and silenced by the hegemonic episteme" (Bernardino-Costa 2014:2). In the case of Brazil, hegemonic discourses about black women undermine their rationality and their ability to tell their own stories. Hence, in recognizing their voices and bringing their accounts to the fore, Bernardino-Costa (2014:2) challenges "the hegemonic speech in Brazilian society." Without explicitly mentioning the myth of a racial democracy, Bernardino-Costa

²² Brites (2013) uses the term seigniorial democracy to suggest the ways in which Brazil's political democracy and the attitude of the employing classes carry residues of colonial notions of servitude and social difference.

²³ For more details on this approach, see *Filosofía de la liberación*, by Enrique Dussel (1996).

(2014:2) says that one of his goals is to deconstruct and destabilize the “belief of harmony between white and black people, and between rich and poor.” Domestic workers’ political mobilization seems to be in a moment of transformation with the exploration of *new* categories, identities, subjectivities, metaphors and methods for the purpose of defending their rights for decent work and abilities in sustaining and leading fulfilling private lives by creating of a more socially just society.

2.3. Brazilian Scholarship and the Study of Contemporary Paid Domestic Work

Since the 1980s, there is evidence of growing interest in the study of paid domestic work in social science research in Brazil (Brites 2013; Fediuk 1995; Fraga 2013; Harris 2007). The themes studied often overlap and include but are not limited to: the ‘naturalization’ of reproductive labour as women’s work, the resulting invisibility and undervalorization of such, the ambiguous effects of the discourse of ‘like one of the family’, the power dynamics between employer and employees, the textures of exploitation and dependency, as well as the lack of opportunities and the trajectories that reveal the historical contingencies behind the overwhelming number of women of colour in the occupation. With almost a decade hiatus between their respective publications, Brites (2013), Fediuk (1995), and Fraga (2013), wrote some pieces mainly designed to offer a literature review of paid domestic work in Brazil by identifying key debates and theoretical approaches deployed. Fraga (2013) summarizes the literature on the basis of its theoretical, statistical, historical, organizational, legal, and relational perspectives. Others focused their work on the relationship between employers and domestic workers (Bernardino-Costa 2013; Brites 2003, 2007, 2008, 2013, 2014; De Souza 1980; Amaral dos Santos 2012; Goldstein 2003; Harris 2007; Pereira de Melo 1998; Preuss 1997; Velho 2012). More recently, there is evidence of a growing interest in studying the role of the National Federation of Domestic Workers (FENATRAD), local unions, and other social movement organizations supporting and organizing domestic workers, including the dimension of labour stratification, legal rights, unions and activism (Barbosa 2013; Bernardino-Costa 2007, 2011, 2014; Brites 2013; Gomes and Bertolin 2011; Gomes e Puig 2013; Gonçalves 2010; Harrington 2015; Vidal 2009). These studies demonstrate that powerful alliances and strategic coalitions are being sought between trade unions and other civil rights movements (such as the Brazilian Black Front, the Unified Black Movement, the Young Christian Workers, and feminist organizations such as the SOS Body). In light of increasing attention to the subject of labour rights, scholars are also

grappling with whether the privatization of care (Ibarra 2016); the flexibilization of labour laws (Saad Filho 2013), and increasing professionalization of the sector (Álvaro 2012), necessarily create more favourable and secure work arrangements for *domésticas* (Brites 2008; Harris 2007). The examination of these themes are the socio-cultural and political backbone of the empirical analysis²⁴ that follows where I aim to examine the textures of paid affective labour and the potential of labour legislation to improve the everyday lives and working conditions of domestic workers in Brazil.

2.3.1. Paid Domestic Work, Modernity, and a Lingering Culture of Servitude

With the inception of modernization in the United States, American sociologist Lewis Coser (1973 in Harris 2007:40) predicted that domestic service and servitude would dissolve into “a thing of the past.” He claimed that in time the colonial model of servitude would shift into more rational and liberal (less traditional and affective) arrangements (Harris 2007). In her essay on identity politics and domestic service, Karen Hansen (in Adams and Dickey 2000) suggests otherwise by emphasizing the significance of paid domestic work in contemporary societies, and the persistent invisibility of this labour force on a local and global scale. She writes: “Keeping servants offers a way of life that has not disappeared in the late 20th Century. In fact, its prime-time politics, and it is about much more than domestic service” (Hansen in Adams and Dickey 2000:285). As the remainder of this section demonstrates, in spite of transformations and, more recently, greater access to labour rights, domestic work is tied to notions of gender and racial subjugation, the unchallenged sexual division of labour, and to the formation of modern states that retract social welfare services and forge an increasingly fragmented labour market. Therefore, Coser’s prediction, whether in Southern United States, or other former plantation colonies, such as Brazil and India, carries at best a grain of truth. What we have witnessed thus far is not a dissolution of servitude but transformations in the employment conditions and relations that characterize the occupation. In addition, with the predominance of the neoliberal model of economic development, industrialization, and urbanization, social inequalities within and between nations are sharper and domestic service continues to represent a large percentage of women who are engaged in the paid workforce (ILO 2013).

²⁴ See Chapter 4 and 5 ‘Empirical Discussion’ for a close analysis that weaves these themes with the narratives of the domestic workers who participated in this research.

Qayum and Ray's (2003) ethnographic study of domestic work in Kolkata, India demonstrate a friction between aspirations to modernity and the persistence of a "culture of servitude" among India's respectable castes. They argue that in India the inception of modernity brought changes to the arrangement of domestic servitude. However, their ethnographic insights reveal that the relationship between domestic workers and the employing classes remains largely unchallenged due to re-articulated cultural notions of servitude rather than a breakaway from such (Qayum and Ray (2003). In this way, Qayum and Ray (2003) identify forms of control and treatment that hold vestiges of India's colonial past. This argument points to one of the greatest challenges in implementing effective political reforms to improve the working and private lives of women domestic workers in other cultural contexts, and how to reconcile workers' rights with lingering notions of servitude. Among the upper classes in Brazil who hire domestic workers, there is evidence of a similar contradiction between an aspiration to live "modern lives" and an attachment to "traditional" everyday practices and customs (Harris 2007). In other words, the Brazilian upper classes are caught between a wish to achieve and live an idea of what it is to be modern – i.e., in conjunction with European and North American ideals - and lingering characteristics, practices and comforts of hiring full-time domestic help thereby maintaining a culture of servitude.

In the context of Latin America, a correlation exists between the number of domestic workers and national levels of socio-economic inequality (Brites 2008). Domestic work is considered at once the product of extreme socio-economic inequalities (Blofield 2012) and a space where these inequalities are produced and reproduced (Brites 2014). As previously noted, while domestic work is linked to structural inequality and poverty, it is also historically tied to domestic servitude and the ideologies that marked the bodily domination of Black women as slaves (Bernardino-Costa 2011; Brites 2013; De Souza 1980; Gonçalves 2010). Bernardino-Costa (2014:1) reminds us that "due to Brazil's colonial history, domestic labour is also seen as the black woman's natural place." The "superiority" of Brazilian elites, which was constructed and imagined, held material consequences, depended on and was sustained by the labour power and presence of a woman slave, servant, or domestic worker. As demonstrated in the first section of this chapter, the residues of colonial ideologies of European and white superiority continue to perpetuate hegemonic discourses of black inferiority in the consciousness of Brazilian citizens with "varying degrees of African ancestry" (Stanley 2009:4). At the

core of this argument rests the idea that women domestic workers in Brazil represent a social location where paternalism and discriminatory, as remnants of colonialism, persist.

Domestic service and care work are predominantly a female occupation (Brites 2013, De Souza 1980, DIEESE 2006; Preuss 1997). In Latin America, the demographics of this sector show that, for the most part, domestic workers are women of colour from poor backgrounds with low levels of education (Brites 2013). The ‘naturalization’ of domestic work and reproductive labour as women’s work (Cox 2006; Gomes and Bertolin 2011), coupled with the increasing participation of middle and upper class women in the labour force²⁵ (De Souza 1980; DIEESE 2006; Preuss 1997; Sanches and Gebrim 2003) contribute to the overwhelming number of women laboring as domestic workers. Ávila (2009) notes that despite the growing number of women active in the labour force, reproductive labour remains highly gendered, and I might add, racialized in function and identity. Thus, while domestic work continues to be racialized and gendered in ways that are historically tied to Brazil’s colonial past, the socio-economic context of contemporary domestic work is part and parcel of the unchallenged sexual division of labour. That is, the ‘liberation’ of middle and upper class women to enter the paid workforce relies on lower class women’s labour power in performing domestic and reproductive labour tasks (De Souza 1980; DIEESE 2006; Preuss 1997)²⁶. In Brazil, the large contingent of women domestic workers is also related to processes of uneven industrialization, urbanization, and economic growth, heightened by the inequality between urban and rural areas, forcing low-income populations, especially poor women, to migrate to Brazil’s urban centers for jobs (DIEESE 2006). The advance of capitalist relations in rural areas, as noted by Pereira de Melo (in Chaney Castro 1989), forces young women to migrate to the cities and enter the labour market as domestic workers. This movement from rural to urban, usually from the Northeast to the Southeast, resonates with the stories of migration in the interviews conducted and discussed in chapters four and five.

²⁵ According to *Pesquisa Nacional de Amostra por Domicílio* PNAD (National Research of Household Sampling), in 2001 there were 34.852.764 women in the labour force (employed and unemployed), representing 41,9 per cen of the *População Economicamente Ativa* PEA (Economically Active Population) (Sanches and Gebrim 2003:100).

²⁶ Bruschnini and Lombardi (1999) studied extensively the character and tendencies of the process of women entering the work force and they point out to a “double standard” where middle and upper class women enter labour that was traditionally male dominated, while lower class women remain performing tasks that are traditionally feminine.

To conclude this section, Coser's (1973) prediction on the fading away of traditional work like domestic service, has not come to pass in Brazil in light of the country's modernization. Today, poor and racialized women continue to suffer from lack of economic and educational opportunities thus remaining at the bottom of the class and status structures in 21st century Brazil. Research also shows that in spite of a conceptual divide, there is no hard line between tradition and modernity. Contemporary social relations and labour politics are being enacted and unfold as a response to the injustices of the past, but which continue to prescribe modern, rational, and liberal economic arrangements. The injustices of the present, such as lack of access to education and job opportunities, decent housing and health care, demonstrate that the politics of domestic labour is not solely based on a struggle for labour rights: it requires a re-articulation of human rights, access to citizenship, and equal opportunities.

2.3.2. Neoliberalism and Changes in the Configurations of Paid Domestic Work

Neoliberal policies and ideologies seeped into Latin American states (e.g. Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay) with particular force during their respective post-military dictatorships (Tomic, Trumper, and Dattwyler 2006). Brazil is an example where transitions from industrialization by import-substitution (ISI) to neoliberal development strategies, and from military dictatorship to political democracy (Saad Filho 2015), continued to reproduce deep-seated socio-economic inequalities (Harris 2007). Early neoliberal economic reforms in Brazil included: the liberalization of trade and international capital flows, the privatization of state-owned enterprises, financial liberalization, and the "flexibilization" of labour laws leading to the precarization of labour, rising unemployment, and growth of the informal sector (Saad Filho 2015). While a more in depth analysis of neoliberal policies in Brazil is beyond the scope of this thesis, a discussion of how neoliberal reforms, in particular those of de-regulation and flexibilization, and its consequent fragmentation of the labour market, is significant and corresponds to changes in the demographics of domestic work and the paradox of entering the occupation as *mensalista*²⁷ vs. *diarista*²⁸.

²⁷ *Mensalistas* are monthly employees, who work full-time or at least three days a week for a single employer/family/household (DIEESE 2006).

²⁸ *Diaristas* are domestic workers who get paid for the workday (rather than monthly salary). They work no more than two days a week for the same employer. According to the law, due to the lack of a continuous nature of work, *diaristas* remain outside of the purview of labour law and legal protection (Amaral dos Santos 2012).

Since Luis Inácio “Lula” da Silva’s first administration in 2003, the Workers’ Party, or *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT) juggled the maintenance of the orthodox neoliberal practices “dictated by the international capitalist system” (French and Fortes 2005:22), while promoting a “pro-poor” ideology which included the advancement of labour legislation (e.g. the *PEC*) (Saad Filho 2015). Experts explain the PT’s governance as the intertwining of democratization, left populism, and neoliberal policies (Nuijten, Koster, and Vries, 2012). While the Workers’ Party offered a hand to the disenfranchised, informal workers, and working classes through federal income subsidies and the implementation of welfare programs (e.g. *Bolsa Família*, a direct cash transfer to low income families), Nuijten et al (2012:166) note that they have also championed the notion of “self realization of the poor.” Based on a close examination and following of a slum-upgrading project in the northeast of Brazil that endorsed the participation of the local population, Nuijten et al (2012:167) argued that under the guise of participatory citizenship the same official institutions that perpetuated the marginalization of the poor were now deploying a neoliberal notion of citizenship and discourse of empowerment. While slum dwellers were included and actively engaged they were required to cooperate and go along with an imposed vision of spatial order that was infused with “middle class views of order and a civilized life” (Nuijten et al 2012:166). In this way, slum dwellers were held accountable for the success or failure of the re-settlement even though the project failed to address broader dimensions and the particular needs of the community.

Harris (2007) identifies this ideology as an integral tool for neoliberal governance: a paralyzing belief in the inevitability of the status quo where individuals are forced to think that there is no alternative to the destiny they are presented with. According to Saad Filho (2015), Lula’s second administration (2003-2006) implemented what he calls a neo-developmental approach favouring elites amidst a thriving global market. Brazil’s strong economic performance and growth was accompanied by “an unprecedented reduction of inequality” due to the implementation of redistributive policies and increases in the minimum wage (Saad-Filho 2015:15). This growth proved unsustainable as Brazil spiraled into a deep economic and political crisis. Saad Filho (2013:664) describes it as “the contradictions of left-wing policy-making under neoliberalism.” But according to the *Portal Vermelho* (Red Portal), one of the first changes introduced by the Lula administration was the creation of the *Secretaria Especial de Políticas para as Mulheres* (SPM) focusing on the implementation of

public policies promoting gender equity and the protection of women's rights²⁹. It is in this context that the plight of domestic workers took great strides with the expansion of labour rights brought to the table during Lula's first administration and the *PEC*, which was formally enacted by his PT successor and Brazilian President, Dilma Rousseff.

Harris' (2007) comparative study demonstrates the significance of a neoliberal economic ideology in the reproduction of social inequalities and servitude, as it relates to paid domestic work in the U.S. and Brazil. Harris' (2007) argument pulls from Harvey's (2005) notion of neoliberalism as a theory of political and economic practices with a strong ideological argument on individual freedom. Harris (2007) looks at neoliberal ideologies at work in Brazil and how they seep into the beliefs and practices of the employing classes, as well as taken for granted assumptions of the historical development of domestic work. He challenges, for example, the view that the re-configuration of domestic work can be seen as an "evolution," from more traditional and affective work relations (more closely associate to the work of *mensalistas*) to more rational, professional, and impersonal work arrangements (more closely associated to the work of *diaristas*). Through this lens, Harris (2007) problematizes the notion that the latter would necessarily translate into a move away from notions of servitude and into better working conditions. Rather, neoliberal discourses are part of the maintenance and reproduction of inequality. That is, neoliberalism legitimizes socio-economic inequalities and re-organizes the logic behind this work relation, portraying the *diarista* as an independent worker that maintains rational or impersonal relations with their employer, when it frees the employer of any responsibility towards the worker. Ultimately keeping domestic service undervalued and invisible to the consumer, and precarious and insecure for the worker (Harris 2007). In conclusion, Harris (2007: 96) supports the view that more substantial changes in the quality and conditions of domestic work require challenging dominant views and attitudes that prevent us from "imagining" and "conceiving" the possibility of a just society.

The effects of neoliberalism on reproductive labour are the heightened commodification of care and domestic work and "its social construction as a gendered and racialized labour market" (Farris 2013:1). While

²⁹ E.g. passing of the *Lei Maria da Penha*, a set of laws to protect women domestic violence and abuse, as well as the implementation of public policies that are concerned with women's representation in the labour market and the quality of their employment conditions (Portal Vermelho 2016)

Farris' analysis focuses on female migrant labour within European nations, her attention to the gendered and racialized dimensions of the global financial crises and its discontents carries analytical value applicable to the case of domestic workers in Brazil. She (2013) argues that migrant care workers seem an exception to the rule in terms of the levels of unemployment during a global crises. But this "exception" is deceiving since unemployment rates might be lower than other "reserve army of labour" categories but wages and working conditions are certainly worsening. In fact, it is a reflection of the gendered dimension of neoliberalism where the feminization of labour market is accompanied by the precariousness that "historically characterized female work" (Farris 2013:2). She concludes that care and affective labour are, in fact, of strategic importance in the maintenance and functioning of the neoliberal order.

In her analysis of the nature and effects of neoliberalism on women, Nadasen (2013) explains that the feminization of labour is symbolic of a contradiction embedded in the neoliberal ideology and political practice. Neoliberal reforms have only come as far as re-articulating the patriarchal order and re-asserting male dominance. And while the benefits of a neoliberal economy may be linked to the increasing representation of women in the workforce, the gap between upper class women with higher education and those who perform low-skill and low-wage labour is evidence of the crumbling of social democracy sharpening the race/class divide among women and the intensified workload and burden of working class women. And yet, Nadasen (2013) emphasizes that neoliberalism's re-working of the old modern welfare state and its labour market race/gender hierarchies creates a "political climate" from which social activism of migrant and domestic workers gain traction by contesting the very definition of "work" and social justice. According to Nadasen (2013), domestic workers' organizing in the U.S. emerged from outside old frameworks of the nation-state, welfare and social benefits captured in the New Deal. Back in the 1930s, domestic work was one of the occupations that remained outside the purview of federal labour law protections. In the words of Nadasen (2015) "A race and gender hierarchy already existed among different types of work, but New Deal labour legislation reinforced and institutionalized it through the passage of laws that protected certain workers but not others." The New Deal was largely based on male-dominated manufacturing sector and industrial unions model with a common "factory floor" and a target employer (Nadasen 2015). With the rise of precarious labour in the U.S. there has been an increase in part-time, temporary or subcontracted wage workers, where

old models of labour organizing no longer apply. Domestic workers' lack of recognition and rights led to alternative forms of organizing amongst domestic workers forming democratic alliances across occupations and directing their demands to the state rather than individual employers (Nadasen 2013). The devaluation of domestic work is rooted in the devaluation and naturalization of household labour as women's work, and thus their political agenda and struggle for labour rights requires a demand for dignity and respect. It is about countering the neoliberal ideological premises that engulf society at large. Domestic workers, Nadasen (2013) explains, deploy an intersectional analysis that takes into consideration how race, class, gender, culture, and nationality, shape the particular needs of a largely immigrant (documented and undocumented) and ethnic minority constituency. In this way, the notion of rights articulated beyond the element of citizenship. Instead, Nadasen (2013) suggests that migrant domestic workers have pushed for renewed notions of work and inclusive notions of social justice. In sum, neoliberal policies like deregulation serve to worsen the working conditions for domestic workers. At the same time, its policies have been a springboard to the re-arrangement of old notions of work and labour rights, and opened a new political space where groups like domestic workers can take advantage of and assert their identities and demands. Despite her analysis being centered in the U.S., it offers great analytical utility in the case of Brazil where domestic workers are identifying their political struggle within historical processes of subjugation and articulating labour rights in more inclusive notions of justice and citizenship (Bernardino-Costa 2011, 2014; Gonçalves 2010; Gomes and Bertolin 2011).

Herod and Aguiar (2006:102) write that the neoliberal flexibilization of labour is inscribed on the bodies of manual labourers who are seen as mere "instruments of labour" forced to adapt to "accelerated work pace and disciplinary regimes." Increasingly deregulated employment relations and loosening of workers' protections, accompanied by greater emphasis on temporary, part-time, and short-term contracts, create more precarious conditions of employment and increase the "disposability" of workers. I borrow from this analytical perspective the notion of how increasing flexibilization heightens the precariousness and vulnerability of the lower segments of the labour market and apply to the study of domestic workers' experiences defending labour rights and demanding greater valorization of their work. Grappling with the paradox of *mensalistas* vs. *diaristas* will then provide us with a more nuanced understanding of the ways in

which neoliberal policies and its accompanying ideological force, have simultaneous and contradictory effects in the conditions of labour, work relations, and articulation of rights. I turn next to discussing this paradox.

2.4. The Paradox between *Mensalistas* and *Diaristas*: A Question of Choice or Change?

In her dissertation, Monticelli (2013) traces the historical evidence of women working as *diaristas* and finds that this form of work has been a part of the reality of Brazilian households since the early years after the abolition of slavery. She notes, however, that the characteristics and tasks involved in the occupation have changed over time. Whereas historically *diaristas* were hired for a day of work to perform a specific task, such as polish the silverware or do laundry, nowadays it is common for their workday to involve a variety of tasks in the household, including cooking, heavy duty cleaning, dusting, laundering, etc. (Monticelli 2013). Today *diaristas* represent a segment of the workforce that is older, whiter with less years of formal education, in comparison to *mensalistas*. On average, they also earn higher salaries and work fewer hours per week than *mensalistas*³⁰. The percentage of domestic workers working as *diaristas* increased from 21.4 per cent in 2004 to 30.6 per cent in 2011 (DIEESE 2013). The increase is due to the fragmentation of the labour force and rising number of autonomous and independent workers resembling “independent contractors” or “free lance” workers in the United States (Fraga 2013). Fraga (2013) links this demand to the needs of middle-class women who are entering the work force (many of whom are married with children), and lower income families, who would otherwise not be able to hire full-time help.

While others acknowledge this tendency (DIEESE 2013; Harris 2007), Fraga (2013) points out that contrary to popular assumption, the increase in the number of women working as *diaristas* was not accompanied by a decrease in the number of women working as *mensalistas*. Despite a growing number of women who work as *diaristas*, or daily cleaners especially in the urban centers, the majority of domestic workers in Brazil continue to be hired as *mensalistas* (Fraga 2013:84; Harris 2007:90). *Mensalistas*, or monthly employees, work full-time or at least three days a week for a single employer/family/household (DIEESE 2006) The work of *mensalistas* involves numerous household tasks including a combination of cleaning, cooking, and often, caring for children, elders, and/or pets, as well as taking on responsibilities that involve

³⁰ The monthly salary of domestic workers is often based on increments of the national minimum wage (IPEA 2011). Over the last decade, the government implemented annual decrees to adjust the minimum wage, resulting in an increase from R\$151 in 2000 to R\$880 in 2016 (roughly CAD\$53 to CAD\$313) (Portal Brasil 2016).

overseeing the routine and schedule of the families for whom they work. *Mensalistas* are either live-in, when they reside in their workplace (living there full-time or going home on their days off), or commute daily between home (usually located on the peripheries of the city) and their workplace. This work arrangement used to be more common and even desirable, especially among young and/or single domestic workers in Brazil's main cities since very often they had recently migrated from other regions of the country and could sidestep the scarcity of subsidized housing by living in their place of employment (Harris 2007:47). Yet, being a live-in *mensalista* has its drawbacks. For while an intense proximity to employers may foster closer and more affective ties, it can also result in more strenuous and exploitative work relations. The condition of live-in workers holds privileges and oppressions that are characteristic of traditional paternalist relations in Brazil (Álvaro 2012:121). Depending on the level of control and how strict employers are, live-in workers have difficulty separating work and rest hours, as well as juggling multiple responsibilities and tasks throughout the week, in some cases resulting in the neglect of their children and families³¹.

In the state of São Paulo alone, 44.4 per cent of women domestic workers are *mensalistas* without a *carteira de trabalho assinada* (signed work card), while 31.7 per cent are *mensalistas* with a signed work card. The remaining 23.8 per cent are *diaristas* (DIEESE 2006:24). In fact, there has been an increase in the percentage of registered *mensalistas* (when the employment is formalized and employees have their work card signed),³² but at the same time, a decrease in the number of *mensalistas* who work without a signed work card (Fraga 2013:181). From 2004 to 2011 the percentage of *mensalistas* who did not have their work card signed dropped from 57 per cent to 44.9 per cent (DIEESE 2013). But as Fraga (2013) notes, even though there has been an increase in the percentage of workers carrying a signed work card, their numbers remained low, hovering around 24 per cent in 2011 (DIEESE 2013). The formality of domestic work seems to have a correlation with the “security” of the job in terms of how long the worker is likely to remain working for the same employer. A study conducted by the *Departamento Intersindical de Estatística e Estudos Socioeconômicos* (DIEESE 2006:28) demonstrated that more than half of the *mensalistas* without the signed work card have been in the same job for a maximum of six months. Those with signed work card have been working in the same household for

³¹ See chapter entitled, ‘Who Takes Care of the Maid’s Children? Exploring the Costs of Domestic Service (Romero, Mary) in edited book *Feminism and Families*, edited by H. L. Nelson (1997).

³² *Carteira de trabalho* translates as work card and is the equivalent of an employment agreement in Canada.

about two years. This study also shows that *mensalistas* are more likely to pay into their social security program since once they are formally registered, it is mandatory for the employer to make monthly contributions for those payments. *Mensalistas* also have higher salaries but they tend to perform longer hours of work than their informal colleagues especially if they are live-in workers (DIEESE 2006:29). Another factor that seems to correlate with access to social security is the neighborhood of their place of employment. Pereira de Melo (in Caney and Castro 1989) explains that in São Paulo domestic workers employed in more affluent neighborhoods such as Pacaembu, Morumbi, and Jardins, show higher levels of formal work registration and access to social security. This statistic reveals a sense of “security” that is afforded by the formalization of the work based on a contract and also influences the conditions of work and trust in the relationship between employer and employee.

Fraga (2013) assesses the diverging interests and interpretations in the field of legislation and labour rights with respect to how they determine and differentiate between the work of *diaristas* and *mensalistas*. He uses the concept of "continuous nature" of work to argue for greater disparity or greater similarity between the two work arrangements, depending on who one favours. In fact, Fraga (2013) points out that not all *diaristas* are sole cleaners; their tasks may involve cooking and the care of pets, for example. In addition, this form of employment frees employers from the cost and liability of a work contract (Fraga 2013). The motivations for women to work as *diaristas* include: greater autonomy and control of the work duties, possibility of increasing their monthly income, greater independence to establish work schedule, and greater control over work hours (Fraga 2013). In this way, the work of *diaristas* is considered a more rational, impersonal, and entrepreneurial form of domestic labour (Harris 2007). In line with this thought, Pereira de Melo (in Castro and Chaney 1989:252) argues that this form of domestic work “represents a more clear-cut form of remunerated employment,” making it easier for workers to establish a more defined work schedule and relationship to their bosses. But, Monticelli (2013) and Fraga (2013) are critical of this argument saying that *diaristas* remain subject to the affective nature of domestic work and develop interpersonal relations with their employers. In other words, this form of labour does not compensate for the lack of legal protection or employment contract *diaristas* endure and their experience of high levels of economic insecurity.

These characteristics make daily work more favourable, but are not likely to coincide with the conditions of work in the case of daily contract cleaners employed by a professional cleaning service agency³³. Harris (2007) notes that in the case of the United States, and other global north countries, professional cleaning services like Molly Maid are becoming more common. These companies that offer cleaning services, however, remain a relatively minor segment of the cleaning industry and services in Brazil (Harris 2007). The social conditions influencing these changes are: the work of *diaristas* can be understood from a perspective of an option with greater autonomy even if accompanied by greater risk; providing flexibility between productive and reproductive labour; allowing for greater balance to be maintained between their own homes and families; and/or combining with independent work to run their own business (DIEESE 2013; Fraga 2013). Nonetheless, the argument that an increasing number of domestic workers hired as *diaristas* reflected in greater professionalization³⁴ of domestic work, is contentious especially when we consider the fragmentation of the labour market and how this segment is excluded from the *PEC* regulations and its extended labour rights.

In Brazil the significance of paid domestic work does not simply rest in the number of women working in the domestic work occupation. As the remaining of this analysis will demonstrate, domestic work is the foremost example of the ways in which class, gender, and race intersect to maintain the subjugation of poor women of colour. Exploring the intersections between class, gender, and race, in the context of domestic work, enhances our understanding of hegemonic discourses in Brazil. Most importantly, recent academic inquiry focusing on the lives, struggles, and social activism of Afro-Brazilian women (Bernardino-Costa 2014; Caldwell 2004; Gonçalves 2010; Henery 2011) demonstrate how the stories these intersections tell carry the power to forge avenues for empowerment, agency and social change. The impact of neoliberal policies is seen as mediated and experienced differently according to the intersections between class, gender, race, as well as other social categories (Ganti 2014). Brazil's neoliberal model of economic development manifests itself through heightened privatization and roll back of public services, the de-regulation, flexibilization, and

³³ See Barbara Ehrenreich's (2001) book entitled *Nickel and Dimed*, specifically chapter two 'Scrubbing in Maine,' for a first hand account of her undercover experience working for 'Merry Maid' a cleaning service agency for US\$6.50 an hour. In it, she critiques the notion that low wage jobs, such as cleaning homes, require no or low skills, and unveils the back breaking demands and exploitation involved in this supposedly more professional service.

³⁴ In Brazil, the term professionalization is linked to skill-enhancing programs and also to the choice of entering the occupation as a *diarista*, considered a more rational/modern/ impersonal work arrangement, which is part and parcel of a neoliberal logic and policies that perpetuate the reproduction of social inequalities.

fragmentation of labour markets, further aggravate unemployment and the precarious conditions of work and lives that marginalized working classes are faced with (Saad Filho 2015). In the case of domestic work, this fragmentation translates into a paradox within the occupation, where women grapple with the precarious decision to enter the occupation as an “independent worker” (*diarista*) that performs work for various employers without formal contract, or as a *mensalista*, who works full-time for a sole household based on a monthly salary. As the remaining of this thesis will demonstrate, this choice is a precarious one considering the marginal advantages and the vulnerabilities experienced by both forms of employment, such as workers’ level of autonomy and risk, which are further implicated by the fact that *diaristas* are excluded from legislative protections and labour rights. In fact, neoliberal ideologies are embedded in the relationship and power asymmetries between domestic workers and employers in such a way that it reinforces and reproduces class/gender/race divides. And yet, this thesis also suggests that the oppressive nature of neoliberal ideologies created a demand for a renewed political activism that merged the issue of labour rights to larger stakes such as racial oppression and lack of access to citizenship (Nadasen 2013).

2.5. Theoretical Framework

My research and analysis are informed by feminist theories of intersectionality and affective labour. The feminist theories presented in this section inform the subsequent discussion of the significance of the *PEC* and the potential transformative power of labour rights to improve the terms and conditions of paid domestic work in Brazil. This encourages a dialogic approach to issues of class, gender, and race-based discrimination (as it is produced and contested) in relation to the narratives of domestic workers who participated in this study. In this way, the present study contributes to the ongoing debate on how structural inequalities influence labour market segregation and reinforce the undervaluation of care and domestic work.

2.5.1. Intersectionality

Intersectionality came about as a critique of essentializing notions of womanhood and race in the early feminist politics and civil rights movements starting in the 1960s (Collins and Chepp 2013). Intersectionality extends beyond a conceptual critique, it is an important tool for anti-discrimination and social movement politics, intersectionality exposed the ways in which looking at power and discrimination from a single-axis limited legal and sociological thinking, as well as political activism (Cho, Crenshaw, McCall 2013:787). While

the roots of intersectionality rest on feminist legal scholarship and anti-discriminatory policies (Crenshaw 1989), its academic legacy is firmly linked to women and gender studies departments (Collins 2000; Lorde 1984; Nash 2014). The basis of intersectionality, whether it is deployed as an approach, a methodology, or analytical lens, is that social categories are “intimately entangled and unknowable apart from each other” (Nash 2014:57). Others defend an approach to intersectionality that considers the dimensions of inequality as dynamic based on the notion that individual categories, oppressions and privileges, do not work in isolation since they influence the process of identity formation, and the meaning and experience of one another in *dynamic* ways (Chikwendu 2013; Walby 2007). Ferree (2008) argues that the intersections of, for example gender and race, should be considered processes through which one affects the meaning and experience of the other.

While scholars from various social science disciplines embrace, critique, and/or reject, the premise of intersectionality, one of the promising fields where it has been applied is political activism and social change (Chun et al. 2003; Doetsch-Kidder 2012; Shurr and Segebart 2012; Sweet 2015). Critical race and feminist theorists place emphasis on the socially constructed nature of categories of identity. In other words, they look at the processes that influence identity formation that arise from those living at the margins of governmentality who are socially neglected and suffer from epistemological impositions of a homogenizing and hegemonic order (McCall 2005). This approach led to a renewed development in the field of intersectionality that aims to de-construct normative discourses by unearthing the sources of symbolic violence and material inequalities (McCall 2005). Feminist scholars who take on this project are invested in eliminating borders and breaking through boundaries of language and social practice. This renewed approach also focuses on “neglected points of intersection” (McCall 2005:1780) often through personal narratives that depict the complexity of individual experience but focuses on a specific dimension of those individual’s experiences that prove most relevant to the social relations and/or subject of analysis. Finally, McCall (2005:1783) notes, “the point is not to deny the importance - both material and discursive – of categories but to focus on the process by which they are produced, experienced, reproduced, and resisted in everyday life.”

The collaborative publication by Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (2013:795) resolved the theoretical conundrum by advocating intersectionality as an analytic sensibility by which one adopts “an intersectional

way of thinking about the problem of sameness and difference and its relation to power.” McBride, Hebson, and Holgate (2015), who stress the lack of scholarship deploying intersectionality in the field of work and employment relations³⁵, also argue for the benefits of deploying an “awareness” of the complexities and diversities that exist within and between each category, or, what they call an *intersectionally sensitive approach*. Their point is that in doing so scholars will “reflect, more explicitly, on the generalizations and conclusions we draw from our research” (McBride et al. 2015:3-4). This, in practice, speaks to designing methods of inquiry that are sensitive to and reflect an awareness of the diversity within the groups and categories under consideration. For example, McBride et al. (2015) argue that in the field of work and employment relations an intersectionally sensitive approach should take into explicit consideration the limits of generalizations. In looking at women’s experiences within stratified labour markets, for instance, one would consider not only the effects of gender but also the effects of gender in relation to other categories, such as race, nationality, or sexual orientation, and how those intersections operate and create particular conditions of oppression, exploitation, and marginalization. Further, they argue that in the field of employment studies, intersectionality encourages us to think of questions that are less obvious, considering for example “the complexity of how power operates” (McBride et al 2015:6) through gendered and racialized discourses.

Given the relevance of those examples, my efforts focus on the permeable nature of social categories and on deploying intersectionality as a way of explicating larger socio-political structures. My research studies the intersections and uncovers the complexity and diversity of domestic workers’ identities and embodied experiences within and between the social categories I take into consideration. In this way, it falls under what McCall (2005) considers an *intracategorical* approach that takes into account individual and group diversity by analyzing workers’ narratives with a caution not to lean or jump to essentialisms. This approach as described by McCall (2005:1774) recognizes the relationship between social categories while maintaining a “critical stance towards categories” and serves to advance research that focuses on the complexity of individual experiences within social groups that are marginalized, discriminated, or oppressed. While focusing on the narratives of participants as a starting point for my analysis, those narratives do not reflect or represent

³⁵ For an excellent example of this limited body of work, see: Browne and Misra (2003) “The Intersection of Gender and Race in the Labour Market” *Annual Review of Sociology* 29:487-513; and Glenn, E. N. (1985) “Racial Ethnic Women’s Labour: The Intersection of Race, Gender, and Class Oppression.” *Review of Radical Political Economics* 17(3): 86-108.

generalizing arguments of the occupation. Instead, they provide us with insights to dialogue with previous and future studies, discourses, and knowledge production relevant in the study of contemporary paid domestic work in Brazil.

Chikwendu's (2013) research project about LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Queer) Nigerian-born women living in the U.S. engages with the political commitment of intersectionality by examining identity and embodied experience. Chikwendu (2013:35) pushes for intersectionality's "elasticity," emphasizing feelings of ambivalence arising from individual awareness of their social location. Those feelings of ambivalence constitute the basis for a politics of agency and empowerment of a highly vulnerable social group that have to manoeuvre various forms of oppression by exercising a "careful deployment" of their identities to ensure "daily survival" (Chikwendu 2013:45). Here I would like to draw attention to the use of *spaces* as a reference to geographic location where one exists and acts, what Valentine (2007) considers a focal (but yet to be explored) point of intersectionality. When bell hooks (2004:159) speaks of being located in the margins and transforming that space into a site of resistance "of radical openness and possibility," she is speaking of the material and discursive implications of space: access, trajectories, and boundaries that shape our daily struggles. Others have thought of graphic intersectional representations in ways that implicate space and social location, such as crossroads (Crenshaw 1989), matrix of domination (Collins 2000), constellations of power (Collins and Chepp 2013), and *circular consciousness* (Chikwendu 2013).

In her critique of identity and experience within feminist research, Cerwonka (2011:67) argues that identity, experience, and bodily desire, are fluid and unstable "unconscious products of social negotiations" requiring consideration of historical processes and larger political contexts. This notion of fluidity is an incisive pillar of research examining social processes and power relations (Cho, Crenshaw, McCall 2013; Ferree 2008; Silva and Ornat 2014). Chikwendu (2013), for instance, incorporates the notion of fluidity in the study of intersectional lives and identities, by arguing that identities are in themselves fluid. They are unstable and multi-dimensional. Its essence is dynamic and part of a process and project, which are indefinite and transformative in their social nature. In a similar way, Cerwonka (2011) advocates that the various categories of identification that individuals embody are non-hierarchical and leave traces and influence one another at their points of intersection. Those intersections are fluid and influenced by historical processes and socio-

political contexts. By using the term *circular*, Cerwonka (2011) suggests continuous movement where understandings and perspectives are evolving and changing, relating to others and the world as they navigate in an exercise of self-awareness. *Circular consciousness* accounts for embodied experience, agency, awareness, ambivalences, and the ways in which intersecting social positioning interact and “leave traces upon each other” (Chikwendu 2012:36).

Circular consciousness, she argues, can also be understood as a movement around power and subjectivity where we realize that categories can hover and involuntarily mark us, carrying potential for agency to “deflect unwanted definitions of our identities” (Cerwonka 2011:36). By referencing the work of black feminist scholar, Patricia Hill Collins, Chikwendu (2013) emphasizes that viewing consciousness as dynamic, always evolving and negotiated is crucial for the maintenance of individual and group agency. And by understanding intersectionality as lived experience we begin to see “a conscious understanding of the various circuits that one’s multiple identities move, or are pulled through: geographic locations, embodied positionalities, invisible lines” (Chikwendu 2013:34). Individual subjects navigate everyday spaces and relations by strategically deploying aspects of our identity (Chikwendu 2013). Chikwendu (2013:34) says this has the potential to serve as a tool of empowerment, a way of “redefining, transgressing, and critiquing hegemonic constructions of identity categories.” This resonates with Crenshaw’s (1991:105) founding argument that “the most critical resistance strategy for dis-empowered groups is to occupy and defend a politics of social location rather than to vacate and destroy it.” This speaks to the political force of challenging hegemonic constructions of class, gender, race, family, and work, by articulating the source and character of those forms of domination that perpetuates the marginalization of individuals and minorities. In this sense, domestic workers, who have been historically marginalized and undervalued, counter discourses of subjugation and the stigma associated with their labour, not by escaping domestic work, but by re-defining notions of dignity, rights, and respect.

Intersectionality has only recently been articulated in the context of domestic work in Brazil. Bernardino-Costa (2014) is an example of intersectionality deployed as an analytical lens that traces the historically derived forms of gender and racial domination that perpetuate the undervalorization, invisibility, and marginalization of women domestic workers in the context of their political struggles and activism. Macedo (2015) provides us with a different angle, by applying an intersectional analysis of how a re-

articulation of social categories of difference influences the agency and trajectory of a woman domestic worker who transitions into a career as a nursing assistant. In the context of a favourable socioeconomic climate, Macedo (2015) argues that two elements influenced the trajectory of this former domestic worker: greater access to material and cultural goods (before only accessible to middle and upper classes) and the pursuit of continuing education that afforded her the possibility of leaving domestic work. According to Macedo (2015) those two elements correspond with a change in the subject's perception of her social positioning and the possibilities she envisioned for herself. His study deploys an intersectional analysis that seeks to understand how a former domestic worker perceived the various forms of discrimination that were linked to her gender, race, and class positioning, drawing a picture of how this perception changed over time and influenced her sense of agency. My thesis contributes to these examples by engaging in a novel application of intersectionality to the field of domestic work by seeking to expand the possibilities of an intersectional analysis to the working and private lives of non-unionized women domestic workers. Instead of seeking to unveil elements of agency that transpire from a trajectory that is guided by a movement away from domestic labour, I examine workers' experiences defending labour rights within the occupation.

This approach to intersectionality serves as an epistemic bridge to the study of domestic work as affective labour (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2014). The notion of affective labour complements my analysis as it relates to the nuances of the power dynamics embedded in workers' experiences and relationship with employers. Affect also reveals the ways in which understandings of race/colour and identity/belonging are infused with sentiments, unequal attachments, and orientations that "move people towards action and inaction in relation to racism and discrimination" (Emboaba Da Costa 2016:24). My contribution then is to bring the theoretical abstraction of intersectionality to life by including the affective textures in an analysis of domestic work, and the interpersonal relations between domestic workers and their employers.

In the next section I turn to the notion of domestic work as affective labour and the household as a field of power relations where affects emerge and circulate, as, not only a part of individual identifications, experiences, and conviviality, but as well as expressions of structural inequalities, and dominant discourses that perpetuate the devaluation and subordination of domestic workers. This offers a framework for the subsequent empirical analysis where connections between the material (task based) and the relational realms of

their labour are seen as inter-related and inter-dependent constituting a politics of affects (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010). This approach reveals some of the particular characteristics and challenges faced by women domestic workers not easily remedied or addressed by labour legislation alone.

2.5.2. Affective Labour

The way we conceptualize of affect in the context of domestic work resonates with the earlier notions of “emotional labour,” a term coined by Hochschild (1983) in her study of the management of feelings (both of self and other) involved in the work of flight attendants. Emotional labour extends beyond the field of customer service jobs, to the private realm of the household and reproductive labour. A perspective of domestic work as emotional labour speaks of the requirements both in terms of *who* is doing the work and *how* the work should be performed. It relates to the gendered and racialized requirements, expectations, and investments associated with care and housework. As noted by Gutiérrez-Rodríguez (2010) this form of emotional labour is entangled in normative rules ascribed to the relational and social scripts that inform interactions between domestic workers and other household members. When a woman is employed in a household to perform domestic work there is an underlying and often unspoken emotional labour that she is expected to manage and fulfill. Whether attending to the emotional needs of a child, an elder, or other household member, or suppressing/managing her own emotions not to disrupt the household conviviality. Furthermore, the management of emotions and behavior is determined by one’s “social location within interlocking race, gender and class hierarchies.” (Chong 2009). Meaning, an emotional labour analysis of domestic work exposes the social norms at play in shaping workers’ identities, reinforcing the class-based, gendered, and racialized hierarchies at play, and reproducing the naturalization and legitimization of domestic work as the work of poor women of colour. What happens when we take into consideration a domestic worker who performs her tasks in an empty household and whose labour does not require human interaction? Affect departs from this questioning, moving beyond “cognitive frameworks of emotions” (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010:13), towards an understanding of domestic work that seeks to grasp the connection between the physical activity and vitality of the worker, the bodily reactions and sensations, the ways in which their labour is affected by and through the space that connects them to, an even, absent employer.

Teresa Brennan (2004) describes affect as a projection or transmission of something that carries energy

and the power to influence material and psychological things. Affects can also be directed, outwards or inwards, when it takes the shape of “affective burden” (Brennan 2004:6). The transmission of affect emphasizes our permeability as individuals and living things. It relates to the affective quality that travels between bodies, objects, and fills spaces with an atmosphere. The origin of affect, Brennan (2004) argues, is social but it produces physical, biological, and psychological effects. Embracing the “affective turn” within post-structural and queer theories, Ahmed (2010) argues that affect and the body experiencing it are embedded in larger structures of power, not in a neat fashion but rather in contradictory ways. Emotions, as the way we conceptualize and experience affect, are infused with relationality, movement, and desire (Ahmed 2010). According to Ahmed (2010:32) there is a relationship between affect as “an orientation towards” something or someone and the openness to be moved (negatively or positively) in the unfolding of political agency.

Affect is understood as a force that can impact “a person’s body or mind” (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010:129) and thus leave a feeling or emotional imprint on that person. Affect can be transmitted, felt, and experienced; understood and remembered; and it may linger or dissipate quickly. The ways in which affect permeates the household can help us think through the relational character of domestic work where a social distance and hierarchy is at play, and realize how it impacts the quality of those relations and the conditions of work that employees speak of. In her empirical analysis of the experiences of migrant domestic workers’ labouring in Europe, Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2010) deploys a postmodern and decolonial approach to the multiple relations between gender, discourse, and the intimate/personal/subjective experiences. Despite the challenges of researching subjectivities, bringing the affective textures of workers’ experiences to the forefront evokes a more nuanced perspective on the gendered and racialized boundaries shaping the relationship between employers and employees.

More recently, Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2014:45) engaged with a racialized notion of affect and the affective dimension of the social in the study of paid domestic work arguing that feelings, sensations, and emotions are inseparable from the “social semantics of place and time,” understood as processes of feminization and coloniality. The feminization of work refers to the gendered dimension of labour stratification, the over-representation of minority and low-income women in insecure occupations, which is

linked to the devaluation and invisibility of domestic work. The coloniality of labour relates to labour exploitation and subjugation based on colonial classifications of race and value that construed enslaved and colonized subjects as “other” (Quijano in Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2014:49). This is also linked to the stigma and devaluation of domestic workers where “[t]he impression of feelings of invisibility and worthlessness are negotiated [...], reviving the cultural logic of abjection as these evolve from a racializing and feminising script of power” (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2014:49). In addition, she described the social (legal and labour conditions) and affective dimensions of negotiations around domestic work by stressing that the latter brings nuance understanding of how those conditions are felt, experienced, and sensed (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2014). Furthermore, Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2014:50) notes how the feelings of devaluation and invisibility, which carry a disanimating/alienating/negative force “stands in contrast to the impact that domestic work has on the household as an animating force.” By looking at the affective textures of domestic work we place emphasis on the forces of emotional and physical qualities of care that circulate in the household and leave traces upon objects, bodies, spaces, and relations. When it comes to labour rights and legal demands, to conceive of domestic work as affective labour substantiates the claim of its intrinsic value for life and social reproduction.

The notion of affect bridges the material and social conditions of domestic work to speak of the ambivalent feelings and corporeal experiences that emanate from the affect of the intimate and uneven power relations within the household. Recognizing paid domestic work as affective labour highlights the power asymmetries and interdependencies between employer and employee on the level of bodily and emotional feelings. A focus on the everyday experiences, affective relations, and power dynamics circulating in Brazilian households through workers’ narratives captures the spectrum of “unequal trajectories of affect and belonging” from harmonious attachments and bonds to suffocating burdens and constraints (Emboaba da Costa 2016:41). The devaluation and “invisibility” of domestic work (Preuss 1997:53) has material, psychic, emotional, and corporeal consequences in the everyday experiences of workers. These consequences surface from the affective exchanges and power dynamics that emerge when we look at relationships between employers and employees, all of which will be further examined in tandem with an intersectional sensibility in the empirical chapters of this thesis.

In this chapter I reviewed the literature on paid domestic work in Brazil most relevant to the topic of my research. I began with a brief explanation of the historically derived oppressions and colonial systems of domination as it relates to the over-representation of Afro-Brazilian women in the occupation. This includes themes on cultural notions of servitude, as well as the devaluation and stigma associated with housework. This was followed by a review of the notion of Brazil as a “racial democracy,” a project, myth, or utopia providing modern Brazil with a foundation as a *mestiço* nation which perpetuated decades of denial of racial discrimination. Black activism and research on race relations in Brazil have successfully debunked this myth and brought forth demands for affirmative action and policies of inclusion. More recently, domestic workers’ activism is articulating gender and racial forms of political empowerment and labour consciousness to challenge oppression and exploitation. I then described some of the continuities and transformations scholars identified in their own examinations of paid domestic labour. In spite of an increase in access to labour rights, domestic work remains linked to cultural notions of servitude, gender and racial domination, as well as the sexual division of labour. All of these, in one form or another, remain unchallenged, and domestic work continues to be seen as poor women of colour’s work. The persistence of socio-economic inequalities is understood in the context of neoliberal policies and the fragmentation of the labour market. The neoliberal economic model means that informality and precarization of labour are forces that counter the potential transformations domestic workers expect to achieve through a language and exercise of labour rights. Further, based on previous quantitative research and empirical studies, I identified the specific challenges domestic workers face relating working conditions, relations with employers, and how these inform the nature of their labour struggle, where dignity and valorization come hand in hand with labour codes.

Finally, I described how, by deploying an intersectional sensibility and the notion of *circular consciousness*, my research contributes to an understanding of domestic workers’ awareness of their social location and embodied experiences. This serves to integrate notions of labour consciousness and empowerment outside the political arena or union membership in their everyday lives. I combine this fluid and dynamic intersectional approach to the conceptualization of domestic work as affective labour. The latter is key in an analysis of domestic workers’ sense of agency and self-awareness in the ways they conceive of and navigate the hierarchies and power dynamics within the households they work. By combining these two

feminist approaches I draw insights of how class, gender, and racial identifications inform, influence, and affect the accounts of the women domestic workers who participated in this study.

The next chapter describes the methodological steps undertaken and feminist orientations inspiring my research and thesis. I address the preliminary organization of my fieldwork vis-à-vis the reality of being in the field and the challenges in reaching research participants to conduct interviews with women domestic workers who juggle their time between demanding work schedules and their private lives, homes, and families.

Chapter 3. Methodology

This thesis examines the everyday experiences of women domestic workers labouring in Brazil by focusing on monthly employees, or *mensalistas*, whose work arrangements and relations are covered by the new legislation. In order to gather first hand accounts of *mensalistas* I spent two months in the city of São Paulo (in the state of São Paulo). I combine primary and secondary data collection with an intersectional sensibility (McBride et al. 2015) and the notion of *circular consciousness* (Chikwendu 2012) to study domestic work as affective labour (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010). As chapter two illustrates, the academic literature on domestic work in Brazil, particularly those produced in the social sciences, demonstrates an increasing interest in the voice of women domestic workers³⁶ (Bernardino-Costa 2014; Brites 2008, 2013, 2014; Amaral dos Santos 2012; Goldstein 2003; Gonçalves 2010; Harrington 2015; Harris 2007; Monticelli 2013; Velho 2012), including the deployment of participatory methodologies in an effort to convey the social textures and intersections influencing their lives (Cornwall, Capibaribe, and Gonçalves 2010; Cornwall and Sardenberg 2014). My research builds on this commitment by employing a methodology that engages with research participants through the act of witnessing³⁷ to map the various intersections that give agency to women domestic workers in Brazil. This research is designed as a case study that begins with the standpoint of domestic workers and weaves their narratives into an intersectional analysis of the dynamics of power, and the potential for empowerment in the context of new labour rights.

Preliminary research and initial literature review helps identify the gaps in the literature, and it is these gaps that inspire my research and fieldwork activities. Recent studies on domestic work in Brazil focus on militant and/or unionized domestic workers with reference to coalitions with other social and civil rights' movements promoting racial and gender equality (Gonçalves 2010), government agencies assisting in legal protection, as well as the role of grassroots organizing and state-directed activism invested in raising workers' consciousness to lobby for change (Bernardino-Costa 2014; Harrington 2015). However, little has been done

³⁶ For an example of literary work based on the testimony, life experience, and political trajectory of a militant woman and former domestic worker in Brazil, see *A Luta Que Me Faz Crescer* (Parisius 1999).

³⁷ In her book *Transforming Feminist Practice: Non-Violence, Social Justice, and the Possibilities of a Spiritualized Feminism* (2003), Leela Fernandes discusses the politics of representation and power dynamics embedded in social research. She develops a liberatory form of knowledge production carrying an ethical/spiritual responsibility through what she calls an act of witnessing. I discuss this in more detail in the final section of this chapter.

on women domestic workers un-affiliated with local unions and who presumably face the greatest challenges in their workplaces. It is this segment of the work force, whose first-hand accounts are less likely to circulate in the media or in the academic literature, which is the subject of this research. The women in this study were interviewed in a semi-structured format. Their narratives are the source and guiding force for the sociologically relevant themes identified and examined herein.

The themes that emerged from our conversations are of two kinds: (1) paid affective labour including: their life trajectories; migration to São Paulo; daily commute to and from work; relationship with employers and their children as well as other members of the household; their own families, motherhood, and children; and (2) labour rights: work tasks, duties, responsibilities, work arrangements and the intensity of such undertakings; informality (e.g., work card), the *Emenda Constitucional* n°72/2013, also known as *PEC Das Domésticas*, workers' experiences claiming those rights; social stigma, and discrimination, and their perception of transformations in regards to the valorization and recognition of their occupation in the workplace and society at large. A discussion and analysis of these themes and their composing elements constitute the focus and strength of this thesis.

3.1. Domestic Workers: A 'Hard to Reach Population'

Recruiting domestic workers is a particularly challenging endeavour from a methodological point of view. Looking at work experiences of West Indian domestic workers in New York City, Sellers, Wilson, and Harris (in Jackson and Caldwell 2012) make recommendations on how to recruit and retain participants who are considered a "hard to reach population" like those in low-wage work and other marginalized occupations lacking social resources. Their key recommendation on recruitment is to establish personal contact with members and/or leaders of the community (e.g. church or other organizations) who will then facilitate initial contact and formal introductions to potential participants. This will then create a network of people for face-to-face and/or phone interactions and interviews (Sellers, Wilson, Harris in Jackson and Caldwell 2012:155). In my fieldwork experience I had prior contact and relationship to the community I am studying. It is well worth re-establishing a strong foundation on these contacts and ties in order to return to dialogue, and create a web of key informants and participants for researching endeavours. Sellers, Wilson and Harris (in Jackson and Caldwell 2012:161) also encourage researchers to be conscious of workers' time constraints, employee

vulnerability, and how gender differences affect the content and dynamic of face-to-face interviews. To guard against these invasions of privacy they suggest matching genders of researcher and participants and conduct interviews in places familiar to study participants (156). This advice proved to be an important step in my own organization of research design.

Domestic work takes place in private homes and except for errands to the grocery store, walking dogs, or accompanying children to school, the majority of *domésticas* time is spent in the confines of the household. This makes it difficult to approach workers “at random.” Therefore, it makes sense to consider the “real-life circumstances” of our research participants (in Sellers, Wilson, and Harris 2012:164) when seeking to map the spatial, daily, and structural process that our research participants live with. More often than not domestic workers endure long hours of work and their commutes to the geographic peripheries of the city are time consuming, whether daily, on the weekends, or on occasional visits to relatives and friends. With little time off to devote to their own lives and families, I needed to understand their situation and consider ways to facilitate their participation in this research project. This wasn’t easy! Two weeks into my fieldwork and I was still revising my ethics application to submit to the UBCO Research Ethics Board. Meanwhile, I had the opportunity to engage in informal conversations with family members, friends, and acquaintances about my research focus. When describing my recruitment methods and especially the use of a poster to garner interest in the study, friends and relatives alike reacted with disbelief. They thought it unlikely that domestic workers would feel compelled to respond to a recruitment poster taped to a wall. As it turned out, they were right since I did not receive any response through this avenue of recruitment. So, I quickly shifted my approach towards personal contacts and “snowball” sampling (Bryman 2001: 98-99). Initially, I asked people I know (some of whom employ domestic workers) if they knew anyone who might be interested in participating in this study and willing to grant me an interview. Ricardo, who works as doormen at my mother’s apartment building and whose wife has been employed in domestic work for decades, showed an enthusiasm to help, and so he was key in facilitating access and contact with potential research participants. Upon contacting the first group of potential research participants, I distributed to them a short introductory letter in Portuguese explaining the purpose and scope of my research. In doing so I wanted to convey to them information necessary to help them decide to participate or not in the study. Once those who agreed to participate

communicated to me their wish, we established a place and time to meet and discuss their experiences as domestic workers. All but one of these conversations ended with a confirmation to participate in the study. After conducting a couple of interviews, I asked those participants to refer to me other people they know who are employed in domestic work and who might be willing to take part in the study. A few interviewees were able to provide names and contact information. I subsequently contacted them and moved on to face-to-face interviews.

3.2. Interviews

Interviews with domestic workers informing this study took place in the city of São Paulo except one, which took place in Ilhabela, São Sebastião, in the state of São Paulo. The interviews took place at the participants' preferred locations. Half of them were conducted at participants' homes or in the vicinity of their workplaces. The other half were in my mother's flat in the west side of São Paulo. In every case, I began the interview with an explanation of the consent form and their right to anonymity and confidentiality in this project. This done, an informal conversation ensued, where we would chat casually for about five minutes before I turned on the digital recorder and began the interview. In such cases, these 'off the record' conversations are considered 'small but important talk,' since they provide an opportunity to establish rapport and clarify issues related to confidentiality (Sellers, Wilson, Harris in Jackson and Caldwell 2012:161). They also make for a "breathing moment" as interviewer and respondent settle in each other's presence. Initially, I expected to be doing most of the talking in the initial phase of interviewing and I planned on telling participants about my background, my connection to the subject of domestic work and how the research was part of my MA studies in Canada. My hope in doing this was to re-enforce the credibility of my interest and preparedness to undertake such a study. I certainly did not follow a rigid and inflexible bullet point list of questions. That is to say, if conversation took off on a tangent, I did not make it a point to reign in the interviewee and remind her of the questions at hand. Since they were giving me their valuable free time, and perhaps for the first time were asked to discuss their working conditions with an interested party, I saw best to let them speak even if some of what they told me had little to do with my research questions. The average interview lasted between 30-40 minutes, though one took about 90 minutes to complete. I asked questions about their backgrounds and lives, past and current employment, relationships to employer(s), notion of proximity and/or separation in this relationship,

relationships to other domestic workers and/or co-workers (when applicable), relationships to the space of the household, and their opinion on the PEC and its effect on their work agreements. I expanded my questions to workers' lives in an effort to "locate the biography of the individual" in what Forsey (2010: 568) calls interviewing with an "ethnographic imaginary." In total eight women were interviewed.

After close readings of the interview transcripts, I identified several themes relating to participants' backgrounds, previous and current work experiences, views on labour legislation and the struggles of making ends meet in expensive São Paulo. Because the questions were open-ended, I noticed each interview had a unique flow with varying depth, insight and direction. In this way, participants demonstrated more interest and/or comfort around certain topics. In cases where they provided a short answer to a question of a more sensitive nature, I did not insist on an answer and instead provided some 'breathing space' for reflection and rest. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and selectively translated. Once I analyzed the interviews and highlighted (coded) the content, I translated into English extensive sections of the transcripts for analysis. This does not mean I would stop referring back to my transcripts or decide to translate other sections later, but the process helped absorb workers' narratives. When translating these excerpts I encountered words or terms that proved difficult to translate, or that would have lost their meaning in translation. In those cases, I left the original print version and included a tentative translation in brackets. This permits a deeper understanding for those familiar with the language and also portrays the voices of research participants more accurately. I coded my transcript manually, in the process identifying main themes and assigning a different colour to each. I compared and contrasted this analysis with my thesis proposal in order to re-assess the original research questions and how they relate and reflect the themes narrated by the research participants.

While this research is predominantly based on interview material, I also recorded my thoughts on a notebook (in bullet point, key words, and on the occasion, more extensive notes), during informal conversations and 'naturalistic' observations that took place in public and private settings, such as grocery stores and the homes of friends and/or extended family. I include remarks on the spatial arrangements of Brazilian households and interactions between workers and employers witnessed during my time in Brazil. Those are mostly based on fieldwork observations as well as personal experiences in households and/or other places I normally circulate in Brazil. When I make reference to an event taking place outside of the timeframe

of my fieldwork (e.g. during my childhood years growing up in Brazil), I make it a point to alert the reader to this fact.

Of the eight women domestic workers who participated in this study, six were originally from small towns in the state of Bahia in the Northeast of Brazil. Of the other two participants, one was from a rural community bordering the states of Paraná and São Paulo; the other was born and raised in the city of São Paulo. The women I interviewed were between 33 and 50 years old. While I had no preconceived notion of reaching participants in this range of ages, this is representative of an ageing phenomenon amongst women domestic workers. In regards to literacy and level of education attained, most participants completed elementary school (*segundo grau*), one graduated from high school, and one participant (who started working in a sugar cane field when she was 13 years of old) stopped going to school before completing primary school (*primeiro grau*). Half of the participants were married and half were not. All respondents have one or two children.

At the time of the interview, two of the respondents worked as live-in domestic workers, one of them was currently unemployed, and the others had varying arrangements of live-out monthly work for a sole employer. The majority of the respondents' daily tasks involve cleaning, cooking, and caring for children or elders; two were hired as cooks only. If we consider their current and previous experiences, all participants have had a variety of work arrangements and situations, but in essence their work involves all of the tasks and responsibilities mentioned above. The majority of respondents expressed a preference or dislike with regards to one or more domestic activities (e.g. cooking, cleaning, caring for children, etc.). They also opined about the different physical and emotional demands required to perform the various household tasks and care work. In general, those preferences are non-negotiable and employers expect workers to be able to handle a strenuous amount of work and sustain high productivity. Most respondents said that employers expect them to know how to do everything (*faz tudo*). One participant in particular raised a powerful analogy when she said: “*Povo acha que a gente é Bombril*” meaning, people (or employers, more specifically) think domestic workers are like *Bombril*, which is a trademark name of a popular steel wool used in Brazilian households. Their slogan

reads “*Bombril: Mil e uma utilidades*” (A thousand and one uses)³⁸. This analogy and its implication in the working lives of domestic workers will be further examined in the subsequent empirical discussion.

In regards to work hours, six of the interviewees worked an average of 8-10 hours a day, six days a week. One of the live-in workers labour longer shifts but the empirical data demonstrates that when they live at their employer’s house the lines between rest and work time seem to blur, and in some instances, workers have no fixed schedule for time off, rest or vacation. One domestic worker I interviewed lives with her daughter in what she describes as a very spacious maid’s quarter adjacent to her employer’s house. She works Monday through Friday, from 8am to 8pm with a break at lunch and another before preparing dinner. On weekends they take two buses on an hour-long commute to their home where her eldest son resides. At their current employment, five of eight have their work card signed (minus the worker who was unemployed at the time of our interview). When referring to previous employment experiences, all had at least one employer who did not sign their work card, and breached other labour rights. When asked about their colour, race, or ethnic identification, two respondents said they identify as being *negra* (black), two as *branca* (white), and the other four participants answered *parda* (mixed-race or brown). One of the research participants, Néia, whose skin complexion is brown and whose hair is smooth, straight, and black, answered this question by saying, “Normally, I say black. [Laughs]. And I know I’m not. I’m descendent of Indians through my grandmother. I’m the granddaughter of Indians. That’s why my hair is like this.” None of the participants were affiliated to a domestic workers’ union, but two reported instances of visiting a local union for legal advice. Most respondents have worked mainly in the occupation of domestic work. One of the respondents changed occupations from retail to domestic work and has been employed by the same family for the past six years. Another ran her own catering business (cooking meals for pick-up) but left it to do domestic work where she has been for most of her adult life.

When asked about their relationship with current and past employers and members of the household and co-workers, most interviewees said it was fine but provided little elaboration. As the interview progressed, and they felt more comfortable sharing their stories, all participants related to negative work experiences involving lack of respect, discriminatory treatment, and resistance to compliance with labour rights, and/or

³⁸ Retrieved June 26, 2015 (<https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombril>).

lack of empathy in the case of health issues of a personal nature. Several of those observations carried multiple significance; they relate to workers relations to employers but also to specific aspects of work conditions and labour rights. This suggests the significance workers' relationship to employers and other members of the household in that it influences work conditions, and vice-versa. I noticed that in most interviews, participants did not expand on the character and quality of their relationship with current employers when I asked specifically about it. More often than not, they spoke at greater length about the relationship with current and/or previous employers as it relates to other aspects of job satisfaction and working conditions. These other aspects included employer's display of respect and appreciation for the workers' contribution, having their work card signed, and recognition (or not) of their social status within and beyond the workplace. While research participants expressed some level of satisfaction with their current employment, they offered the following caveat: 'it could be worse'. This point of view is based on their previous work experiences and the state of labour markets and informal sectors (with waged and dependant wage work relations) in Brazil where barriers to job mobility are difficult to overcome (Brites 2013; Lovell 2000).

3.3. Other Sources of Data Collection

In addition to the collection of fieldwork-based empirical data described above, this thesis includes secondary data sources and a review of the relevant literatures. The following sources were specifically targeted for collection of information and analysis:

- 1) A review of how the genesis of domestic service in Brazil's colonial history affects practices of discrimination vis-à-vis Afro-Brazilians and their location in low-skill and low-paying jobs (Bernardino-Costa 2011, 2014; Casagrande 2008; Gonçalves 2010; Lebon 2007; Pravaz 2009; Vieira Gonzalez 2013).
- 2) A review of the ideologies of *mestiçagem* and the "Myth of a Racial Democracy" (Freyre 1933/1964) and contemporary studies on racial politics (French 2009; Lebon 2007), and black women's identities (Caldwell 2007; Henery 2011; Pravaz 2009), to the extent that this illuminates how the racialization of domestic labour, as representative of larger social inequalities such as class, gender and race takes place.
- 3) A review of the literature on contemporary domestic work in Brazil to identify the continuities and changes observed by previous quantitative and qualitative studies. This is important in order to identify the challenges in regards to working conditions, relations with employers, and struggle for dignity and valorization

(Bernardino-Costa 2013; Brites 2003; 2008, 2014; De Souza 1980; Amaral dos Santos 2012; Fraga 2013; Fediuk 1995; Goldstein 2003; Gomes and Bertolin 2011; Harris 2007; Pereira de Melo 1998; Preuss 1997; Velho 2012).

4) A review of the literature on the political trajectory and struggles of women domestic workers in Brazil at the realm of labour stratification, legal rights, unions, activism, as well as the recent changes in labour legislation, and census data on domestic work (Bernardino-Costa 2007, 2011, 2014; Brites 2013; Gomes and Bertolin 2011; Gomes and Puig 2013; Gonçalves 2010; Harrington 2015; Vidal 2009; Vieira Gonzalez 2013).

5) An ongoing review of news print and online media (e.g. *O Estado de São Paulo*, *Folha de São Paulo*, *GGN O Jornal de Todos os Brasis*, *Centro de Mídia Independente*, *VEJA*, *Globe and Mail*). Since January 2015, I received regular email alerts via Google search engine with the following key words: labour rights, domestic work, *PEC das domésticas*, and *direitos trabalhistas*. The material available online was used to cross-reference with my literature review, interview content analysis, and information on statistics and public opinions. Much of the profile of the industry is collected from these sources.

6) A review of a couple of examples from the literature on domestic workers in Latin America (Chaney and Castro 1989; Goldsmith 2013), and other parts of the world, including research on the experience of migrant domestic workers inspired by de-colonial and transnational feminist theories (Blofield 2012, Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010, 2014, Pratt 2004). This situates my research within a larger academic debate of feminization and devaluation of care work, connected to feminist praxis and transnational solidarity networks (Ferree and Tripp 2006). Looking at racialized care work from a post-colonial perspective in more contemporary transnational contexts, scholars suggest that racialization and persistent social devaluation of domestic work marks the invisibility and inferiority of domestic labour force precisely because it bears “the traces of servitude” and serves to reproduce colonial social relations (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010:110).

The above is a description of the methodological and practical steps I undertook in seeking to understand the realities of women paid domestic workers especially in the context of new labour legislation that seemingly includes them in the house of labour for the first time. But research, as we know, is never strictly an “objective” enterprise. In the course of my trajectories outside and beyond Brazil as immigrant, student, worker, mother, and dark-skinned woman, I have realized that life has an inherent tendency to draw a

full circle around us. Without a conscious effort, my research for the MA led me back to my country of origin and to the intimacy of my upbringing. In studying the experiences of women domestic workers in Brazil, I am not simply studying a topic that is significant in the culture where I grew up, but also returning to the often ambiguous and affective ties of my childhood. In the next section of this chapter I discuss the subjective experiences I felt and dealt with in the course of conducting this study. And while this discussion offers no “measuring” stick in the design of the research project, it is no less important in understanding my trajectory and analysis of the research findings.

3.4. The Subjective Endeavour of Researching

This research endeavour is connected to my place of origin and stems from my personal experience being raised in the care of domestic workers. This experience now resonates in my academic interests and influences my role as a researcher with a feminist political orientation. That is, my critical theory skills have enabled me to recognize the ways in which Brazilian history and culture are intertwined with hegemonic discourses about race and class identification maintained and legitimized to reproduce a highly stratified society. In particular, this research is infused with a feminist orientation both theoretically and methodologically emerging from what Pratt (2004) calls an “awkward field of power relations” (31) wherein lays a potential to build class solidarity. This research is primarily concerned with the everyday experiences of women domestic workers and the challenges they face in reconfiguring work relations in the context of demanding labour tasks, as well as the ways in which they embody and resist discourses of subjugation and marginality in this process. In this pursuit it is crucial to position myself in relation to the subject of my inquiry, accepting its discomforts and contradictions as a point of departure. I take into consideration my position within Brazilian notions of gender, class, and racial privileges, which influence the nature and relations that form this study on domestic work. This text mediates between the narratives of women domestic workers, and the historical processes, conceptual frameworks, and my own interpretations in creating knowledge bound to the reality of our encounter. Furthermore, this research contributes to the debate on contemporary paid domestic work in ways that destabilizes the private/public divide, and thus explores the patriarchal nature of this form of class oppression.

In the context of a multi-racial identity and a transnational life, I find myself circulating in often-

contradictory positions of privilege and oppression. In Canada, my skin colour, immigrant status, and social positioning, are perceived based on different standards of racial, gender, and class privileges. This provides an occasion to grapple with my identity and the ways I perform and negotiate it. The daily maneuvers of blending in, making it heard, or concealing that I'm Brazilian, a Latina immigrant, or a Permanent Resident, are exhausting from a personal and intellectual point of view. From a distance, my view of Brazil has become sharper and no less complicated informing a critical gaze upon my upbringing and positionality vis-à-vis women domestic workers. To destabilize my identity even further, I am confronted with the question of who am I when I go back home. Nine years living abroad can turn a native into a "half so," or at times, it can make you a foreigner like any other. In his ethnography on "the Boys" Dunk (1991) writes about white male working-class culture in Thunder Bay. In doing so he highlights his working-class background and trajectory from manual labourer in Thunder Bay to graduate student in the process disrupting notions of objectivity and bounded cultures. In this way, he engages with the insider/outsider debate and the presumed methodological and theoretical implications of doing research at home or abroad by making connections between his life history and the nature of the questions he explores explicitly in his book with his friends from high school. The issue of bias, perception, and objectivity, Dunk (1991) argues, is relative and cannot be simply solved by conducting research at home or abroad, rather they require "honesty, reflection, and criticism" (13).

The "field" where I conducted my research was in many ways a liminal space between private and public spaces, familiar and unknown territories, where once I recall seeing more demarcated boundaries. Did my familiarity with the subject, the spatial arrangements of households, my memories of relationships and bonds I had with domestic workers make me a more avid listener, or did it perhaps make it easy to overlook otherwise relevant details? In some ways, I could be considered an insider as I grew up in Brazil and was raised in a household employing nannies, cooks, and cleaners. But this is precisely where this insider status becomes slippery. I was a part of the "reality" of domestic work from within, but from a particular place, from the privilege and private space of my home, which in turn was the place of employment for the women who worked there. Coming into the field, entering the conceptual space of the "Brazilian household" as a researcher put me in a situation where I made an effort to make "the familiar strange" (Rowe 2005:16) and seek to understand the Other's (the subaltern) perspective based on a renewed interaction. In this attempt to

accommodate an insider/outsider perspective, I remind myself that partial and/or conflicting views carry the potential of theoretical insights and breakthroughs.

As a child I grew up in a neighbourhood known as *Riviera* in the south side of São Paulo, by a dam called *Represa Guarapiranga* and built in 1906 by *Light*³⁹. Back in the 1980s when my parents first moved there, this place was a solace from the big city hustle. Large tracts of forested land surrounded the dam. The socio-environmental landscape of this region changed dramatically during the following two decades. In the late-1990s, on our daily commutes to the city we would drive through a gate, which served as an inhibitor more than a formal check point for residents, visitors, and workers. Legally, this was not considered a private gated community and supposedly no one could be prevented from entering⁴⁰. For about five minutes we would drive along a protected land, also known as *Parque Ecológico do Guarapiranga*, and established in 1999. This land served as a buffer between the “community” where we lived and the expanse of informal occupation and *favelas* that grew from the banks of the *Guarapiranga* reservoir, outward, towards the city, in a process of urban expansion that Castro (1998:82) has identified as “rapid, unorganized, illegal, and highly segregated.” The road that connected the neighbourhood where I grew up to the city wended through a strip with grocery stores, butchers, pharmacies, churches, etc. serving the lower classes living there. The level of poverty and social neglect characterizing the area, and the disproportionate lack of infrastructure throughout this peripheral community, are the backdrop to my memories growing up. This depiction is relevant in that it is not a unique or isolated case; rather it is representative of an erratic model of development and governance (Castro 1998), evident in the spatial segregation of São Paulo’s urban sprawl⁴¹. It also serves to link with my sense of home and the fear and anxieties that are inseparable from it.

My childhood was lived near this large tract of water separating us from the city. It was, however, interrupted in an abrupt and violent way when my younger sister and I were kidnapped in June 2002. Though

³⁹ Light was a private company selling electrical power in Brazil beginning in 1905. This company was founded in 1882 in Toronto, Canada.

⁴⁰ This entry point did not conform to the standards of other gated communities in Brazil, which are enclosed by high walls, equipped with security cameras, safeguarded by cars, and even armed security guards (Caldeira 1996).

⁴¹ The socio-economic inequality and escalating marginalization, everyday violence and police brutality against the poor in São Paulo is the arena of Teresa Caldeira’s seminal book entitled *City of Walls* (1992). For further sociological discussions of the intersections of violence and the neoliberal model of the ‘penalization of poverty’ in urban Brazil, see Loic Wacquant’s article “The Militarization of Urban Marginality: Lessons from the Brazilian Metropolis” (2008). For a collection of essays on the cultural production and social dynamics of the city, see David Foster’s book *São Paulo: Perspective on the City and Cultural Production* (2011).

this is a traumatic and very personal story, it cannot be understood without analysis of the contingencies of the socio-political context where it happened. This is a context of economic violence and vulnerability as a result of a neoliberal divide between private and public spaces by re-defining the notion of power as these boundaries are trespassed. Behind this story, or at its epicentre, rests the hierarchies of social classes and how “uncivil democracies” (Caldeira and Holston 1999: 692) regulate (and violate) the civil components of citizenship by sustaining structural and everyday violence in a process that perpetuates the “criminalization of the poor” (1999:692). More than a decade has passed since this harrowing event, but I continue to struggle with it and learn from it. When we were released, it was perplexing to relive the story based on the accounts of what went on, on “the other side.” I learned then that in the early stages when the police became involved, their first warning to my family was that the domestic workers in the house (at the time, a full-time cook, a cleaner, and a driver employed by my family) were scrutinized as suspects of either passing the information that led to the kidnapping, or of actually being involved in the kidnapping itself. One of the women who worked in our house, then a migrant from the Northeast, had been employed by my family for more than a decade. It was she who everyday woke up my sisters and me, prepared us for school, and nourished and cared for us even when we fell sick. She has known me from the time I was a child. I grew up knowing her affection and dealing with her scolding, which were both equally important in forming my character. It seems impossible to refer to my upbringing, identity, and life experiences - all embedded in the motivations that drive my academic interests - without speaking about this event. When I choose to repress it, as I often do, it does not feel right. The story feels incomplete. The lingering fear of susceptibility to targeted violence, and my desire to live in a place where I could feel safe made me leave Brazil and brought me to Canada. My attempt to understand how this experience of captivity is part and parcel of the injustices and corruption in Brazil, and the ways in which socio-economic inequalities perpetuate marginalization and structural violence, is ongoing. After the kidnapping we moved to the city and this put an abrupt end to my relationship to the place of my childhood. Almost simultaneously, this loss turned into a longing expressed through unresolved feelings about home. There emerged in me the need to return; to reconnect with a “lost home” (Behar 2003: 21). In this way, my fieldtrip to Brazil was to do double duty: to conduct research for an academic degree by interviewing women domestic workers and to rediscover home/Brazil where memories of joy, love and care were

interspersed with recollections of violent acts and events. The place of my childhood was lost. In fact, it was taken from me. And the women who raised me along with my parents, are crucial in the formative significance of that decade to my life. This research then is driven by a longing to reconnect with my home as place of origin, with my native language and culture, and perhaps, it is a product of a desire to mend the thorny (de)attachment I have with Brazil. A study of paid women domestic workers seem, now, to be the perfect undertaking to examine identities and intersections – mine and the interviewees’.

In this chapter I described the methodological steps undertaken in the collection of data to understand women performing paid domestic work in the city of Sao Paulo. More specifically I focused on “*mensalistas*” and their particular labour relations now incorporated into new labour legislation enacted to provide and protect labour rights for some of the most vulnerable workers in the Brazilian economy. This objective description of methodology was followed with a subjective and introspective account of my connection to paid domestic workers and the care I received as a young child growing up in a household employing domestic workers. The next chapter begins the empirical discussion and analysis of the data collected for this study.

Chapter 4. The Affective Textures of Paid Domestic Work

In the present and following chapters I analyze the empirical findings focusing on the narratives and experiences of women domestic workers participating in this study. Individually, their stories are rich in detail and provide texture and insight to my inquiry. Their stories also resonate with a collective sense of shared experience and rising consciousness of political possibilities. Most importantly, this chapter discusses elements of domestic work that remain largely unexamined and unaccounted for by policy reforms. These include workers' place of origins and experiences of migration to São Paulo, their ability to negotiate work arrangements that allows them to pursue their private lives, and the power asymmetry characterizing their relations with employers. The discussion herein serves as a platform to expand on the themes emerging from our initial face-to-face interactions. Here too, I examine their narratives through an analytical lens that is informed by theories of affect and intersectionality.

The notion of affect and the affective textures of paid domestic work, as described in the literature review provide us with a starting point from which to trace the cultural logics behind the racialization, feminization, and coloniality of domestic labour (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2011). I borrow from Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2014) the understanding that affect speaks of the invisible and intangible textures of domestic work as forces that remain invisible to the eye. What brings them to life are the intentions and process of translating those sentiments into words. In this way, conceptualizing affect is a continuous effort. Looking at the affective dimension of domestic labour enhances our understanding of the forces that characterize the fields of power relations between employers and employees. These power dynamics emerge from class, gender, and race hierarchies that influence the relational and task-based dimensions of the occupation. The cultural logics I mentioned above (of feminization, racialization, and coloniality), in turn influence this hierarchy and the accompanying energies that carry animating and (dis)animating forces circulating the household and shaping the social boundaries that domestic workers negotiate, enact, and transgress (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2014). Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2014) sheds light onto the notion of affective labour as a political force capable of unveiling the material, psychic, emotional, and corporeal experiences in domestic labour and care work. As a political force, affect substantiates a re-vitalized demand for recognition and valorization in a language that speaks not only of labour codes but also of dignity and human rights. The notion of affect has

also been applied to the study of race relations, identity, and belonging, in the context of diverging sentiments towards the idea of Brazil as a racial democracy (Emboaba da Costa 2016). My empirical discussion seeks to interpolate the two concepts in an analysis of domestic workers' awareness of self in relation to the human and non-human qualities and hardships of their labour. That is, the ways in which they recount their life trajectories, the daily tasks and relational aspects of their work, and the qualities, textures, and sentiments attached to those experiences.

First, I describe the background and processes of migration that lead workers from places of socio-economic deprivation to the major cities, such as São Paulo, invoking the forces and sentiments that workers associate with the experience of leaving home as well as adapting to the city. Second, I discuss what I consider the core themes that make up this empirical chapter: workers' perceptions of their tasks, duties, and responsibilities, work arrangements and the intensity of such undertakings, employers' demands and expectations, and their perceptions of the relationships they establish with employers, their children, and other members of the household. Third, the chapter ends with a conclusion on affect and domestic work.

4.1. “*Esse Mundo Diferente*”⁴²: Migration, Family, and Work

In Brazil the significance of paid domestic work does not simply rest in the number or percentages of women working in the occupation. Domestic work is the foremost example of the ways in which class, gender, and race intersect to maintain the subjugation of poor women of colour. The persistent over-representation of poor women of colour in the domestic work force is linked to socio-economic inequality, extreme poverty, and unequal internal migration flows (Fraga 2013). Fraga (2013) explains that women born to low-income families often start helping with the care of younger siblings and house chores from an early stage. Fraga (2013) adds to this by remarking that among low-income families in Brazil, it is common for parents to send their daughters to live/help/work/be raised in the house of an acquaintance, with whom they may or may not have familial ties. In a testimony by Zica, former president of the Domestic Workers' Association of Rio de Janeiro, she comments on this matter highlighting how the intersection of class and gender creates a distinct perception of work: “We are forced to work even before we understand ourselves as girls or adolescents. Our

⁴² Translated as “This alien world,” suggesting how the city feels like a different world all together from the place where they used to live.

need to work in order to survive destroys whatever other hopes we have” (Pereira de Melo in Chaney and Castro 1989:258). This is part of a larger process, or cycle, reproducing inequality in the very socialization/enculturation of young girls who are unlikely to entertain higher education (and in some cases even primary) due to structural and cultural capital barriers (Bourdieu 1986). Consequently, they enter the paid domestic work force prematurely to support themselves and contribute to their families’ income (Fraga 2013).

This discourse resonates with the life trajectory of the workers I interviewed. For instance, Néia (early fifties) recounted that at age twelve her mother sent her to live with her aunt. Her aunt had children and needed to work, so Néia was responsible for house chores and for looking after the kids who were only a few years younger than she. During those years, Néia did not receive a wage and the familial aspect of this relation proved challenging for her: “Because they are our relatives, they think they can exploit us. I didn’t even get paid. [...] I guess I got to live at her house.” Cristina is also in her fifties and married with two grown children. During the interview, she talked about her first job experience as a domestic worker when she was a teenager: “I used to do everything. Cooking, cleaning, ironing... Because the woman [her employer] used to work, right? So I would stay at the house with her two kids, a boy and a girl. I was twelve [then] and I worked there until I was fourteen.” Fatima too said she worked for her older half-sister who had four children; from the time she was eleven until she turned sixteen. Besides caring for the children, she was responsible for tidying up and sweeping the house, ironing, and cooking. Fatima received a small sum as monthly salary, which she used towards her tuition at a private school. In all of three cases mentioned above, they were born and raised in the Northeast of Brazil and as young adults immigrated to seek employment in the city of São Paulo.

These narratives are a part of a broader theme of rural-urban migration that emerged as a common story in the life narratives I gathered from this small sample of interviews. Of the eight women domestic workers in this study, six were originally from small towns in the state of Bahia in the Northeast of Brazil. The other two participants, one was from a rural community bordering the states of Paraná and São Paulo, and the other was born and raised in São Paulo. Their trajectories and experiences of migration are often linked to sentiments of dislocation and displacement. It involves a sense of melancholy, or *saudades*, a feeling associated with longing, missing, or homesickness, experienced because of leaving family behind, which in some cases include children and friends. It also entails hardship in adapting to the pace and impersonal ways of a large

industrial city. When sharing her story about her trajectory to São Paulo, Fatima touched on all of these aspects. She and her son used to live in Bahia and part of her family was in the interior of São Paulo. In need of work and wanting to leave a complicated relationship with a man, Fatima said: “I had to get away from a certain husband. [Laugh]. I had to leave a husband that wasn’t doing me any good.” She decided to move to São Paulo to look for work. Fatima describes this transition and the heartache of leaving her son behind:

I had never been away from him [her son] before. To this day I laugh about that. I had never been away from him for so long. So, in the beginning, to be away from my hometown, you know... I wasn’t used to that. I had always lived there. 26 years in this tiny place where everyone knows each other. Then coming to a big city like this where you don’t know anyone... It’s strange. Right? But then I adapted well. But... it was difficult because of that. To move away and adjust. You change your whole life. But in those days, it was hard for me to even buy a pair of shoes for my son. And you come to this *mundo diferente* (a different world), and you say ‘My God! What is this?’ Everything is completely different. But I... I got used to it all.

Above Fatima describes the painful separation from her son and in recounting this story says that to this day she laughs about it. While laugh and humour were particularly prominent in my conversation with Fatima, each one of the women I interviewed smiled, chuckled, or laughed at some point during our interview. Interestingly, these expressions of humour did not all come in the context of light or up-beat stories. In fact, many came in the context of the following subjects: the hardship of living away from their children and/or families; early memories related to their upbringing and first working experiences; strenuous or challenging relationships with employers; affective ties and sense of loss because of the bond with employers’ children; difficulty and/or preference for certain tasks at work; and negative work experiences where employers took advantage of or acted in bad faith towards them. The humorous comments, smiles, and laughter seem to occur as expressions of feelings and/or a bodily necessity to release the weight of sensations that certain accounts instil⁴³.

Lourdes expresses similar feelings related to the emotional toll regarding the distance from her daughter due to unreasonable work hours and demands. When she worked as a live-in domestic worker and nanny, Lourdes turned to her family for support in raising her daughter: “She [her daughter] always lived with my sister because I had to work. Sometimes, I would spend fifteen days straight away. It’s what I had to do.”

⁴³ In Goldstein’s (2003) ethnographic description of the livelihood of a domestic worker in Rio de Janeiro, she makes an interesting observation on the salience of humor in the accounts of women who lived in *Felicidade Eterna*, saying that it was often difficult to define whether expressions of humour came in spite of, or because of their suffering.

Lourdes considered her first experience as a live-in domestic worker to be “really good” for two reasons: she worked for a single woman and she was able to attend school while holding her employment. Things went well until Lourdes became pregnant. As her due date approached, her boss decided to re-locate to another city leaving Lourdes without a job and place to live. She relates this event:

My first work experience was with a woman who lived alone. It was just she and I. When I worked for her I used to study. So, for me it was a really good experience because it was just the two of us. And then I got pregnant... I was about to have the baby, my boss, she left. She moved to the interior. So, I had to leave the house and I moved in with a friend until I had the baby. Only after that I went to live with the father of the child.

This is one of the contradictions experienced by women domestic workers. While their work is associated with the notion of reproductive labour and the skills they have to perform in this job involve knowledge and experience with caring, mothering, and home-steading, there is little respect and protection when it comes to their own ability to raise a child, have a family or care for their own homes.

After an arduous upbringing involving toiling in sugarcane fields doing *corte de cana na roça* (harvesting sugar cane in the country) as a minor, Geni moved to the São Paulo and entered the domestic work force at the age of eighteen. She lives at her workplace, and when I asked who was looking after her son who is now fourteen, she said: “He lives at my father’s. There’s also one of my sister’s kids there, and another.... Everyone pitches in a little.” Geni does not get to see her son much as a result of her intense work schedule and the distance between her workplace and home. She explains her frustration:

I live and work here, right? From Sunday to Sunday, I’m here. After noon I have a *folguinha* (day-off). I go for a rest, take care of myself, do my nails, dye my hair... That is my own time. When there’s a long weekend, then I go see my son, you know? Where I live [referring to where her family and son live] is 450km from here. So it has to be a longer time-off for it to be worth it. It’s like six hours of travel, right?

Her situation is unlikely to change in the near future.

In some instances, *domésticas* have previous contacts and knowledge about the city through family or social networks. This provides a relief from the challenging aspects of getting to know a city and the services it offers and how to find them. Cristina was sixteen years old when she and her sister migrated to São Paulo with a place of employment lined up for them through the assistance of an aunt living in São Paulo. Despite the advantage of securing a job as soon as they arrived, Cristina tells of the difficulty in being away from her parents and the enduring loneliness:

In the beginning it was all really difficult, right? You don't know anything. I used to cry a lot. My parents had stayed there [in Bahia], right? And... so I just went straight to my job. I worked there until I was 18.

The narratives above describe stories common to young girls from low-income families in Brazil, where economic insecurity lead to an early transition from family domestic help to paid domestic work, leaving little opportunity for independence and the pursuit of an education. Entering the labour force at a relatively early stage as domestic workers, interviewees describe the emotional challenges in uprooting themselves from their homes, leaving family members behind, and surviving and adapting to a new life in the city of São Paulo. Further, these narratives suggest that, in some cases, women had to leave their own children in the care of relatives in order to meet the demands and expectations of domestic work. This is one of the ways in which workers are confronted by a contradictory character of their labour, while caring for people, animals, objects, and the general maintenance of life is part and parcel of the labour they perform, their own needs and right to enjoy a fulfilling life is often overlooked. Blofield (2012:141) says that while it is pivotal for domestic workers to earn greater access to labour rights and decent work conditions, labour policy has yet to address workers' ability "to live fulfilling private lives and have their own families." This predicament underlies the degree of material inequality between them and the households they work for.

In the following section, I present contemporary work arrangements and relations reflecting a level of transformation, a movement towards the embodiment of rights and efforts to negotiate (aspects that may or may not comply with the codes, but are advantageous for the worker) with their employers. To a certain extent, the contrast between early stories of more exploitative working conditions and the subsequent narratives that signal increasing levels of political awareness and negotiation, might be representative of the increasing vitality of the public and political debates on domestic work in Brazil. And yet, one of the persistent difficulties domestic workers living on their own face is the long bus commutes in less than adequate roads and poor transit systems to their places of work in affluent neighbourhoods across São Paulo.

4.2. Daily Commute and Work Arrangements

Work arrangements vary and some employers respect the limit of eight hours a day and forty-four hours a week⁴⁴. Six of the eight interviewees worked an average of eight to ten hours a day, six days a week. As the following data demonstrates when domestic workers live at their employer's house, the lines between rest and work time blurs. Further, in some instances workers have no fixed schedule for time off or vacation. The following interview demonstrates that the regulations of daily and weekly work hours is not always the case. The way Fatima explains her arrangement is that while she works ten-hour days, Monday to Friday, she has two days off which allows her to visit home on the weekends. In this case, while the regulation does not comply strictly with the labour code⁴⁵, Fatima says this arrangement was agreed upon with her employer. At her workplace, Fatima is asked to keep track of work hours with the use of a *livro de ponto* (a manual way of clocking in and out), and when she exceeds the agreed upon hours, her boss pays overtime. Fatima:

At this current job I cook and do the laundry, the ironing, right? But I only work from Monday through Friday. Everyday, except on Tuesdays, I start at 8 in the morning. And I usually leave about eight at night, right? It's twelve hours in total. But I have a lunch break, right? One hour of rest in the afternoon, around four or five depending on the day. So, it ends up being ten hours of work. But we settled on a salary that is equivalent to the job. [...] And then I go over my time she pays extra. Over there we have the *livro de ponto* and all. You write down the time you arrive, your snack break... And it's easy this way, you know? The... The people at the house are chill.

This is a unique arrangement from the other interviewees. Maria, a participant who is employed by the same family that used to employ her mother for two decades, explains her work hours and her boss' flexibility:

I work five days a week, seven hours a day. I don't work Saturdays, Sundays, or holidays. I have no problem missing a day, or if I have to leave early, *tudo é liberado numa boa* (everything is agreed upon with ease). As long as I give them notice and we talk. This week, for example, I had to leave at two in the afternoon to deal with *Eletropaulo* [equivalent to BC Hydro]. They let me go. I told them I didn't need to get paid, of course, and they refused to do that because they saw it was an emergency. They're really cool.

⁴⁴ As a response to the challenges of enforcing labour rights in establishing and respecting the maximum of 8 hours of work a day, a company in Brazil created a phone App called '*Ponto Doméstico*', where employer and employee have access to 'live' data of workers' clock-in and clock-out (Borges 2016). Retrieved April 27, 2016 (<http://g1.globo.com/goias/noticia/2016/03/goianos-criam-aplicativo-de-celular-para-controle-do-ponto-de-domesticas.html>).

⁴⁵ According to the *Ministério do Trabalho e Previdência Social* (Ministry of Labour and Social Security) the *PEC* established that domestic workers working as *mensalistas* should work no longer than 8 hours a day or 44 hours a week (MTPS 2016).

This is an example of a domestic worker who works less than the weekly limit as defined by the latest labour code which stipulates that employees can be required to work a maximum of forty-four hours a week (MTPS 2016). While this is an unusual example of work arrangement, Maria explains this as part and parcel of the personal and affective relationship her employers cultivate with her. She knows that most workers do not enjoy the same level of respect and support she does. Maria:

If my sons get sick, they help, you know? [...] I feel lucky. Because I know it's not everyone who treats their workers this way. I hear people complain a lot. But in this way, I know we have a bond, not only as employer and employee, I think it's a friendship really. We've known each other for so many years.

The majority of the women in this study explain that their current employers display some empathy and respect for their family responsibilities and private life. For example, Fatima notes that even though her boss is fairly quiet and does not like to chat, she displays a willingness to be flexible and understanding when private matters arise:

And the boss... Well, she's not *de conversa* type. She'll talk to you only if it's necessary. Nothing else. Right? But you know, if something comes up with Luana [her daughter], she's understanding, if we need to see a doctor, or leave early. She'll say 'No problem, you can go. Leave dinner ready and the girls can heat it up later.

In contrast, Geni recalls that when she used to work as a live-in worker, the work schedule was basically non-existent. "When we sleep at work we don't have a time to go to bed, right? You wake up early... You wake up at 6am and don't have a set time to leave, it depends on when you finish the job."

With respect to the daily commute to and from work, Selma, who lives on the coast, describes the challenge of traveling up the mountains during the rainy season when hazardous environmental conditions such as floods make the roads inaccessible. But her employer rarely accepted this justification of hazardous condition as reason for being late or missing work. Needless to say, Selma was frustrated with her employer and his/her skepticism towards her accounts of road conditions:

It's really difficult [to rely on the local bus]. They [bus drivers] won't come all the way [up the mountain road where she lives]. When it rains the waterfalls overflows. There are four waterfalls for us to get through. The bridge over there... That bridge gets covered in water. We even have footage of the water running over it. This bridge you crossed, the last one. It flooded completely. The whole way gets flooded with water. Most of the time we'd get through with the car but just so you know, I'd get out of the car, take my shoes off –and you go wondering what's going to happen. Whether you will make it. There're so many logs in the way. A lot of people give up. It's too difficult. On

sunny days, it's all good but comes the rain, it's hard to get through. With or without a car, getting out of here is hard.

Under these difficult weather conditions getting to work on time wasn't always easy:

To be honest... I think they think we're lying. Like... You can tell they didn't like it and they think you're lying. Because... for the water to run over the bridge? They think it can't be true. That's what I think... And that's why we have these new bridges now. Some years ago, we had to cross over with ropes. If someone fell ill up here, they would die, or they had to cross using a rope. Getting food was tough too. Because sometimes it would rain for a whole week. It was a whole week without being able to leave the house. I've been here twenty-six years. Back in the day, I had a cousin that was ill and when he came around, as soon as it started raining, he would have to stay at the local hospital. When the forecast was rain, we would cross and take him over. This place was really deserted, so it was difficult.

Maria is in her early thirties, married, mother of two, and a domestic worker. She was first hired as a nanny, but sometime later, when a colleague working as the cook left the house, Maria negotiated with her boss to switch from her sole responsibility as a nanny. She commutes to work in her car and takes approximately one hour. However, when it is her *rodízio*⁴⁶ she catches the bus and this takes her almost two hours to get home. She recalls how one day it took her almost four hours to get back home on the bus. Maria: "I thought about giving up [on the job]. Not because of the work. I would tell my boss 'Look, if I spend almost four hours in the morning and four hours at night, that's eight hours a day! I work less hours than I commute.'"

Fatima talked about her current work arrangement as a live-in domestic worker who specializes in cooking in the city of São Paulo. She is the mother of two children, one age seven and the other is a young adult. To secure her employment, Fatima lives in a separate house at her employer's property with her youngster from Monday through Friday. She goes back home on the weekend where her eldest lives. Her journey is about one hour by public transportation. I asked her about her daughter's experience living between these two houses. Fatima replied:

She's used to it. Despite it all... Over at the house, our boss' house... Our TV has all the channels that the boss has. So, can you imagine? There are 1,000, 700, I don't know how many channels... There are two beds, you know? A closet. A fan. It's nice. There's even a separate TV room. The bathroom is gigantic, *eu fico besta de ver* (it blows my mind). The house is really quite big.

⁴⁶ This refers to a traffic control policy in effect in the city of São Paulo, where they control the circulation of vehicles to reduce traffic during rush hour by stipulating one day a week of reduced hours according to the last number of your license plate.

In this passage, Fatima describes the living space at her place of employment as having good amenities, including a wide variety of paid television channels, separate beds for her and her daughter, a fan, and a large bedroom. The space Fatima resides in is actually separated from the main house, which she described as making a substantial difference in her sense of privacy. This is in contrast to Harris' (2007) description of a common maid's quarter in a Brazilian household as *minúsculo*, or tiny, or Pereira de Melo's (in Chaney Castro 1989) illustration of a "room of two or three square meters" adjacent to the kitchen and laundry area (248).

Above I described the diversity of work arrangements, such as live-in, live-out, or a combination of both. The implications between these different scenarios are not black or white. In fact, domestic workers consider a variety of issues when faced with having to choose one of the options. While live-out situations, as discussed in the literature review, provide workers with more freedom and privacy to lead their personal lives, the daily commute can be a great source of exhaustion and exasperation, at the end of the day, leaving little time to spend at home. Most of the time the live-in option is not desirable since the average middle-class household usually has a small room adjacent to the kitchen (*área de serviço* or servant's quarter) where they sleep. Under this arrangement it becomes easier for employers to expect workers to work longer hours or until late at night, since they do not have to commute home. Some workers rely on extended family to help raising their own children when they work away. In other cases, employers are sympathetic to workers' situations making it possible for employees to negotiate better arrangements that allows them sufficient time to attend to their private lives and homes.

The next section transitions into the material and physical aspects of *domésticas'* labour underscoring the tasks and responsibilities involved in the daily execution of domestic work. The care for children, for example, entails a specific kind of responsibility and demands greater flexibility. In addition, I examine how workers' preferences and needs influence their sense of well-being, and whether or not those affect their negotiations with employers. Finally, I discuss the "menial" tasks of caring for the household and how this constitutes a mechanism through which employers and workers enact and negotiate this interpersonal relation within a field of power relations and transmission of affect.

4.3. “*Povo acha que a gente é Bombril*”: Tasks and Valorization in the Workplace

Domestic work, whether housekeeping, cleaning, washing clothes, cooking, or looking after children, elders, or pets, involves care in one way or another. Domestic workers are responsible for the maintenance and well being of the household. Their work involves organizing, cleaning, sweeping, dusting, washing clothes, cooking and serving meals, among other activities that entails caring for the home, the members of the household, as well as pets, flowers and plants. While some upper-class households hire two or more domestic workers specializing in cooking, cleaning and laundry, or taking care of children (Blofield 2012), most middle class Brazilian households employ one domestic worker responsible for the maintenance and care of all of those dimensions of work. The majority of the respondents’ daily tasks involve cleaning, cooking, and caring for children or elders; two were hired as cooks only. If we consider their current and previous experiences, all participants have had a variety of work arrangements and situations, but in essence their work involves all of the tasks and responsibilities mentioned above. Research participants expressed either a preference or dislike for one or more domestic activities (e.g. cooking, cleaning, caring for children, etc.). They also opined about the different physical and emotional demands required to perform the various household tasks and care work. In general, those preferences are non-negotiable and employers expect workers to be able to handle a strenuous amount of work and sustain high productivity. Employers’ expectations, perceptions, and reactions to workers’ performance, have a profound impact on workers’ feelings. Lourdes, for example, had her first job as a domestic worker when she was 23 years old. In the beginning she found ironing clothes challenging: “Ah! Ironing clothes! I did not know how to iron the pockets. [Laugh]. It was awful. *Ai chama atenção*, right? But that was all right. I guess it’s normal.”⁴⁷ In some cases, workers see themselves confronted by excruciating rules on how to perform their work, with expectations far surpassing the standards employers would attach to the household if they were to undertake those tasks themselves. Workers get upset about the inhumane levels of performance employers expect, seeing it as a means of getting their money’s worth by over-working employees. Most respondents said that employers expect them to know how to do everything (*faz tudo*). One participant in particular raised a powerful analogy when she said “*Povo acha que a gente é Bombril*.” (They expect

⁴⁷ The expression *chama atenção* means that this would draw her boss’ attention thereby revealing her difficulties ironing around the pockets.

us to be a jack of all trades). This means that employers think domestic workers should know how to perform and excel at every fact of their job. *Bombril* is a trademark name of a popular steel wool scrub sponge used in Brazilian households. Their slogan reads “*Bombril: Mil e uma utilidades*” (A thousand and one utilities)⁴⁸. This analogy speaks to two inter-related elements of domestic work: employers’ expectations and demands linked to the realization of physical tasks, which are directed/expressed/projected onto domestic workers; and the way in which they, in turn, receive/perceive/respond and, ultimately, are affected by it. Interestingly, the same participant used this analogy later on in the interview when she explained the way in which her co-worker felt threatened by her work skills and positive attitude. Note here how the *Bombril* analogy compares domestic workers to an inanimate object, a cleaning tool, and in doing so carries what Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2014) calls a simultaneously animating and (dis)animating force. On the one hand, it connoted the hardship of coping with employers’ demands and expectations, on the other, it invokes a sense of self-worth based on having a broad skills set and a positive work ethic. I discuss this analogy and its implications in the remainder of this chapter.

Most interviewees said that employers expect them to know how to do everything. One of the interviewees, Geni, uses this term when describing her work responsibilities: “... *Eu faço tudo*. (I do it all!). I wash, I iron, I make food, I clean, *eu faço companhia*... (I keep them company). *Faço tudo*, right? Now, I don’t know what you would call that.” Another participant, Néia, used this notion of *faço tudo* to explain her role in a household she used to work where her employer “doctored” her employment records to indicate that she was hired as a *laranjinha* (street cleaner) at the local municipality, earning more than her actual salary. When asked about her relationship with her employers and other household members, Néia said:

Normal... They’re really cool people. They have two kids. I took care of them both. It was sort of *faço tudo* because since they had two kids, I started as a nanny. Later I started working at the house too. So basically, whatever they needed is what I would do. I was like a companion. I would go with the kids to the beach, to a concert, I’d go traveling with them... I didn’t have my son at the time so I was always available to be with their kids, you know? Even though I was married. That’s the way it was. I’d go and spend a whole week away; we’d go away, if there was some kind of event and the parents couldn’t make it, it was me. Because they were related to people who work at the *prefeitura* (city hall), the ex-mayor, so there was always something going on. And I was always there with them. So... that’s how it was.

⁴⁸ Retrieved March 22, 2016 (<https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombril>).

Lourdes relates a similar sense of frustration regarding her employer's demands and the challenge setting boundaries between her private and her work life. Her employers expected her to not only be flexible, but also to be willing to adjust her hours to meet their needs and available to work beyond her regular schedule:

I would work non-stop. It was even hard to tell when I was on or I was off work. Because even if it was a Sunday, I was there if they needed me. I'd go to work on a Sunday, or a Saturday. The right thing would have been for me to work Monday through Friday but if they needed me on the weekend, I was there. I was there to get things done.

Sônia emphasizes how common it is for employers to take advantage, and have expectations that are unreasonable, even harmful, to the well-being of the employee: "Marina, you have no idea... She [her co-worker] is the driver, she cleans the house, books the girls' appointments, takes them to the doctor, tells them to do their homework, to shower... It cracks me up because there are days this woman barely has time to eat lunch. She doesn't eat lunch, she swallows her food. And I tell her, '*Tu vai adoecer*, it's not worth it."⁴⁹. In Sônia's opinion, her co-worker does not recognize the importance of maintaining her health and demanding to at least have a proper break for lunch.

Workers use the word *capricho* to talk about tasks that they enjoy doing or take pride in knowing they are good at it. To do something with *capricho* means to perform a task with care, with a desire to do it well, and for it to turn out well (be it in taste or aesthetic). For example, Geni is responsible for taking care of everything in the house where she works, including her elderly employer's well-being. She says: "What I like best is cleaning. I like to clean. I make food because there's no one else to cook, right? So... I do it. With love, with *capricho*, and something always turns out." Cristina explains that at first cooking was not her thing: "I like to cook. I really like it. When I set my mind to do something, I like to do it right. *Eu capricho*. In the beginning I didn't like it. But now I even take courses, I look for things to learn. I do it. I do it because I like it." Cooking was a source of pride and joy for Fatima, a domestic worker who started out selling prepared foods at the small town she grew up in the Northeast. She is now employed as a cook in an upper class household in São Paulo. Her joy in cooking stands in sharp contrast to her feelings towards other tasks in domestic work she did previously:

⁴⁹ '*Tu vai adoecer*' (you will fall ill), captures the load this worker takes on without contestation, which negatively affects her health and well-being.

Well... *Toda vida* I liked to cook, you see? When I was little, I used to get spanked not to cook, you get it? [Laugh] I'd get spanked not to cook. And... For me the most difficult thing about a *casa de familia* is when I have to clean, to make the beds, or clean the bathroom. I feel *travada* (paralyzed). It's a strange thing. Now I understand it better. Before I didn't know exactly how to explain it. I'd ask myself: 'My God... why do I get so annoyed when I need to clean a bathroom, when I need to tidy the house?' You know... Now I know this, with time, I learned. It simply annoys me. This thing of cleaning and tidying the house annoys me. If you put me in the kitchen and say 'Look, you're either going to make dinner for 500 people, or you have to go and wash the bathroom, just the bathroom.' I'd answer: 'I'll make food for 500 people and I don't want to clean any bathroom.' You see? That's the difficult part for me.

The quote above is indicative of *domésticas*' views of the tasks they perform and those they like and those they do not. This example shows a situation where the workers have a strong dislike for tidying up and cleaning tasks. Fatima, however, cooks well and enjoys doing so. While her preference is not always negotiable, the ability to be hired as a full-time cook only has influenced previous decisions to terminate or take on a new employment position.

The section above sketched the affective textures involved in domestic labour with workers describing not only some of the tasks and responsibilities of their work, but also voicing the demands and expectations employers project on them, and how those emerge as feelings either of animating or (dis)animating (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2014). The ability to negotiate work tasks is quite unusual since most households employ one domestic worker and thus, negotiating specific tasks would require another household member to take on that responsibility. As the interviewees explained, they simply do everything. Work tasks emerge and signify varying degrees of preference and weighing on the level of job satisfaction.

In the next section, the focus shifts onto the relational aspect of domestic labour through an examination of the dynamics involved in carrying for children, and how workers deal with the emotional bond they establish with the children they care for.

4.4. Affective Ties and Discontents Involved in the Care of Children

The work of *mensalistas*⁵⁰ may or may not involve the care of children. *Babás*⁵¹ on the other hand, are hired for the exclusive care of children (although they may be expected and required to perform other tasks, especially

⁵⁰ *Mensalistas* are monthly employees, who work full-time or at least three days a week for a single employer/family/household (DIEESE 2006).

during the day-off of other household workers). In general, when caring for children, employers expect workers to be kind, responsible, trusting, attentive, patient, and prompt to perform any help, and support the needs of the children. They are responsible for maintaining and assisting the well-being of the children, often beyond agreed work hours. It was precisely because of this aspect that Maria asked her boss to change her position from nanny to working as a cook/cleaner. Her boss was flexible and worked out a solution making the situation more favourable for Maria. She and her employers' daughters have a close relationship and for that reason it took a while for them to get used to the idea that the new employee (not Maria) was to be primarily responsible for the daily tasks related to their care. In fact, as Maria explains, even though her official position has changed, she continues to look after the girls. Maria comments on how this change affects her schedule and explains her motivation:

I used to work as a nanny but now I clean. Because this way, doing the cleaning instead, I get the job done, it hits the clock, I leave. If there wasn't enough time to finish things up, I finish it tomorrow. It's something that can wait, right? With the children it was different. Now, I clean the house, one day I wash and iron, if there wasn't time to finish ironing, I do it tomorrow.

She adds:

You know something... The reason why I made that choice [to work as a cleaner instead of taking care of the children]. It's because this thing of working as a nanny is a big responsibility. Not that I don't have what it takes. But I preferred cleaning because of the work hours. Because when you take care of children, you work longer hours here and there. I have my own kids, a husband, my house... So, that would get in the way, working as a nanny. But, for as long as I'm there, the girls arrive home, and I didn't stop being their nanny. It's just not all the time. [...] I'm still the one to pick them up at school most of the time. I'm the one who makes their lunch. I'm the one who's there with them. Homework... Everything. But when the clock hits and I have to go, I go. And I really put a lot of emphasis on my work hours because I have my responsibilities at home too.

The depth and quality of employer-employee relations vary greatly, and in some cases, resembles more impersonal work relations. Caring for children, however, inevitably fosters affective bonds requiring physical and emotional investment in attending to their daily needs. The level of attachment, affect, and intimacy between workers and children can, sometimes, turn into a point of tension between employers and employees. Preuss (1997) found evidence of employers displaying feelings of anxiety and/or jealousy regarding the amount of time and relationship their children develop with nannies. These feelings manifest

⁵¹ *Babás* are a segment of domestic workers who are hired to work exclusively as nannies, acting as the caregivers to the child(ren) of the household on a regular basis.

itself in different ways. For example, there are instances when employers whose children spend a considerable amount of time in the care of their nannies display a level of concern regarding the quality of socialization and enculturation to which their children are exposed to (Colen in Brites 2007:97). It is not uncommon for employers to force their beliefs and exercise control over the activities and ways caregivers relate to their children. And yet, MacDonald in her book *Shadow Mothers* (2010) writes that nannies' sense of the importance of their role in their employers' children's lives goes unrecognized and is undervalued. One of the "feeling rules"⁵² influencing this labour by nannies is that the latter's relationship with the children is supposed be detached (Hochschild 1979 in MacDonald 2010:114). And yet, the following example illustrates a rather different scenario, where the employer did not deploy this level of "management." In fact, this domestic worker and child caregiver developed a healthy relationship with her employer based on trust and respect. Maria is an example of this type of close relationship without signs of jealousy from her boss vis-à-vis her relationship with their child. She explains:

Nossa... The kids love me. The youngest is always saying she loves me. It actually makes me feel a little embarrassed. [Laugh]. Once she asked to come live with me. [Laugh] I didn't know what to say to her. I think she might have said that to tease her mom, I don't know... I told her 'Gabi, it's not acceptable for you to say you want to come live with me.' And she said, 'Dani, I love you and I just wish I could live with you.' They come over to my house all the time. My sons come over to their place. I got married and they came to my wedding! They come to my kids' birthdays. It's a nice bond we have. It's not all about my work-hours, you see? It's a bond of friendship, it's really nice.

Brites (2007:103) argues that at the same time that children develop affective ties to their caregiver, they are "socialized in a logic that is profoundly hierarchical, which places the *empregada* in a different social realm." She asks: "... how is it that we go from relations of so much intimacy and affection between the children and their *empregadas*, to adult *patroas* (female boss) expressing such strong feelings of hierarchy? How do these realities become separate?"⁵³ (Brites 2007:103). Brites' (2007) point is that despite evidence of a emotional bond and attachment children develop with their nannies, they learn to differentiate themselves from their *empregadas* through lessons that are either directed at them verbally, or understood and learned by example. Goldstein (in Scheper Hughes and Sargent 1998:394) writes that middle and upper class children

⁵² This concept was developed by Arlie R. Hochschild (1979) and it speaks of the social norms that influence how people feel, manage, and/or display emotions in a given social circumstance or relation

⁵³ "A questão é: se existe tanta intimidade e afeto entre crianças e suas empregadas, como se reproduzem patroas adultas com um sentido tão forte de hierarquia? Como se separam esses mundos?" (Brites 2007:103).

learn (imitate and copy) their parents' way of treating the maid and learn at an early age how to "treat" the maid, including ordering her to do various tasks for them. One of the many results of this relationship is that the children of the wealthy are indulged, spoiled, and catered to daily by their parents and caregivers in the midst. However, more often than not children and their caregivers create a bond and an affective relation. This is evident, for example, in this girl's comment about her *empregada*: "Lena, you could go and win the lottery. Then you could come here and just play with me. We could have lunch together and rest in my mom's bed- just like she does" (quoted in Brites 2007:97). This illustrates how the girl's emotional bond to Lena is accompanied by a consciousness of the social distance that exists between them and affects their relationship. This is an example of the emotional cost experienced by Lena when her employers moved to a different city and she lost her job and daily contact with the little girl (Brites 2007). Instances like this show that nannies and caregivers, whose routine revolves around children, establish an emotional bond that is difficult to untie.

When Sônia left her hometown in the Northeast, she left behind her family and young son to take a job at a private home in São Paulo. The heartache of missing her son was a sensitive topic for her. While describing her adaptation to the city, her new job and living situation, she also detailed the affective bond she developed with the kids she looked after:

There were three little girls, you know? And they liked to *encher o saco* (bug me). They would fight over who would get to sleep with me. So, I ended up getting used to it. I raised them. I took care of them as if they were my own daughters. [Laugh].

The emotional investment put into this relationship is tied to a multiplicity of roles - as worker, as mother-like figure, as friend. In the following passage Sônia describes the emotional bond and attachment between her and the children she cares for to an almost inevitable sense of loss:

You know what... I tell the girl that works with me: 'Don't just go and get too attached to them [the children she cares for] because afterwards you suffer, you hear?' [Laugh].

Women domestic workers hired as nannies or whose responsibilities involve caring for children are often afforded a higher status vis-à-vis other domestic workers. According to De Souza (1980), amongst the different specializations in domestic work, nannies seem to hold a higher status than, for example, cooks. This is largely due to the fact that nannies are hired to care exclusively for children, and so earn higher wages than

other domestic workers⁵⁴. Bloefield (2012) notes that in the main urban centers of Brazil where there is evidence of increasing levels of formal registration, women domestic workers who work exclusively as nannies earn higher salaries and are often within the earning bracket of what is considered the new middle-class (Bloefield 2012). According to the owner of *BabyCare* agency in São Paulo specializing in recruiting full-time nannies, the most desirable employees are those who are willing to live-in. The average monthly salary for such nannies varies between R\$1.800 to R\$3.000 (roughly CAD\$645 and CAD\$1077 per month) (Marcucci 2013). This is possible because upper middle class and elite households can afford to hire specialized workers like nannies and offer them higher salaries.

Besides caring for children's basic needs, such as nutrition and hygiene, domestic workers whose tasks involve caring for children (or full time nannies) are also expected and compelled to meet their emotional needs. In the examples above, the women interviewed caring for children develop strong emotional bonds which sometime in the future may be heartbreaking when domestics move on to other workplaces. While the literature suggests other ways in which this influences the relationship between employers and domestic workers, as well as the open-ended dimension of examining how children internalize and conceptualize of the emotional closeness and social boundaries with their caregivers, this is one of the dimensions of domestic labour that would benefit of further and focused attention in future studies.

The next section presents' opinions and experiences relating to the character and quality of the relationships they have with current and previous employers. As noted previously the quality of this relationship, whether it takes on more personal or contractual character, is intertwined with other aspects of domestic work and workers' experiences in the workplace.

4.5. Affective Textures and Power Asymmetries in Employer-Employee Relations

Adams (2000) writes that conceptualizing the household through a relational focus allows us to dismantle and explore the forces permeating this landscape of class relations, its reproduction and contestation on a daily and intimate basis. In a study conducted in Rio de Janeiro in the late 1970s, De Souza (1980) interviewed

⁵⁴ For an article in the *New York Times* that describes this phenomena, see "Upwardly Mobile Nannies Move Into the Brazilian Middle Class" (Barrionuevo 2011) Retrieved on June 8, 2016 (http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/20/world/americas/20brazil.html?pagewanted=all&_r=3&).

domestic workers about their degree of job satisfaction. She found that satisfaction was almost always contingent on the relationship with the employer. That is, if an employer was deemed “good” than satisfaction was high. But if the employer was inadequate in his relationship with the domestic worker, than satisfaction suffered. De Souza’s (1980) research also revealed that employers and maids developed genuine ties of friendship, especially in cases when live-in workers were hired by the same family for a long time. But this friendship is generally kept within “the limits of the social distance” (De Souza 1980:45). Particularly in the case of *mensalistas*, Kofes (in Fraga 2013) remarks that the notion of belonging to the household, as a quasi-family member or friend, is symbolic of affective bonds workers seek to establish, and which they perceive as an essential element in safe guarding working conditions favourable to them and enhancing their chances of keeping their job. In a more recent study, Fraga (2013:160) observed a similar current whereby domestic workers’ perceptions of the quality of their job is not only influenced by their relationship with employers but it is also seen as “inseparable from the intimate everyday life of the families they work for.” Fraga (2013) suggests that the professional and familial dimensions of domestic work continue to be marked by an element of subordination and that household relations mimic racial and class hierarchies that operate at the level of society. However, Pereira de Melo (1998:4) brings attention to how “fictive notions of familial ties” in the relationship between *patrões* and *empregadas* impedes the professionalization and formalization of domestic work. Studying agency and resistance in the workplace from the “native point of view,” Brites (2003) found that domestic workers’ opinions stood in contrast to the overwhelming majority of research on paid domestic work, especially those with a feminist orientation. In addition, she argued that while scholars largely perceived the “personalistic and clientelistic” character of the relationships workers establish with employers as the source of their oppression and subjugation, workers themselves considered that element to work in their favour, presenting advantages, such as extra-salarial benefits and a level of flexibility that would be difficult to secure in other low-paying occupations in the formal labour market (Brites 2003:82). While workers recognize the elements of exploitation and domination that permeate their relations of employment, their accounts show evidence of strategies to subvert these through every day acts of resistance (Brites 2003).

Recalling a boss she worked for as a live-in domestic worker during twelve years prior to marrying, Lourdes said “She [her boss] helped me in ways that my own family hasn’t, right? To this day I pay her visits.”

She refers to this employer as a generous boss. Lourdes mentions, for example, how she did not know how to cook when she started her job and how her boss was patient and gave her opportunities to learn. Lourdes feels indebted to her, especially since her skill in cooking helped her find good jobs in the subsequent years. Another example of the ways in which job satisfaction and the quality of employment is linked to the relationship a worker established with her employer as told by Lourdes. She says “I have nothing to complain [about]. In fact, my relationship with employers has always been good. There was only one boss that I would say it wasn’t worth working for. She was the kind of person that doesn’t know how to talk to us. She would yell and swears [at us]... As if you’re nothing.” After a while, this boss was so unbearable that Lourdes explains how she suddenly decided to quit: “I said ‘this is it’. I told her, ‘Madam, you lack manners in the way you speak to us [domestic workers]. The same way I need to respect you, you need to respect me. So I’m leaving.”

In her research, Brites (2008) also explores the argument that domestic workers value their relationship to *patrões*, even when they show evidence of paternalism and clientelism. This demonstrates that in some cases the informality of domestic work and the affective and personal ties with employers provides advantages for the worker. Still, Brites (2008) recognizes that this advantage is contingent upon the precariousness and informality that is so prevalent in domestic work. She notes further that “extra-salarial” help in the form of gifts and donations seem advantageous precisely because the enforcement of legal rights is still scant (Brites 2008:2). Employers for their part perceive these gifts and donations as good deeds and often presume and expect their gifts to translate into and encourage workers’ loyalty. Consider the following comment: “If I redecorate my house, I wouldn’t sell this table, I would give it to my *empregada*. Doing this I gain five years of fidelity and dedication” (quoted in Brites 2008:6). This practice is embedded in a notion of class relations based on a hierarchy as the *empregada* receives items that have been used and are no longer desirable to her employer. The act of gift giving⁵⁵, or handing down used items, is not a means of reciprocity between equals but a practice stressing social difference and distance between parties. It signifies the material

⁵⁵ Brites (2008) notes a correlation between the logic of gift giving in the context of domestic work and the notion of reciprocity studied by Marcel Mauss’ (1974) in regards to the Maori practice called *hau* (Brites 2008:6) Similarly to *hau* these objects of gift or donation are infused with an affective energy that goes beyond the material, it remains linked to the giver, it implies that something is being exchanged (Mauss 1967 in Brites 2014:67).

inequality between donor and recipient and it conveys the existing social hierarchy (Brites 2014). From this stems the argument that domestic workers' remuneration should not be based in extra-salarial terms, rather the wage of domestic labour needs to meet the social significance, and social and economic value of their work. The transmission of a used item or a gift carries a paternalistic and disciplinary weight, one in which the receiver is expected to return this favour in the form of loyalty to their employer. The symbolic significance of this act, which is representative of the hierarchy between employer and employee, manifests itself in a powerful manner, since that hierarchy informs the employer's decision and confirms the assumption that the workers needs the item being transferred. Thus, while the symbolic meaning of this act carries an affective force which re-instates not only an expectation of having an employer's loyalty in return, but it also leaves affective traces of workers' inferiority and dependency. In response to this issue, the image below reads: "Neither favours, nor gifts. I want my rights to be respected. Equal rights for domestic workers."



Figure 4.1. Dona Rita Campaign "Sou Trabalhadora Doméstica." Source: Cunha Coletivo Feminista 2013

This image simultaneously recognizes and denounces the practice of gift giving since it disrespects workers and can stand in the way of *domésticas* seeking labour rights. This image is part of a campaign called '*Sou Trabalhadora Doméstica. Tenho direito a ter direitos iguais*' (I am a domestic worker. I have the right to equal

rights)⁵⁶. The fact that the act of “gift giving” is the focus of one of the images in the campaign suggests that it remains a common occurrence of a hegemonic cultural practice. The poster above is part of a campaign, led by militant domestic workers and their allies, to denounce, challenge and hopefully eliminate this practice. The act of “gift giving” is one of the elements of the interpersonal relations between employers and employees that are deeply complicated by the social asymmetry between the two and the affective energy that travels with the gift itself. The “gift” is simultaneously an act of generosity and social dominance, as nothing (material) is expected in return except loyalty. In the passages that follow, I attempt to reproduce a close rendering of workers’ perspectives of the personal bonds, the limits, and the social distance influencing these relations.

Selma recounted an example of one of her employers who was neat and tidy. These are characteristics Selma does not possess and her recollection of working under this employer is amusing:

It depends, it depends a lot... There’re a lot of employers that... I have this problem I take something and I don’t know how to put it back where it was. So, there are bosses that will come around and before they say good morning they start putting it all back in place. Only after doing that, they say good morning. And I have this problem. I don’t know. If I move a chair, I don’t know how to put it exactly the way it was. I always have this problem of leaving it *torto* (crooked), in a different place. And I’ve had employers that would stop bringing it to my attention, they would just do it. They would see that it was my own issue. I don’t know how to put things back in place.

What Selma describes is representative of the negative affects circulating in a household in various material and immaterial forms. When Selma cleans the house (note that it is not uncommon in Brazil to expect employees to move all the furniture and objects around to conduct a frequent and thorough clean of the space and floors), she finds it difficult to remember exactly where things are placed, or how exactly they are placed. She suggests that the fact that this upsets her employers makes her understand it as a problem of an inability to meet their expectations. Previous employers, she notes, would make a point to first place things back where they belong, or fix the placement of furniture or other items, before they even acknowledged her presence in the morning. While this exemplifies a passive aggressive demonstration of her employers’ discontent, Selma comments that from her perspective, employers would eventually get over it and accept it as her own issue. This quote touches upon the way domestic workers cope with the physical presence of their employers, as

⁵⁶ This campaign was developed by *Cunhã*, a grassroots feminist organization based in the Northeast of Brazil, in collaboration with the local, regional, and federal domestic workers’ Unions, as well as the National Program for Equal Rights and Empowerment for Brazilian Women⁵⁶ (*Cunhã* 2013).

well as the affect that their demands leave upon the space and workers' daily activities. In this case, Selma does not question the unrealistic notion that someone should be able to remove every piece of furniture and object of a room in order to clean it thoroughly and be able to place everything exactly how it was. Rather, the worker is confronted by a dissatisfied boss and internalizes this critique as a personal problem.

Maria is in her late thirties. She started working at private homes at the age of ten and raised her daughter as a single parent. In the following account Maria expresses an awareness and difficulty in separating the limits of her personal and work relation to her employers, especially when her bosses welcome her daughter to spend time at their house. Maria recounts that she did not feel comfortable to let her daughter circulate freely around the house. But her employers insisted her daughter sit at the dinner table, which she accepted reluctantly:

We have a lot of intimacy. But with my employers, you know... I've always respected them. I've always put myself in my place. I am the domestic worker here, not one of the family. Sometimes, my daughter would be around and they would say 'Maria, you can let her seat here with us' [at the dining table]. And I would say 'No, no. Let her eat in the kitchen. That is your place. And they would insist. But I didn't like. I think we need to put ourselves in our place, you understand?

While Maria acknowledges that there is closeness and intimacy in the relationship, she differentiates between the notions of being 'one of the family' and draws a line in terms of her role and her place within the household:

Once I told my boss 'I'm in the privacy of your life, you know? So, whether you want it or not, you become intimate, a part of the family, you know? You know what they eat, you're there, you're seeing... When there's an argument between them, you're there. You witness it. You're there in the *dia-a-dia* (day-to-day life).

I said to Maria that this is precisely one of my interests in studying domestic work - the affective, emotional, intimate aspects of this form of labour. In response, Maria said: "Yes. But you know what? It's not every boss that gives the freedom for this bond to happen." From her perspective, her employer owns the decision of whether or not to establish a bond and the depth of this relationship. In other words, this is an example where, due to the uneven power dynamics that characterizes this relationship, the employee sees the employer as entitled to decide, control, and define the terms of this bond. Maria continued to speak, describing the familial ties between her and her employers' children and how meaningful it was when her bosses attended her wedding, "When they arrived, I was *anestesiada*. I couldn't believe it. I knew they had other commitments

that day. So, it meant a lot to me, they showed me that, you know, I'm not just an employee. There's *carinho* also, right?"

One participant had a very different opinion about establishing a bond with her employers. Néia described her preference to maintain a distance from her bosses. She says this is due to a personality trait. In the interview, she said to me: "I don't even know why I'm talking to you." I was not sure whether this meant she was having second thoughts about the interview, or whether she was surprised with the fact that she felt okay to be talking to me and recording our conversation. Faced with a degree of uncertainty as to how I should proceed, we sat silent for a moment until I decided to ask if she felt comfortable to continue the interview. Néia took the initiative to proceed with the conversation:

You know what... I don't like to establish a bond with my employers. I don't like it. It has nothing to do with them... I just don't like it. I'm the kind of person that doesn't like to work with people. I don't even know why I'm talking to you. I'm the kind of person who... I like to talk quite a bit but it depends on the person. I'm...I guess I'm shy. No, it's not that I'm shy. It's a way of being. I don't like to hang out talking to people. [Pause] It's just that... *eu sou muito na minha* (I'm reserved). I don't like to work with the public. Of having people around me. I don't like that part of it. If I'm doing my work, cleaning, and there's someone around, I can't do it.

While the majority of participants express a degree of job satisfaction in terms of the quality of the relationship they establish with employers and other household members, Néia feels anxious in the presence of her employers. She prefers to conduct her work tasks alone and to keep communication to a minimum. Néia said she experienced what is called *soadeira*, a feeling of nervousness, getting the "sweats". Her account offers an example of the (dis)animating force that one can experience from inevitable proximity in the context of a highly asymmetrical relationship. For Néia the interpersonal aspect of domestic labour is draining. She feels obliged to respond to her bosses' communication and to meet their expectations in terms of the kind of verbal response she gives them. This is a powerful example of how domestic work involves a management of emotions⁵⁷, or response, which perpetuate feeling of nervousness, physical discomfort, a sense of dread. When I listened to our interview and read the transcripts, this passage felt troublesome. Néia confirmed that she felt okay to continue the interview and yet, the following comment suggests that our interaction caused

⁵⁷ See Hochschild (1983) for a study of feeling rules and emotional management involved in the everyday experiences of flight attendants. See Chong (2009) for an intersectional analysis of the ways in which race, gender, and class hierarchies affect the social construction of emotional labour.

her to feel anxious in a way that resembles the negative feelings she experiences in dealing with the proximity and verbal communication with her employers. Néia:

You see? I'm having *soadeira*. So, I don't need to have this kind of bond with my bosses. A lot of the times, it's not them, it's me. I don't feel good. I don't feel good sitting at the table with them. I don't feel like arriving in the morning, starting conversation, like... If I had a choice, I rather them not talk to me, you know? I'd rather them leave a little note and that's it. That would work great for me.

As a result, this ended up being the longest interview I conducted. In fact, our conversation continued long after the audio recorder was turned off. Her son arrived home from school and the three of us walked over to her sister-in law who lived nearby. Their houses were built on a tall and steep hill. I met her brother as well as their children. Everybody stood at the veranda, while the kids played with a tricycle. Before leaving, Néia and I walked back to her house and I asked once again if she felt comfortable having talked to me about her experiences and the interview being a part of the research. She nodded and said that she knew it was important to make her voice heard so that other women domestic workers recognize their common challenges. I told her I agreed and her story was one of profound transformation, where overtime she realized the exploitative nature of her previous work arrangements, and, with time, she gained a nuanced political consciousness, which gave her confidence to demand fair working conditions. I reminded her that no matter what and at any time, she should contact me if anything came up.

Finally, one of the interviewees told me an interesting story about her relationship to a co-worker whom she considers nice and has been employed at their current workplace for about five years. Sônia explains that it did not take long for her to realize that to hold the job she needed to *paparicar* her co-worker (to get on her co-worker's right side) who has seniority at the house:

Here's the deal, when the other maids would start working there, I say they must have been dumb as a doorknob. The kind of person that knows how to do that one thing and nothing else. You know? With me it's like... My old boss would joke about it. I'm like a *bom-bri! mil e uma utilidades* (a thousand and one utilities) [laughs]. I've always known how to do a little bit of everything. And when I don't, I figure it out. So, because I'm this way, she ended up feeling threatened.

She sensed that the co-worker felt threatened or jealous because of her good work ethic, strong skills and positive attitude. Sônia comments on those qualities vis-à-vis what she imagines previous employees have been like, specifically, she is referring to workers whose skills are limited to one type of activity. This participant is aware that her ability to handle things and the attitude she takes on dealing with situations or

tasks she is unfamiliar with, stand out in relation to other domestic workers. To assert this aspect of her personality, she quotes a previous employer who used to say she's like a *Bombril* (Brazil's popular steel wool that is marketed and known for having multiple uses in the household). In this chapter, this analogy came up twice in the same interview. One, referring to the level of expectations and demands on the part of employers in regards to the tasks and responsibilities domestic work entails. The other, which relates to the quote above, connotes a positive and self-affirming quality that both Sônia and her previous employer recognize about her. She invokes here a sense of self-worth and pride, which emerges in the context of her account that the woman who she is working with feels threatened by. The way in which this analogy is deployed and the meaning it conveys is dependent upon the context from which it arises. Comparing a domestic worker to a steel brush with multiple uses in the household speaks simultaneously of the weight of the expectation and demands that are directed at workers and the uplifting effect of their feeling of responsibility, self-worth and pride. The power of this analogy resides on the fact that it conveys, on the one hand, how essential domestic workers are in the maintenance of the household in the social reproduction of the nation, and on the other, how the very aspect that should signify the valorization and pride of the occupation (not only on an individual, but on a social level) is the object of its invisibility, the justification of low remuneration, and delayed recognition in the realm of labour rights. Instead of allowing this animosity to instill, Sônia chose to speak honestly with her co-worker and reassure her of her good intentions:

One day I came to her and said, 'Listen, you don't need to worry. I'm not here to take your place. I'm here to walk along with you. So, you count on me for whatever you need. Don't go thinking I want to take your job because I don't. I don't like to tidy up houses, I don't like to clean bathrooms, I don't know how to drive. I hate having to boss around. I don't have the patience for that.' And things got better. Way better. Now we work very well together, in good harmony.

This chapter was an effort to think through the significance of affective labour as a theoretical approach to the study of paid domestic work. The empirical discussion above supports the argument that looking at domestic work as affective labour enhances our understanding of how categories of social difference, such as class, gender, and race, influence both the relational and task-based dimensions of domestic service. The notion of affective labour permeates many of the accounts herein, from the tasks and responsibilities their work entails, the level of expectations on the part of employers, their ability to lead fulfilling private lives, and the sentiments they describe in coping with all of these aspects. Further,

respondents' testimonies suggest that their place of origin and experiences of social and economic marginalization influence processes of identity construction as well as their relationships with employers.

The notion of affect bridges the material and social conditions of domestic work. It speaks of the ambivalent feelings and corporeal experiences that emanate from the intimate and uneven power relations within the household. In the privacy of the household, employers and employees relate under a hierarchical social distance "through displays of deference (linguistic, spatial, gestural)" (Rollins 1985 in Brown 2011:37). As noted by Brites and Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2014:3), the interpersonal relations between employers and employees exist within a "matrix of power relations" that is characterized by "moments of affection" that sustain "processes of subordination." This reveals how the exploitation, subordination, and sense of inferiority experienced by domestic workers intersect with broader class hierarchies and the undervalorization attributed to their labour.

As noted in the opening to this chapter, the affective dimension of domestic labour is particularly revealing of the relationship between the human and non-human qualities and hardships of domestic workers' labour. In line with how Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2014) deploys the affective texture of domestic labour, the women who participated in this study theorize their social location and working lives in terms of forces and residual effects they observe and feel, between they and the spaces they work in, they and the household members they relate to, and they and the social world which they navigate and exist within. The ambiguous sense of belonging, ambivalent feelings in relation to employers or the children they care for, and the unequal material conditions of their lives in relation to the households they work in, are infused with competing feelings of intimacy, interdependency, and power asymmetries. Those sentiments speak of the subjectivities as well as the diversities that characterize their individual life stories and identities. However, as noted previously, there are elements of their accounts that suggest a common ground in the way that intersections between class, gender, and race, have emerged as fundamental markers of their identity and the crossroads they encountered. Those crossroads relate to their access to education, the premature start of their working lives, the difficulties of raising and caring for their own children, trajectories of migration and daily commutes, among others.

A multitude of factors play into how workers' perceive the quality of their employment, some are of a relational nature, others relate to the work arrangements and tasks they undertake daily. My empirical findings confirm what other scholars have argued, that the relationships domestic workers establish with employers influence all other aspects of their work experience, including their ability to negotiate work arrangements, tasks, or simply, the quality of the affective energies that permeate the household and is inscribed in the spaces and material belongings they care for. The empirical data in this chapter signals that, in spite of the lack of social and economic valorization ascribed to domestic work, their labour is not only demanding in terms of work hours and intensity of their daily tasks, but also in consideration of the level of skills those seemingly mundane activities require and the emotional labour that is involved in the management and maintenance of the household. The workers I interviewed are aware of this contradiction, which they sense as a burden and feel, simultaneously, as a source pride. The reproductive aspect of their work (be it human or non-human) is essential; their presence in the household is essential, and this knowledge inspires a sense of empowerment. Interestingly, most workers I interviewed commented on the notion of being like "one of the family." They identify in this discourse a retrograde element of employer-employee relations, often linking this form of relationship to the early stages of their careers when they used to work in return for room and board. This stands in contrast to their more recent work experiences, where participants recognize the personal nature of their relationship to employers and the inevitably intimate nature of their work, while embodying and protecting their identity as dignified workers.

That being said, the accounts from women who take care of children or are hired as nannies reveals the particularities of a demanding sector of domestic work where duty and personal bond become blurred in the emotional ties they develop with the children they care for. The emotional aspect of their work is gratifying but not without its discontents. Often, as the children grow older they become more aware of the social distance between them and their nannies. Plus, there is always the underlying knowledge that at some point and for various reasons, their employment could terminate and they would have to cope with the loss and distance from children they helped raise. Workers explain that the care of children also involves demanding schedules and makes it difficult for them to maintain consistent work hours. In any case, the examples in this chapter only serve to briefly outline some of the challenges of this type in domestic work.

They suggest however, that in the work relation and emotional bonds they develop with children they care for, resides a significant topic in the study of the social hierarchies embedded in domestic labour.

The next chapter demonstrates the uneven plane in domestic work as employment relationships come into sharper focus as workers recount employment terminations, legal disputes, and the persistent discrimination they are confronted with. Still, the affective textures and sentiments circulating in the household are tangible and expressed in workers' narratives.

Chapter 5. Labour Rights and Workers' Experiences Bringing Rights to the Table

The previous chapter demonstrated the affective textures of paid domestic work through workers' narratives of migration, and their ability to lead fulfilling private lives while coping with demanding working conditions. Workers in this study spoke of the interpersonal relations and energies permeating the household they work and/or live in. Their narratives provide an understanding of the interplay between class, gender, and race, experienced and produced at several "crossroads"⁵⁸ in participants' lives (Gonçalves 2010:62). These intersections are implicated in the ways *domésticas*' occupation reinforces and reproduces larger socio-economic inequalities through personal, and often times uneven and subordinate relations with their employers. In this chapter, workers' narratives take on the more tangible political expression of agency as their accounts relate to the specific issues concerning formal work ties, securing labour rights, and deflecting negative stereotypes attached to their occupation.

Below I discuss the significance of labour rights by examining domestic workers' perceptions of the *PEC Das Domésticas*⁵⁹ in their own terms, and the everyday spaces where the exploitation of their labour intersects with the affective textures of employer-employee relations. For the sake of contextualization, the analysis begins with an overview of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 189 and their Recommendation No. 201 for 'decent work for domestic workers'. Next I describe the political environment leading to the approval of the most recent policy reform in Brazil, the Amendment Bill that came into effect on April 2013 to harmonize domestic workers' rights with that of workers in other occupations. This is followed by an examination of some of the repercussions and public debates accompanying the passing of this legislation. I also consider the limitations and the potential transformative power of this extended set of labour regulations. In the final section of the chapter I weave together workers' narratives and my interpretations of the social and political implications influencing the success of Brazil's policy reform for domestic workers. While the emphasis is on workers' opinions and claims concerning new

⁵⁸ Based on her research on domestic workers organizing and talking to Creuza Oliveira (president of the FENTRAD) Gonçalves (2010) noticed the numerous crossroads that women encounter in their lives when they are either caught in the obstacles of inequalities, or when they are "presented with a choice of the power to make a choice." She adds, "Those crossroads are places and moments where privilege and inequality are highlighted" (62).

⁵⁹ In 2013 the Brazilian Senate approved the *PEC das Domésticas*, which harmonizes domestic workers' rights with workers in other occupations. This is the equivalent of a Constitutional Amendment Bill.

labour rights, research participants also express important views on the lack of respect in the workplace and the devaluation of domestic work in society at large. This finding leads me to include a discussion of social stigma and discrimination in this chapter. In other words, I focus on domestic workers' interpretations of the *PEC* and labour rights and what it means to them to be *domésticas* in Brazilian society.

5.1. The Right to Have Rights⁶⁰ and the *PEC Das Domésticas*

In 2011 the ILO adopted the Domestic Workers Convention No.189 (what is considered a legally binding international treaty) and its Recommendation No. 201 (non-binding guidelines) on Decent Work for Domestic Workers, bringing the precariousness of the sector to the forefront of the ILO public advocacy (ILO 2013:1). In doing so, the ILO recognized: 1) the overwhelming number of individuals engaged in paid domestic work; 2) the fact that domestic labour is undervalued and poorly regulated (Human Rights Watch 2011); and 3) that domestic workers' vulnerability and exploitation are linked to "disadvantages that have been historically created" (Albin and Mantouvalou 2012:67). The convention and its recommendation promote legislative standards for social protection and decent working conditions for women domestic workers. It also supports the operation of local trade unions in the process of implementing those rights and encourages the formation of transnational alliances, dialogues, and networks. From the time the Convention No. 189 was published, only 22 nations have ratified it (12 of which are Latin American nations),⁶¹ and are thus presumably committed to enacting their labour standards through political reforms (ILO Conventions and Recommendations 2011)⁶². While at this point Brazil has not ratified the ILO's Convention, Brazil's recent policy reform is largely in accordance with the labour standards defined by the Convention No. 189 (Gomes and Puig 2013). The ILO inspired a renewed vitalization and awareness to the gendered and racialized dimensions of paid domestic work, and the vulnerabilities endured by domestic workers in Brazil and elsewhere (ILO 2013). It served to bring to visibility the common challenges faced by the domestic work force in different nations, underscoring the significance of organizing nationally and transnationally. Domestic

⁶⁰ To reference the term used by Geraldine Pratt (2004:95) in the context of her research about Filipino domestic workers in Vancouver.

⁶¹ For a full list of ratifications by country see: http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11300:0::NO:11300:P11300_INSTRUMENT_ID:2551460.

⁶² Retrieved on February 18, 2016 (<http://www.ilo.org/global/standards/introduction-to-international-labour-standards/conventions-and-recommendations/lang--en/index.htm>).

workers and militants gathered with force mobilizing “the first international domestic workers’ movement” where workers took an active role in policy-making debates (Fish 2015). On a national scale, the ILO strengthened the collective bargain through the FENATRAD and their political allies. This momentum was further propelled by three consecutive Labour Party administrations, starting in 2003, culminating in the most recent policy reform known as the *PEC Das Domésticas* (DIEESE 2012; Gomes and Bertolin 2011; Vieira Gonzalez 2013).

On March 2013, after arduous negotiations on the Amendment Bill n°72, the Brazilian Senate unanimously approved the *PEC Das Domésticas* harmonizing domestic workers’ rights to that of workers in other occupations. This constitutional amendment establishes profound changes in legal rights and protections for domestic workers. Some of the provisions include: formal work contract and registration with the Ministry of Labour; access to social security (*Carteira de Trabalho e Previdência Social - CTPS*⁶³); a monthly salary in accordance with the national minimum wage; access to statutory and religious holidays; a maximum of 8 hours a day and 44 hours a week of work; 40 per cent Guarantee Fund for Time of Service (FGTS); 50 per cent overtime pay for night time work, 30 days of paid annual leave; maternity leave; 30 days notice in case of termination; and other items (Ministry of Work and Employment 2013)⁶⁴. This amendment remains intact even now during the political turmoil Brazil is experiencing.

Militant domestic workers, activists, allies, and union representatives, celebrated this achievement and see the passing of this law as a historical moment of political redress (Cunhã 2013). At the same time, advocates recognized that the passing of the law does not guarantee labour justice. One of the greatest challenges remaining for labour justice advocates and domestic workers is the development of strategies to encourage the implementation and policing of the law. These rights, considered basic labour rights and enjoyed by the majority of formal workers in Brazil, when extended to domestic workers and the regulation of their labour, generated a lot of debate. Brazilian newspapers, magazines, and social media exploded with

⁶³ *Carteira de trabalho* translates as work card and is the equivalent of an employment agreement or contract in Canada. The *carteira de trabalho* is issued by the Ministry of Labour and the National Social Security Program (INRS).

⁶⁴ The full extent of the Amendment Bill is available online. Retrieved on 15 May 2015 (http://portal.mte.gov.br/trab_domestico/emenda-constitucional-n-72/).

commentaries divided by those in favour or opposed to the *PEC*.⁶⁵ The debate took on an alarmist tone from the bourgeoisie and upper classes who employ *domésticas* voicing their opinions regarding the *PEC* and its implementation (Lopes and Cardoso 2013). The media response was “sharp and strong” (Harrington 2015: 109) and public opinion captured employers’ resistance to clauses for the formalization and contractual work arrangements with domestic workers (DIEESE 2013). Middle class households were particularly vocal in expressing their dismay at the legislation and what it entailed in terms of their ability to afford the cost of hiring domestic workers in the future (Vieira Gonzalez 2013). Nascimento Santos (2014) argues that the *PEC* and its significance go beyond the realm of labour rights and work regulations; it spills over and confronts a wider set of political and ethical questions in Brazilian society. She writes that class resistance towards extending labour legislation and domestic workers’ rights is better understood from a socio-historical perspective taking into consideration the ways in which Brazilian social structures have developed since the time of slavery. The question of labour rights for domestic workers is directly related to challenging the subaltern status of *domésticas*’ labour power in the labour market and society at large (Nascimento Santos 2014). A more encompassing view of this matter involves understanding how domestic workers’ rights are not only a matter of labour law and political redress but also a matter of empowerment and social justice.

In the next section I discuss the *PEC*’s potential to improve the working conditions and lives of women domestic workers in Brazil. I begin with the employing classes’ reaction to it in order to show the challenges domestic workers face with the acceptance and implementation of the legislation. In this context I draw attention to class differences as barriers to the process of legal reparation in Brazilian households, and provide an example of a grassroots effort to translate the *PEC* and government bureaucracy to an everyday language of rights.

5.2. From Legislative Rights to the Table: The PEC and Domestic Workers in Brazil

On March 26, 2013 news reports about the *PEC das Domésticas*⁶⁶ came to prominence in the Brazilian media.

⁶⁵ See ‘*A Revolta da “patroa” Danuza Leão com os Direitos das Domésticas*’ (The Mistress Uprise Danuza Leão with the Rights of Domestic Workers) for an article that weaves the arguments of both sides of the debate (Pragmatismo 2013) Retrieved on June 2, 2016 (<http://www.pragmatismopolitico.com.br/2013/03/danuza-leao-preconceito-pec-domesticas.html>).

⁶⁶ A Google Brazil search narrowed between the 24th and the 30th of March 2013, brings numerous articles from national media sources, the FENATRAD, feminist blogs, among others with facts, figures, and diverse opinions/projections on the consequences of the *PEC*.

As domestic workers gained greater political representation and legal rights through the PEC, middle and upper class employers reacted in diverging ways to the formalization of domestic work, an occupation historically organized and experienced through paternalistic ties and relations. A group of upper class women living in São Paulo created a group called *Grupo Anti-Terrorista das Babás*⁶⁷ where they expressed their objections to the new legislation and its extension to paid *domésticas* (Sampaio 2013). This online forum served as a platform for employers to discuss relationship and issues with their *empregadas*, as well as share advice on mundane affairs like hair salons and ski vacations. An article published in the conservative newspaper, *O Estado de São Paulo*, quotes an entry by one of the group members: “My nanny came up to me with some nonsense story that I owe her cash payment for all the holidays she worked because there is a new law that says that is her right. I’m feeling disoriented about her attitude, disappointed with her lack of manners and appreciation for all that I’ve done for her. Still, I want to know if it’s true that I’m obliged to pay for it.” (Sampaio 2013). This statement illustrates the reactionary attitude of an upper class employer who interprets her worker’s claims to labour right as an act of defiance and betrayal. This is only one example of a number of classist comments circulating in the national media about the changes the legislation introduced⁶⁸. In a recent interview with the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (*Ministério do Trabalho e Previdência Social – MTPS*), Creuza de Oliveira (President of FENATRAD) comments on the issue:

The workers’ (response) was positive [...] The *PEC* represents an improvement and workers in the occupation are happy about it. The only thing we didn’t expect was the hatred on the part of the employers. They were used to the *Casa-Grande* (Masters’ House) and *Senzala* (Slave Quarters), with the employee who lived at her place of work and was there available 24 hours⁶⁹ (MTPS 2016).

In this excerpt the president of FENATRAD reminds us that the *PEC* is an important step towards greater political status and the professionalization of domestic work. Creuza de Oliveira sheds light on a significant element requiring further examination: the discourses that circulate among Brazil’s middle and upper classes

⁶⁷ This translates as the Anti-Terrorist Group of Nannies. I found numerous references and evidence of the *GATB* group online but the actual group was either removed or made private.

⁶⁸ See Brites and Fraga (in Brites and Schabback 2014) for an analysis of media and public discourses that argue that domestic workers are disappearing, when what is truly at stake is that that notions of servitude are being challenged by increase legal protection and changing labour relations.

⁶⁹ “Por parte das trabalhadoras foi positiva. [...] Foi um avanço e a categoria ficou muito feliz com isso. Só não contávamos com o ódio dos patrões. Eles estavam acostumados com a *Casa-Grande* a *Senzala*, com a trabalhadora que morava no local de trabalho e estava 24 horas à disposição” (MTPS 2016). Retrieved on September 3, 2015 (<http://www.mtps.gov.br/noticias/3302-creuza-oliveira-uma-trabalhadora-domestica-no-brasil>).

about the *PEC* and the employers' interpretations of the law.

The perception of the employing classes is particularly relevant considering this labour policy reform is intended to regulate and redefine the relationship between members of highly unequal classes, status and backgrounds. Employers' resistance to the legislation is a serious challenge to domestic workers, their allies and progressive politicians. If labour rights are to move from paper to practice, better public policy and enforcement needs to be institutionalized. But how do you secure these when the place of employment is the private homes of the bourgeoisie? The struggle for respect, dignity, and labour rights by domestic workers in Brazil and elsewhere, is also about dismantling social privileges and the patriarchal heritage embedded in capitalism. As noted in the literature review, this is linked to a neoliberal state gutting of social welfare provisions and promoting an ideology resisting acknowledgement of the self-worth of workers and what they do, and instead fostering a "systemic transfer of care work" to poor women of colour who are racialized, and often migrants, on a national and global scale (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002:13). In this strategy, gender, racial, and ethnic inequalities are reproduced and perpetuated in supporting the invisibility of care workforces.

Driven by an awareness of the invisibility and under valorization afforded to paid domestic work, *Cunhã Coletivo Feminista* (*Cunhã Feminist Collective*), a grassroots feminist organization based in the Northeast of Brazil, developed the visual campaign '*Sou Trabalhadora Doméstica. Tenho direito a ter direitos iguais*' (I am a Domestic Worker. I have the right to have equal rights)⁷⁰. This campaign was designed in collaboration with the local union of João Pessoa (*Sindicato das Trabalhadoras Domésticas de João Pessoa e Região*), and the National Program for Equal Rights and Empowerment for Brazilian Women (Cunhã 2013)⁷¹. The group supports the social recognition and valorization of domestic labour, and encourages employers' compliance with labour legislation and the legal protection of women domestic workers. The campaign is based on a simple but impactful design combining the portrait of a domestic worker with a quote denouncing some of the retrograde characteristics of employment arrangements persisting to this day. It communicates the importance of recognizing, valuing, and professionalizing domestic work and workers. For example, in the image below

⁷⁰ The details and images are available at Cunhã website: <http://cunhanfeminista.org.br/campanha-sou-trabalhadora-domestica-tenho-direitos-a-ter-direitos-iguais>

⁷¹ This campaign was also supported by the Gender Equality Program from *ONU Mulheres* (The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women).

the following statement accompanies the portrait of Josefa Pereira da Silva: “I am proud of my profession. I don’t accept the subjugation of any rights. I am not a slave.”



Figure 4.1. Josefa Campaign “Sou Trabalhadora Doméstica.” Source: Cunhã Coletivo Feminista 2013

This is one example of the campaign criticizing lingering notions of servitude and upper classes’ resistance to proper and legal treatment of domestic workers and seeing them on the same footing as workers in other occupations. In other words, the campaign is about respect and dignity. The absence of respect and dignity are consequences of the invisibility, devaluation, and stigma associated with domestic work. These notions, as will become evident in this chapter, continue to embed an underlying issue, or in some cases, represent an overt challenge to the re-articulation of relationship between employer and domestic workers.

Guided by these observations, I examine the significance of this legislation more closely from the perspective of women domestic workers themselves. I focus on those un-affiliated to trade unions at a time when they are implicated in the initial stages of the implementation of the new rights and what labour reform will mean to their lives.

5.3. “*Sign, Don’t Sign...*” The Issue of Informality

According to the *Pesquisa Nacional de Amostra por Domicílio* (PNAD), in 2004 the number of domestic workers represented 18.3 per cent of the total number of women in the labour force and of those, approximately 25 per cent are formally employed and contribute towards their pension plans through the Brazilian social security system. This percentage indicates the number of domestic workers registered with a labour and social

security card (*Carteira de Trabalho e Previdência Social – CTPS*)⁷² (DIEESE 2006:13). However, Gomes and Bertolin (2011) found that even when they are registered with a work card, their work arrangements might still carry residues of informality (e.g. non-compliance with specific labour rights and contributions towards the social security system). They argue the high level of informality is linked to other characteristics associated with the occupation of the domestic work such as workers' low levels of education and poor government inspection and enforcement of labour rights (Gomes and Bertolin 2011). In addition Gomes and Bertolin (2011) write that the personal nature and affective textures of domestic work contribute to workers' reluctance to demand labour rights⁷³. And yet, it is possible that workers' perception of their worth and the value of their labour, not only in the realm of the maintenance of the household but of the social reproduction of life in society, could lead to a change in consciousness regarding the characterization of interpersonal relations between employers and employees. In the state of Rio de Janeiro and prior to the introduction of the *PEC*, an increase in union activity and dissemination of information on labour rights resulted in a higher number of lawsuits against employers and their violations of workers' rights (Vidal 2009). This trend continues with the implementation of the *PEC* so that the number of law suits against employers increased by 12 per cent in 2014 (*Doméstica Legal* 2015). Another study by the *Tribunal Regional do Trabalho* (TRT) found that the number of law suits filed by domestic workers rose by 24.8 per cent between 2013 and 2014. Workers' lawsuits stem from the absence of formal work agreement, demands for retroactive payments towards social benefits, including over-time and *vale-transporte* (public transit contributions), and resistance to termination without just cause ⁷⁴ (Terra 2015).

While formal registration and signed work card do not guarantee work arrangements and conditions that correspond to expected legal standards, those seem to correlate with the level of security enjoyed by domestic workers and the likelihood of securing long-term employment. A study conducted by the DIEESE (2006:28) shows that more than half of the *mensalistas* without a signed work card had been in the same job for

⁷² *Carteira de trabalho* translates as work card and is the equivalent of an employment agreement or contract in Canada. The *carteira de trabalho* is issued by the Ministry of Labour and the National Social Security Program (INRS).

⁷³ For a historical analysis of free domestic workers' experiences who sued for their wages and filed legal complaints in regards to work arrangements and conditions during the 19th Century, see the article '*Wages of Intimacy: Domestic Workers Disputing Wages in the Higher Courts of Nineteenth-Century Brazil*' (Lima 2015)

⁷⁴ Retrieved March 18, 2015 (<http://economia.terra.com.br/acoes-movidas-por-domesticas-crescem-cerca-de-25-em-2014,34b59699cdcbb410VgnVCM3000009af154d0RCRD.html>).

a maximum of six months. But the majority of workers with signed work card had been working in the same household for about two years. This study also found that *mensalistas* with formal employment status were more likely to pay into their pension funds, have access to social security programs, and earn higher salaries. And yet, there is evidence that *mensalistas*, especially those who live-in, work longer hours than women who labour as informal workers, daily cleaners, or *diaristas* (DIEESE 2006). As stated by a DIEESE (2006) report, in the state of São Paulo *mensalistas* work, on average, seven hours more per week than the average work hours of daily cleaners. These findings suggest that having a formal employment contract and a signed work card influences the quality of the relationship workers establish with their employers, and the former's overall satisfaction and sense of job security.

Fátima is in her forties, a single parent with two children and a migrant from the Northeast of Brazil. Over the course of her life she ran her own food business selling baked goods as a street vendor. She also worked in the service industry as a restaurant manager and then moved to private homes as a domestic worker. In the following passage she comments on the issue of informality:

I've always paid attention to these things [changes in legislation], because we're in this dilemma, you know? Sign, don't sign.... This has been going on for years... But I always paid attention. Even when I wasn't working as a *doméstica*, I always kept an eye on it because I thought to myself 'Well, what if I end up back in domestic work...'

The issue of "sign, don't sign" speaks of a significant dilemma faced by women working in the occupation and represents one of the challenges for the *PEC* to improve the term and conditions of domestic work. This is because the majority of employers are either unwilling to comply with, or unaware of their legal obligation to sign their employee's work cards and register domestic workers for retirement funds, social security or employment insurance⁷⁵ (*Fundo de Garantia por Tempo de Serviço* (FGTS))⁷⁶. Due to poor enforcement efforts and state regulation, workers are left to fend for themselves, have to choose between remaining an informal worker or 'bringing rights to the table' by demanding to have their rights respected and observed.

⁷⁵ This translates as a Severance Indemnity Fund.

⁷⁶ According to the Ministry of Work and Employment, the number of domestic workers who enjoy access to the FGTS increased by 596 per cent between 2014 and 2015 (Fernandes 2016). Retrieved on July 22, 2016 (<http://www.redebrasilatual.com.br/cidadania/2016/03/numero-de-trabalhadoras-domesticas-com-acesso-ao-fgts-aumenta-em-18-vezes-em-14-anos-5498.html>).

The issue of not having a work card signed or being formally registered is also linked to the stigma associated with domestic work and the devaluation of women who work in the occupation. De Souza (1980) concludes, from her interviews with domestic workers, that some women preferred to forego a signed work card to avoid being identified as a “domestic worker” and “assume” the stigma attached to the occupation. In addition, several domestic workers said they prefer their employers withhold payment into social security and other benefits so that they can take a higher salary home. In this case, immediate financial needs trump long-term security (De Souza 1980). Thus, workers are faced with the decision to give up long-term security for immediate financial relief through higher wages. De Souza (1980) found that this feeds into a vicious cycle where informality perpetuates lack of access to, compliance with, and enforcement of labour rights. The accounts in the remaining of this chapter suggest that since the early 1980s, when De Souza conducted her study, domestic workers’ are more aware of the importance of securing retirement funds. And even though research participants display an awareness of the long-term risk involved in opting out of pension contributions for their immediate needs, the low wages afforded to domestic work means that workers continues to face no choice at all regarding the prospects of setting money aside for future financial security.

In the passage below Selma says that things have not changed; there has been no improvement in terms of the conditions and valorization of domestic work. She connects this to her earlier work experience as a nanny when she worked for a family for three years without a signed work card. For her the lack of formal work contract is tied to her employers who consider her “like one of the family.” The discourse of “being a part of the family” is linked to a patriarchal ideology that continues to plague employer-employee relations in domestic work and perpetuates exploitative work conditions (Gomes and Bertolin 2011)⁷⁷. However, Selma juxtaposes this argument to the fact that she worked as a nanny, earned a salary, had no blood ties with her employers, and yet, they insisted on treating her as if she were a part of the family. This ambiguity surfaces in the interwoven narratives about her relationship, her status within the household, and the financial remuneration she received:

⁷⁷ See the book *Not One of the Family: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada*, edited by Bakan and Stasiulis (1997) for an analysis of how ideologies of privacy, maternalism, and family, are linked to institutionalized forms of differential treatment and access to citizenship rights, that perpetuates the exploitation of migrant domestic workers in Canada.

I think it's the same as always. Before, when I was working, when I first started working as a nanny, I had a job for three years and during that time they never signed my work card. They never mentioned a thing about it. They considered me as a member of the family but I worked as a nanny. I had a salary and all. But listen, I had no *parentesco* (kinship) with them but they treated as if I was one of the family and I took care of their son.

In another interview, Lourdes recounts working for the same employer for fifteen years. When she started her boss did not sign her work card. But after a year Lourdes asked for a signed work card and her employer complied. Lourdes:

There are bosses that you have to come up and ask them to sign your work card. This one I was just telling you about. 15 years that I worked for him and I was the one who brought it up. If we depend on them to come and say something, they won't do it, right? Because of that, I lost a whole year that I could have been registered.

In this case, had she not demanded the right to be registered, she would have lost not just one, but fifteen years of contribution towards her retirement fund. In addition she would have forsaken her access to other rights.

At her current employment, Maria has her work card signed but her employers do not comply with the contribution towards social security and employment insurance:

They have always paid for [complied with] my rights. INSS, vacation, 13o... I never had any issues with that. Late payments, *condução* (transportation benefit), none of that. The only thing is... Well... They don't pay my FGTS. And I think this is illegal, you know? It's been six years. It's six years that I lost. For example, had I been working at a company, I would have that right, a sum of money to receive when I leave. It would help me a lot. And you know... It's not so much for the money... But I have kids and if I end up unemployed, the *seguro desemprego* (unemployment insurance) would help, right?

Maria recognizes that in comparison to other domestic workers, her employers demonstrate a good level of respect; they also operate under contractual terms and comply with the majority of labour rights. However, she is aware that the absence of contribution towards unemployment insurance has consequences for her security and the care she can provide for her two children. Maria was unlikely to bring forth and demand her employers' contribution towards her unemployment insurance since she considers them to be good employers and fair in other ways. But as a young mother of two, Maria is aware of and concerned with the precariousness this may result and the hardship she could face if her employment is terminated.

As mentioned previously, in the early stages of the implementation of domestic workers' expanded labour rights, one of the issues at stake was employers' resistance to comply with the comprehensive set of labour rights for domestic workers. The new labour rights seem to be leading some employers to opt for a restructuring of work arrangements and schedules, and in some cases, firing domestic workers to avoid compliance. Sônia explains that government agents in the Ministry of Labour advised her to resist employers' demand to change her work schedule and work fewer days in the week. This demand corresponds to the argument that the implementation of the law and its potential to improve the conditions of domestic work is hindered by the neoliberal ideology where instead of complying with the extended labour codes, employers opt to "pull back" by shortening the work hours of their employees thereby avoiding accountability and establishing a contractual bond with their employees. In pursuing this disengagement, employers increase the precarization and informality of domestic work. As will become evident in the next section, this issue has a profound impact on the way workers perceive the *PEC* (and the potential for re-structuring their occupation), and how they conceive choices in this context. And yet, the advice by the agents at the Ministry of Labour, which Sônia recounts, speaks to the potential of collective mobilization and the power of coalition to counter the upper classes resistance to change. Sônia expresses a notion of political militancy that if all domestic workers refuse to work only two days a week, then employers will have no option but to accept the legal reform and grant their employees full access to their rights:

The Ministry of Labour, they tell us, they even call on us, it's hard, but they tell us not to accept it. And that's because if everyone refused to work only two days a week, just so they don't have to sign our cards, they would end up without any help. Then we'd see... That's when they would start doing things by the books.

The conversation continued in regards to the assistance and kind of support the local Ministry of Labour can provide:

There's a lawyer, a social assistant, there's a whole bunch of people around... The person who helps us the most is the lawyer. There's also... a health practitioner in case you have some kind of health issue. They're there to check you. But the nice thing about it is that it's not just us. Everyone goes there. Nurses, doctors... The majority of middle class people go there. But the class that needs it the most [domestic workers] ... they don't go. They don't.

Sônia makes a point about the resources available at the local office and comments on the variety of occupations seeking help at the ministry. She recognizes that domestic workers, "the class that needs it the most," do not seek legal support and advice often because they fear losing their jobs. She explains:

I think they lack... I think they're scared, scared to say... Scared because they think they will go and end up with an empty hand. And they also think this will make it hard for them to find another job. Because a lot of people rely on social assistance. I don't have a single welfare benefit, from the local municipality, or from the government, this thing *bolsa familia*, *bolsa escolar*, I don't have any of that. So, you know what, I have nothing to lose.

Sônia thinks domestic workers who rely on government programs for welfare and social assistance are afraid to enter the realm of legal advice for labour rights in case this affects their ability to collect social benefits or influence their ability to seek employment in the future. When I asked Sônia why, as a young working-class mother she did not collect the government assistance called *Bolsa Familia* (a direct cash transfer to low income families), she replied:

They expect you to humiliate yourself. That's how it is. You have to humiliate yourself. You have to prove this and that. You have to go there everyday. *Men* having to prove that your shower only runs cold water, can you imagine that? So, it's difficult.

Sônia opted not to receive government assistance because she considers the nature of their programs and eligibility requirements to be discriminatory and humiliating. This is significant in that it alludes to the gendered and discriminatory dimension of public welfare programs, such as the *Bolsa Familia*, which is largely collected by poor mothers and working class women. The welfare state and its *modus operandi* can be understood through the lenses of a patriarchal social order as it prescribes a system providing specific and limited resources to women, and re-inscribes female double dependence (on male heads of household and the State). The notion that an individual is expected to come and make numerous trips to the social agency to prove one's level of poverty in order to collect welfare, suggests how structural power operates to maintain and reproduce dependency and inequality.⁷⁸ For instance, in the context of neoliberal Argentina, Auyero (2012) notes that in treating citizens as "patients of the state," access to welfare and social services (which involve long waits, complicated bureaucracies, inconsistencies, and uncertainties) in itself works to discourage individuals from claiming those services. Similarly Paulani (2015:17) remarks: "After all, the only way to preserve the seigniorial future of the upper classes is to maintain the servile condition of the rest of the population and, for both, the building of a true nation. The building of a society in which *Bolsas Familias* would no longer be necessary must not happen in the present. It should be confined to the future, forever." In this

⁷⁸ For an ethnography of the "tempography of domination," that examines the connection between urban poverty, neoliberal ideologies, and waiting, see *of the State: The Politics of Waiting in Argentina*, by Javier Auyero (2012).

passage Paulani (2015) criticizes the Brazilian nation state for its “modernity with backwardness.” That is, a process in which a neoliberal and dependent model of economic growth produces and reproduces inequality and urban poverty alongside modern patterns of consumption and unjust, uncivil, and unsustainable models of political exclusion.

In the following section I examine workers’ knowledge of labour rights and their experiences bringing rights to the table in the context of employers’ divergent practices with respect to following the law. Workers’ accounts suggest an amalgam of hopes about the potential of the new legislation, and the same time skepticism regarding the negative repercussions the regulations might bring their way.

5.4. Workers’ Perceptions and Knowledge of Labour Rights

Workers’ perceptions of the *PEC* and its significance in fostering changes in their working conditions and everyday lives vary. The effects and potential of the *PEC* changes according to workers’ previous experiences and employers’ compliance with labour codes. As the following quotes suggest, workers’ perception of labour rights are linked to their broader sense of valorization, dignity and respect for their occupation. We begin with Geni’s testimony, a domestic worker who has been employed in the same household for more than two decades. She says:

Look... My understanding is... Now things are the way I always thought they should have been. To have respect, to earn a little more, and to have legal rights. Now, domestic workers have all of that, right? That’s it... now it’s good.

According to Geni things have been improving over the last two decades. When I asked her for some examples, she mentioned improvements in wages, the treatment of workers, and valorization of their work. She explains that there is less discrimination in the occupation due to the development of mutual respect between *domésticas* and their employers.

Geni: Now things got a lot better. In the last 20 years, things got a lot better.

Marina: Can you give me some examples of these changes?

Geni: Look, everything got better: The salary, the way people treated, treat us... Nowadays, they treat us better, right? In those times... We were sort of... When we said we’re domestic workers, there was discrimination, right? Not anymore. Now people treat us *de igual para igual* (as equals). It’s a simple job, but it is a job, right? It’s a job like any other.

Marina: So, you think the valorization of domestic work improved?

Geni: A lot. So much. From... say 25 years ago, it got a hundred times [better]. Now, it’s even better, right? This new law is nationwide, right? Equal rights for all domestic workers.

Fátima notes the regulation of overtime payment and employment insurance served to improve her working conditions. In the following dialogue, she explains how this improvement translates into her work arrangements and how her employer, who she notes likes to “do things by the book,” brought the implementations forth.

Fátima: Look, the overtime is one of the things... Plus, the employment insurance.

Marina: Were you the one who brought these items to your boss' attention?

Fátima: No. She did it. When it comes to these things she's very *certinha* (doing things by the books). Usually she doesn't deal with it herself, she'll talk to her secretary and the secretary will talk to us.

Marina: What about your vacation?

Fátima: *Tudo direitinho* (things are done by the book). She pays for everything. I never had a late payment. It's like when you work at a company, you know? She pays us every two weeks. It's really nice to get paid every two weeks [as opposed to once a month, which is more common].

The way Fátima explains her work arrangement and relationship to her employer highlights compliance with labour rights and access to bi-weekly payments, which resembles a “professional” employment experience. She makes this clear by comparing it to working at a company instead of a household. Lourdes' point of view is that the *PEC* is representative of a positive change. She is nonetheless cautious on how the legislation will evolve in terms of enforcement and its potential to establish significant changes. Lourdes:

Here's what I think: it's something that is really good for us. Right? At least we'll have our rights. So, I like to talk about it with the girls [other domestic workers] ‘Did you see the law that they passed?’ and they comment back. So, yes, this is good. I just hope it will move forward, right?

Néia, on the other hand, explains that she has always had access to labour rights and in her case she explains that the *PEC* did not translate into any changes in her work arrangements or the quality of her employment relations:

Look... Since I started working [when she was 12 years old] I always had my rights. Vacation, *décimo terceiro* (13th month salary) ⁷⁹... In my opinion, it hasn't changed. It really hasn't changed.

Néia has enjoyed access to her rights for the past decade and she demonstrated less enthusiasm towards the *PEC*. However, on top of the fact that started working when she was still underage, from our conversation it was not clear whether or not her current employer would comply with the extended labour codes. When I

⁷⁹ President João Goulart established the 13th salary in 1962 as a financial bonus of one extra salary to be paid in two installments (Farah 2012).

asked her to elaborate on it, she explained that the Brazilian employing classes reacted, or as she explains, overreacted, to the new legislation:

Néia: Here's what I think... With the new law, *o povo se assustou* (people freaked out). *Sem besteira, né?* (No kidding, right?) People who have maids kind of freaked out about it. Thinking it would cost them a fortune. And it won't cost them a fortune. *É pouca coisa* (It's not much). But there are a lot of bosses out there firing their workers.

Marina: You think this is going to be a problem [domestic workers being fired because of the extended labour rights]?

Néia: Oh yeah... At the grocery store the other day, over at *Alto de Pinheiros*, a clerk was saying that. I also met a girl who said her boss told her she doesn't want to have a full-time worker anymore. She wants each one of her employees to come twice a week only. Because then you don't you're not protected by this new law. That way they don't have to pay for your rights.

Marina: Basically, there are people out there who will choose to arrange the schedules so that they don't have to comply with the law?

Néia: Absolutely! Just so they don't have to pay.

Néia identifies negative repercussions to the *PEC* linked to employing classes' resistance and their manoeuvres to avoid establishing formal work contracts with their employees. In light of this challenge, Néia proceeds to explain the advantages she sees, including the potential to earn a higher monthly income when doing part time work for several households rather than working as a *mensalista*.

I told Pedro [her son]: 'If it wasn't for the fact that I have a permanent job, I'd go out and find 10, 12, houses to work at. But I would charge them the price'. I'd say, 'Look, I'll do it. I'll come to your house and cook. How many times a week you want me to do that?' 'This many?' And I'd say 'I charge x amount per day, if that's what you want. You won't have to have any legal bond with me.' People [employers] are afraid, Marina. They are afraid of something that I think it's not worth being afraid of. Nowadays, I think only those that really have a lot of money will be able to hire a maid. Because... Now you have to pay for everything. You have to settle on an amount and if the person does overtime, you have to pay for it. Some of the *domésticas* I know, who work for employers that aren't necessarily wealthy, that don't have a big purchasing power... things have gotten complicated, right? But on the other hand, if you stop and think about it, it's not that much of a financial difference. But sometimes, those who earn less money... Let's put it this way... Say I work at your house and you don't have a big purchasing power, so you pay me less, say less than I could earn somewhere else, but the truth is I don't have what it takes to get a better job... You have to look at all those things. But this is going to make things tough for some families.

Néia concludes with an unfavourable prognosis for both parties under the *PEC*:

You know what? It's tough for both sides. Because the employer won't hire help because they won't be able to afford it for what it's worth. And the worker... well the worker will end up unemployed.

Lourdes also comments on the changes she sees happening: more women choosing to work as *diaristas*. She remarks:

Nowadays people are choosing to work as *diaristas*. That way, they're making more money. You understand? So, there are people- I know friends of mine, who work everyday in a different house. And they make way more than me. It's tiring, right? Because everyday you're somewhere different and it's *faxina pesada* (heavy cleaning). It's hard work but you're getting paid more. It's much better. So, nowadays the employers are like that [displaying more value] because of this. The majority of us are getting education. I have a lot of friends who are studying, working in other types of jobs. Right?

Lourdes attributes the increase in valorization of domestic work to (1) more workers are choosing to work as *diaristas*, and (2) an increasing number of young girls have access to better education opening doors to alternative job opportunities.

Cristina makes a similar observation regarding the decision to work as *diaristas* and the potential negative effects of the *PEC* (e.g. job loss and increase in unemployment among domestic workers). She says nannies are particularly vulnerable because of the nature of their job and employers' expectations, which to this day require a great deal of flexibility in terms of work hours. The following example is an extreme situation in which an employer went from having a live-in domestic worker/nanny to a cleaner once a week:

I know a lot of workers, nannies especially, who got fired. They sleep at their workplace, so there's the extra payment. *Adicional noturno* (pay for night work/shifts), all of that. So they got fired. Their boss would say: 'I'm only going to have a *faxineira* (daily cleaner) once a week.' They do that because if you work more than three days the laws start counting.

But Cristina also notes that things have improved from the initial reactions to the legislation and that job losses, as a result of employers' concerns about the increase in hiring domestic workers, have not occurred to the level first predicted. She adds insightfully that this effect is part of a larger process of political change:

I think it's a little better now. I think so. Because when they first started talking about making- approving this law, the change, *nossa!* I have friends who got fired. 'Ah, because I can't afford to pay, because of this and that.' Many people got fired. But you know what? It's okay. If we need to make a change, we need to make a change, right?

Speaking of change, Geni and I, during our interview, touched on the subject of social mobilization and how Brazilians of different social classes are 'taking to the streets' to protest recent political mechanizations and corruption scandals (Holston 2013; Saad-Filho 2013). This subject quickly translated into her awareness of the potential of collective action. Interestingly, Geni does not equate the struggle for equal rights with the efforts of domestic workers' unions. In fact she says that the local union in São Paulo was "sort of against it" (referring to the *PEC*), and its arguments resemble those of the upper-middle classes and political elites who resist political reform. Geni:

I tell my friends ‘We should gather everyone, grab some pots and pans. Let’s protest too. Let’s go to the streets.’ To see, right? If anything will change then... Because even the union... They were sort of against it. They were saying that it would cause too much unemployment.

This passage demonstrates an important issue domestic workers confront when local unions act more like domestic work placement agencies serving and advocating for the employing classes, rather than protecting domestic workers’ interests and rights⁸⁰.

In another interview, Selma argues that employers continue to resist the formalization of work contracts and she explains, unless workers demand to have their work card signed, employers are unlikely to bring it forth on their own. She further says that some employers sign the work card but do not fulfill the monthly contributions towards social benefits:

You know what, I think things are very much the same. They only sign your work card if you come up and ask for it. And even when they do, they’ll sign it in front of you but you never know whether they’re doing anything beyond that. So, I don’t believe there’s... They continue to not value our work

In our interview Selma went on to say that the persistence of informality and non-compliance with labour rights is due to employers’ lack of valorization and recognition of domestic workers and their labour. It is due to employers’ lack of compliance, political awareness, and respect, that workers are starting to seek legal advice, gaining political knowledge, and taking legal action too. Selma:

They [employers] don’t have this consciousness that they have to do that. That’s why, these days, more people are looking to find out what their rights are and they are taking them [employers] to court. Because people [who hire domestic workers] are denying to have this legal bond with the worker. They refuse to spend a little more, entre *aspas* (quote unquote), because at the end of the day, they end up spending even more when we take them to court to fight for our rights. But they don’t have this consciousness.

Selma concludes by highlighting the irony of this cycle. Employers are resisting the establishment of legal bonds with their employees in order to avoid any expenses beyond workers’ minimum wages. However, in the instance where the workers seek legal protection, employers end up having to comply with an even larger sum than what they would have spent towards social contributions in the first place.

⁸⁰ I was not able to find scholarly work to substantiate this argument. A brief content analysis of the website of the local union in São Paulo, *SINDoméstica-SP*, revealed evidence of a language that is meant to disseminate up-to-date knowledge about labour rights and provide workers with practical advice about establishing formal employment.

In several previous jobs (both short and long term) Sônia was not formally registered as a domestic worker. In reference to a particularly exploitative job she left a few months ago, Sonia says, “The truth is every single boss I’ve had has always done something like this. No one ever signed my work card.” Her employment was solely based on a verbal agreement. One day, speaking to a colleague in her neighbourhood, Sônia learned about resources available at the local Ministry of Labour to assist domestic workers whose rights are breached.

Sônia:

I went to the Ministry of Labour for help and I filled against them but when the day came to go to court, I couldn’t do it. I think at that time, I was too immature. I was young. I thought I better leave it alone. But now I think differently, what’s the worst that can happen? Nothing will happen. Now I know what I’m doing.

Recounting this event, Sônia says that her decision to withdraw from the case against her past employers was due to her young age and lack of maturity. In my view Sonia is too harsh on herself in turning an issue that is at the core of labour justice into a personal flaw. Pursuing a case against an employer is risky since it can lead to repercussions like job loss and “blacklisting” which in effect means that one will have a hard time finding another job in domestic work. Now that she is experienced and politically aware, Sônia’s agency expresses confidence in claiming entitlement to labour rights without fear of repercussions. In the same interview Sônia speaks of the irony of dealing with bosses who are “cool,” but at the same time do not respect nor comply with her rights. This irony is one of the factors making it challenging for workers to demand their rights in the first place. However, Sônia states that the dismissal of her rights is “an act of bad faith”.

The funny thing is that my bosses are mostly cool people. They’re cool people but when it comes down to paying and respecting my rights, they do that. They act like bastards (*sacanas*). They act in bad faith. It’s always like that.

In the passage below, Geni points to a similar connection between labour rights, dignity, and valorization. She notes how in some cases domestic workers are reluctant about the enactment of the new legislation since they think it could “back fire.” For instance, workers fear that increased regulation and the extra cost of implementing formal work contracts would result in employers choosing to dismiss their employees. She suggests the government should assist and take some of the financial burden off employers.

So, you know what... It’s a job as *digno* as any other, right? These things should have come up years ago, right? I think so. It’s a job like any other. Like this, many people are saying ‘Ah! I prefer if they don’t put the law in effect because a lot of people will end up losing their job, those who don’t have the means.’ This and that... I think the government should *dar uma ajudinha* (give a little help)

because we pay so much in taxes, right? They should do something to encourage too. So many taxes, so many things, that they should be helping. Because this is it really, people who don't have the means will end up firing, right? It's too much. *Fica pesado* (it takes a toll) right? The salary, the FGTS, the INSS, the *condução*... I think this will make a difference for the employers but I hope it comes into effect; that it's approved. I'm not sure whether that happened already.

The issue at stake is that Brazilian upper classes have relied on the availability and affordability of around the clock domestic help with work arrangements that surpass standards of fair employment, such as the limit of an 8-hour workday. While the *PEC* does bring about changes that translate to higher cost for employers, the monthly increase is not substantial and should not result in unemployment. Instead in order for the *PEC* to bring forth substantial changes, the employing classes need to follow suit, and change their expectations regarding domestic work and lingering notions of servitude to reflect fair employment arrangements. The *PEC* does not signify a change that will necessarily result in a real financial burden; rather, Brazilian middle classes seem troubled by the ways in which the new set of regulations translate into changes in the configuration of domestic work (e.g. limit of work hours and overtime pay). But those changes are necessary to establish more fair arrangements and remuneration for domestic help. Specifically, complaints in regards to the increase in cost for domestic help are largely associated with the new regulations on the *Fundo de Garantia por Tempo de Serviço (FGTS)* and overtime pay. However, with the recent changes the *FGTS* translated into an increase of 6.64 per cent in the total cost of full-time employment salaries (Yazbek 2013). Further, the Brazilian government encourages compliance and formalization by allowing employers to claim the portion of domestic workers' salary paid into the *INSS* (National Institute for Social Security), which varies between 8 and 11 per cent, as a tax write-off or deductible in their annual tax return (Alvarenga 2015). As noted by Bentivoglio and Freitas (2014) the *PEC* represent an important step towards the professionalization of domestic work, and while they recognize that initially it might result in higher unemployment within the occupation, the long-term effects is likely to bring forth higher formalization and better working conditions.

Above I discussed workers' perceptions of labour rights, their experiences and challenges in securing those rights, as well their opinions on some of the issues that labour rights alone cannot address. Next, I turn to the subject of valorization and social recognition. The issue of valorization is tied to sentiments of shame and stigma. But it also carries a force and desire to counter those negative connotations attached to workers' occupation. The women domestic workers I interviewed explain how the *PEC* served to bring their

exploitation into the open and empower them in their struggle for respect and dignity not only in their workplaces but also society.

5.5. “*Que Mudou, Mudou...*”: Valorization and Recognition

The domestic worker’s struggle is not just for labour rights.
It is also for dignity: to be treated as fully human
(Cornwall, Capibaribe, and Gonçalves 2010:299).

Vieria Gonzalez (2013) argues that invisibility, combined with a lack of valorization on the part of the employing classes and society at large affect domestic workers’ sense of worth, their dignity and self-valorization. The experiences of domestic workers who participated in this study show a direct and mutual link between better working conditions, employment relations, and workers’ sense of dignity. The case of Geni, who had a remarkably late entry to paid domestic work, exemplifies this argument. She explained that people reacted negatively when they learned she was leaving her position in the service sector to work for a family in a private household. The expression *nessa vida* (in this life) connotes the hardship, stigma, and lack of valorization attached to domestic work. And yet, Geni challenges this view by emphasizing the financial gains and life improvements she achieved working as a *doméstica*. Geni:

I had never worked as a *doméstica* before. Never. That was the first time. And many people would say: ‘You must be crazy, this young, and all, *nessa vida*.’ But I’m not going to lie, since I’ve been in the occupation, I’ve achieved a lot of things: I bought my own house, my own car... All of this working as a *doméstica*. I’ve even worked as a store manager before and I had never been able to do any of this. *Vivia na mesmice* (I used to live in the sameness), meaning it was difficult to achieve any substantial life improvements or financial gains.

Besides being able to secure long-term housing in the city and purchasing a car, since she started working as a domestic worker, Geni was also able to provide her children with a better education and extra curricular opportunities. Geni:

Nowadays, I can give my children a good life. My daughter goes to ballet classes. My son plays soccer. They both study English. I only managed to do this after I started working as a *doméstica*. Before I couldn’t afford it. So, it’s an occupation that doesn’t pay poorly, but it’s very discriminated. It’s an occupation that is discriminated, but doesn’t pay bad.

It is worth mentioning that Geni's monthly salary of R\$2,200 (the equivalent of CAD\$877) is in the higher bracket of domestic workers' wages in São Paulo⁸¹. But in spite of financial gains she earns as a domestic worker, the occupation continues to discriminate against *domésticas*. Geni:

Look... This whole thing is kind of sitting on a scale, right? *Que mudou, mudou*. (Things have changed). In comparison to some years ago, things have improved. Not quite how it should have but it's better.

Fátima carries a strong sense of dignity regarding her identity as a domestic worker. She identifies as a cook, a domestic worker, and a hardworking woman battling to provide her two children with a better life. In her account, Fátima validates her social position as a domestic worker, rather than disassociating herself or attempting to undermine this part of her identity. When a grocery store clerk whispered a derogatory comment to her as *empregadinha doméstica* (the use of diminutive in this context signifies an insult), Fátima reacted. She is not one to overlook an insult.

Fátima: Well. I never had a problem [saying that she is a domestic worker]. I make a point to say that I'm a cook in a private home, you know? *Doa a quem doar*. But... I've been discriminated against precisely for that, for being a cook in a family's house. And I put the lady in the garbage bin [*Botei a dona na lata do lixo*].

Marina: Can you tell me about what happened?

Fátima: Oh yeah... It was at a store, you know? A grocery store. So, it started out '*Ab, uma empregadinha doméstica*'. No, no... *Eu não levo desaforo pra casa* (I'm not one to let an insult pass). *Empregadinha doméstica?* I told her 'Honey, I bet you I make three times what you earn at this job. You have...' I tell you, you're going to humiliate someone, you picked the wrong person. I said, 'Listen, do you know where I live? I'm pretty sure you live out in the slums. Now, I live in Pinheiros⁸², and I am a domestic worker.' She looked at my face and shrugged. The lady at the cashier next to her said '*Você mexeu com a pessoa errada*'. (You messed with the wrong person). That girl has known me for years. And she continued 'I told you not to mess with her *ela vai te esculbachar* (she will slag you off), this woman ain't lowering her head to anyone.'

Below Fátima describes the relation between the devaluation of domestic work and the persistent discrimination of this occupation in Brazilian society. She explains that people discriminate against everything: your colour, your social position, where you live, etc. The materiality of those elements speak to the

⁸¹ In São Paulo, the city with the highest living cost, domestic workers make an average of R\$383 (roughly US\$170) (DIEESE 2006:17).

⁸² *Pinheiros* is considered a *bairro nobre*, an affluent neighborhood in the West side of São Paulo. The fact that Fátima resides in this part of town, not in the peripheries, indicates the financial gain and life improvement she has been able to secure through her employment in domestic work.

complexity of these intersections, with one's colour being perceived differently depending on other aspects of one's identity, such as your level of education, occupation, and place of residence. Here, gendered and racialized constructs of non-white, non-affluent Brazilians are built into the burden of discrimination and the negative affect emanating from it (Da Costa 2014). Fátima:

Discrimination is ongoing. It's everywhere, to this day. Unfortunately. *O povo*.... People have a problem of discriminating against everything. That's the truth. They are used to discriminating against everything. For your colour, you know? Your social position, where you live, everything. Unfortunately, that's how it is.

The fact that she (who is racialized black) says "to this day" may imply a link to the legacy of discrimination of racialized others in the history of Brazil (Bernardino-Costa 2011; Cornwall and Sardenberg 2014; Gonçalves 2010).

Below Lourdes explains her wish to leave domestic work and seek life improvement by working in a different job. Her comments draw a link between access to education and better life opportunities, and the issues that stem from the notion that domestic work is an occupation requiring low-skills and low-education. As a result, it is an occupation not recognized as a profession. Lourdes:

But here's what I say: when I leave [current employment] I'm tired of working in domestic service. But I think that to be able to do that you need to have *um estudo* (a degree). So, I don't want to work in domestic service anymore. But I didn't finish my studies. I want something better. Because, domestic work is not valued. It's not valued precisely because we don't need a degree from a university to do it. Because if we needed a university degree to work at a family's house it would be value. And we work a lot. You understand? But there's no value. Very few, very few value it.

She also discusses workers' treatment reflecting notions of "pollution" (Lauderdale Graham 1988) once attached to women who worked as servants, and whose proximity to their masters caused anxiety and feelings of abjection as masters sought to draw boundaries and control the bodies of servants⁸³.

There are homes where... Let me tell you something... The domestic worker doesn't have the right to eat a thing. They don't allow her. You understand? They really don't give them anything. But there are families that... Well, at least you can eat rice and beans, with something else. But no meat. Meat, you can't eat. Fruits, you can only eat oranges and bananas, you see? I've worked in families' houses that... It was cruel. Nowadays, I can't really complain because my boss lets me eat anything. But this happens still. You just can't. You don't drink from the same cup as your boss. Everything is separated. I've had several bosses who did that. Everything was separated. I'd arrive in the morning

⁸³ See Bridget Anderson (2000) for a research about migrant domestic work in the North, looking for example at the connections between slavery and contemporary domestic service in the U.S., where she examines how notions of dirt and pollution work to 'other' and oppress women domestic workers.

and there would be a little bread, my cup and my plate. Those were mine and I could never touch theirs except to serve and wash. So, there's that. Discrimination. Because they think the domestic workers is... I don't know...

Vieria Gonzalez (2013) remarks how rules and restrictions on workers' access to food products and assigning separate tableware is an example of the level of scrutiny domestic workers are subjected to. These types of house rules operate as a mechanism of distinction and control. While domestic workers carry a significant, if not essential, place in the maintenance of the physical space and emotional stakes of the household, their work is defined by rules reminding them of their lower status vis-à-vis their employers.

Sônia shared a story about the time she was asked out on a date. In setting up the details for the evening, she asked her date to pick her up at work at the end of her shift. She made a point to tell him that she is a domestic worker "Because I don't feel a need to lie about it." Sônia:

I say 'I'm a domestic worker, I work in a family home'. Then, you should have seen... When I was leaving the building, he looked at me and said: 'Wow, you don't even look...' [Laugh] I think he thought I was going to show up on my uniform, right? Because people think that because you're a domestic worker you dress a certain way, right? But that's not the case. I dress up and I don't think that way. It's not because I work as a *doméstica* that I go around looking like whatever. So, people have a lot of discrimination. I have friends who work at family's homes and they walk around looking like *madames*, I tell them "how do you do that? How do you have time to get your hair done, dress up, put lipstick on?" They come onto the bus and no one can tell they're domestic workers.

In telling me this story, Sônia wanted to point out her date's surprise on how well she was dressed even for a *doméstica*! She sought to mark out that one could not make assumptions about a person on the basis of the work one performs or the social class to whom one belongs. For Sônia a person's pride and self-worth is expressed in many ways regardless of the occupation one holds. She simultaneously embraced her identity as a domestic worker while debunking the stereotypes assumed because of the nature of domestic work; a domestic worker should not be able to or care to dress nicely. Sônia is also impressed with some of her colleagues who invest a great deal of time on their appearance. She says: "when they get on the bus, no one can tell they're domestic workers." This speaks to her (their) dignity, pride and refusal to be defined and identified by the social stigma attached to domestic work.

The empirical discussion contained in this chapter provides some insights on the promises and limitations of labour rights from the perspective of the women domestic workers who participated in this study. While it is too soon to ascertain the significance of the *PEC*, in both quantitative and qualitative terms

and to identify more broadly the changes it brought forth, this study suggests that there is more than one side to this finding. In fact, I borrow from Gonçalves (2010:62) the term “crossroads” as a way conceptualizing this political moment. In this crossroads, Brazilian citizens across racial, social, and economic divides are challenged to reconsider the inequalities implicated in the daily maintenance of life. My research is particularly illuminating of the ways in which the *PEC* represents a crossroads for women who are formally employed in domestic work as *mensalistas*, or engaged in paid household services through other informal types of work arrangement.

Workers’ narratives suggest and re-enforce the argument that harmonizing the rights of domestic workers to that of other occupations serves to improve their work conditions and private lives to a certain extent. As defended by Vieira Gonzalez (2013:20) Brazil’s policy reform is representative of a commitment (at least in the legal and constitutional plane) to repair decades of “a delay” in recognizing domestic work on same footing as other professional occupations. This commitment, she notes, sets Brazil apart from several Latin American and Caribbean countries where domestic work remains largely unregulated and continues to be seen as a private matter. The legal reparation in itself has painted a landscape of optimism and hope. It has also served to bolster a sense of agency and empowerment, where the efforts of militant domestic workers finally came to fruition. The official promulgation of the *PEC* has been linked to an increase in the visibility of domestic workers, which serves to remedy the stigma associated to the occupation and to instill a greater sense of dignity among workers and the professionalization of their occupation (Vieira Gonzalez 2013).

More specifically, in the early stages of the implementation of the *PEC* there is evidence of an increase in formal work contracts between employers and employees, which signifies that more workers have regularized their contribution towards social security and access to employment insurance and retirement benefits. In addition, even though there are cases where employers take the initiative to either regularize the work contract or implement the changes, in the case where workers already had their work card signed, the interpersonal and emotional character of domestic work continues to negatively influence the likelihood that workers will demand to have their rights respected (Vieira Gonzalez 2013). However, since the inception of the *PEC* there is evidence of higher number of lawsuits and litigation in domestic work disputes. This may be a result of effective dissemination and political mobilization that instills greater awareness of their rights and

the resources that are available to them through, for example, the Ministry of Labour and the offices of local unions.

And yet, the argument proposed by Barros (2012:11) is still pertinent. She writes that the implementation and debates surrounding labour rights suggest a political polarization between the interests of the employing classes and domestic workers, regarding the “*significado do emprego domestico*,” or what domestic work signifies and the social and economic value it is afforded. This argument indicates that along with the implementation of rights this political struggle is contingent upon disseminating and educating the employing classes about, not only the specific provisions of the *PEC* but on the social and economic valorization of paid domestic work. Vieira Gonzalez (2013:31) reflects upon the hope that the *PEC* will improve the conditions of the domestic work, saying that with time it needs to be seen as a tool not only to repair decades of legal exclusion, but also to promote the importance of recognition, dignity, and valorization of domestic work in fostering a society that is more “peaceful, inclusive, and solidary.”

In his most recent publication, Bernardino-Costa (2015) reminds us that even though the *PEC* represents a legal victory, it is by no means the end of the struggle but the beginning of a new phase. In fact, this new phase carries a significant challenge considering Brazil’s historical legacy to find ways of circumventing the law, which according to him, explains the fact that since 1972 domestic workers were given the right to have their work card signs, and to this day only about a quarter of the labour force exercises this right (Bernardino-Costa 2015). And yet, Bernardino-Costa (2015:160) also articulates a framework of hope, a potential for emancipation, where domestic workers’ struggle is seen as a part of a larger de-colonial project, pushing beyond the realm of “pragmatic rights” towards a notion of “resistance” and “re-existence” seeking to overcome class, gender, and racial inequalities promoting a notion of “*um novo humanism*,” a new form of humanism.

From the interviews with research participants, some of the challenges that emerged linked to the *PEC* and labour rights more broadly are: the issue of informality, the ambiguous feelings towards the *PEC*’s transformative power and the difficulty to translate legal jargon to an everyday language of labour rights; the potential negative effects of strengthening labour codes without appropriate enforcement and public awareness; and workers’ awareness and challenges coping with lack of respect in the workplace, the

devaluation of their labour, and the social stigma that remains attached to their occupation. The legislation alone carries limited power to tackle challenges such as workers' employment contract, which entails registration with a signed work card and yet informality continues to plague the occupation. The *PEC* also fails to address the gendered nature and class contradiction embedded in paid domestic work (De Melo 1989), which affects the power dynamics and subordinate positions of women domestic workers within their place of employment. In addition to the lack of labour rights enforcement, there is still a gap in the labour policy to address the specific vulnerabilities experienced by women employed in the occupation. The unsustainable demands of their working lives aggravates the strenuous means they endure to attend to their private homes and raise their own families (Vieira Gonzalez 2013). Participants argue that an increase in awareness and employers' consciousness is contingent upon greater recognition, valorization, and respect for domestic work and for the women who labour in their homes.

The women who participated in this study demonstrated a political awareness of the subjugation, invisibility, and lack of valorization of their labour by individual employers and society at large. The visual campaign presented earlier in this chapter, designed by Cunha in collaboration with other bodies of political activism such as the local union, demonstrate a grassroots initiative resonating with the issues at stake for workers' themselves. This campaign does not speak of labour rights alone. It invokes the persistent culture of servitude preventing society from recognizing domestic work as work, but encourages renewed vitalization, self-worth, and pride, on the part of workers themselves. These are important pillars if the *PEC* is to sustain real improvements in work relations, conditions of employment, and living standards of women domestic workers.

Research participants argue that one of the effects and impacts brought forth by the *PEC Das Domésticas* is greater visibility of domestic workers and their labour. The *PEC* and the debates it engendered shed light onto the politics of paid domestic labour and its widespread and significant contribution to the maintenance and reproduction of life. Evidence from this chapter supports the argument made by Gutierrez-Rodríguez (2014) that looking at domestic work as affective labour fills a void in the political dimension and language of rights. Where dignified work conditions and the professionalization of their occupation are integral but lack a demand and recognition that domestic work is not only “fundamental for the reproduction

of society” but also “intrinsically linked to sustaining personal wellbeing” (Gutierrez Rodríguez 2014:51). From the accounts invoked in this chapter and an interest in the affective dimension of domestic workers’ labour, I argue that this void needs to be addressed, either by a more encompassing policy reform resonating with the particularities of the occupation and the hierarchies that continue to define employer-employee relations, or by alternative models of organizing within the public arena raising political consciousness that debunks the hegemonic discourses perpetuating the devaluation of this form of labour and its racialized workforce.

In the following and concluding chapter, I revisit the core empirical findings of my thesis in relation to the literature on paid domestic work. I do this with an intersectional sensibility and a perspective of domestic work as affective labour. I return to the fundamental concepts that informed my analysis of the experiences of women domestic workers from a task-based and relational perspective, including work arrangements and job satisfaction; their perspectives on social recognition, dignity, and valorization; as well as knowledge, access, and enjoyment of labour rights in a context of persistent cultural notions of servitude and a neoliberal economic model, as it relates to the precarization of labour and the reproduction of social inequalities.

Chapter 6. Conclusions

This study was driven by my interest in the significance of labour rights as it relates to the working conditions and everyday experiences of women labouring as domestic workers in Brazil. In this final chapter I summarize the empirical findings of my research in relation to the questions I sought to investigate. My final remarks avoid forcing simple answers to the questions I formulated before going into the field. Instead, I grapple with the frictions and untidiness of integrating theory and everyday experiences. In spite of this tension, I am able to draw insights and contribute to the literature on domestic work, as well as suggest ways for more holistic approaches to labour rights and social justice. Finally, I describe some of the limitations I identified before, during, or after my time in the field, in the hope that highlighting such leads to improved future research design on studying marginalized workers. I end the chapter with a few words on the dimensions of paid domestic work and offer suggestions on further study in light of the present political crisis and crossroads Brazil faces.

Growing up in Brazil, domestic work was deeply entangled with the rhythms of my upbringing. If I were ever asked to recollect my childhood, my consciousness would seek ways of remembering those years: milestones, homes, schools, relationships... Relationships. That is probably where I would find the most salient recollections, vivid memories, and signals of who I was, who I am, and all the in-between. A significant part of those relationships are the women who, over the years, worked for my family and helped raise my sisters and I. As children of privilege (Pease 2010), attending private schools, sharing our time between the homes of our working parents, the women who laboured as domestic workers and/or nannies were largely responsible for our immediate needs and the maintenance of our daily lives. Domestic work was an integral part of life. It was also “naturalized” by the socio-economic and cultural environment that surrounded me. The subject was close to home. So close that it was not until I left Brazil as a young adult that I began thinking of the implications of those relations, i.e., the social distance that inevitably mark our bonds, and the realization that their personal lives mattered the most and extended beyond my home.

Graduate school provided me with an opportunity to structure these thoughts and to theorize the politics of exclusion and injustice embedded in them. It gave me the language to dismantle taken for granted assumptions of the social organization of family and work, race and gender relations, and the status of

domestic labour in Brazil. During the early stages of this research, my interest resided in the triangulation of the intimacies, social asymmetries, and power dynamics that characterize employer-employee relations in the household. However, shortly thereafter I learned that on March 2013 Brazil had approved a policy reform that became known as the *PEC Das Domésticas* (at that point yet to be put into effect) granting domestic workers the same rights as other workers. That piece of information caught my attention, illuminating the extent to which *domésticas* had been excluded from employment protections; but also signaling that militant domestic workers, unions, and their allies, were beginning to reap the fruits of their lobbying efforts. At that point, I wondered what state-led and grassroots strategies existed to substantiate the enactment of this legislation, to encourage workers to demand those rights, and to educate employers. This interest led me to question whether those rights would translate into better working conditions for domestic workers. Specifically, I was compelled to hear the perceptions of women domestic workers regarding the *PEC*'s potential to elevate their occupation to a more professional category of real work in a society that showed evidence of cultural notions of a gendered and racialized servitude, and a certain “delay” in enacting and enforcing legislative changes.

The set of “fundamental labour rights” enjoyed by the majority of formal workers in Brazil, when applied to the regulation of domestic work, generated considerable reaction and debate among the employing classes. In light of diverging opinions, the low levels of unionization within the occupation, and considering that the *PEC* is aimed at improving the conditions of work for a large segment of marginalized women workers in Brazil, my research for this MA thesis set out to examine the significance of this legislation. By deploying an intersectional sensibility and a notion of domestic work as affective labour, I hoped to uncover what might be missing in terms of the specific challenges, disadvantages, and needs of women employed in the occupation. I borrow from Gonçalves (2010) the notion of “a crossroads” to conceptualize this moment, in which domestic workers are coping with the uncertainties of the initial stages and implementation of the *PEC*, and the yet to be determined potential transformations from this legal reform. At this crossroads the public and private domains of social life are interwoven, implicated in re-configuring the arrangements of domestic work, respecting formal work contracts, and implementing the new regulations of Brazil's recent policy reform. This study focused on the experiences of women domestic workers who work as *mensalistas* that

are not affiliated to labour unions, and have little attention from researchers studying empowerment, labour consciousness, and political agency.

6.1. The Significance of the *PEC* from the Perspective of a Small Group of Non-Unionized Women Labouring as Domestic Workers in São Paulo

The *PEC* emerged in this study as a symbolic force and a crossroads where class interests compete, and where hope and skepticism coexist. In the context of paid domestic work, the question of labour rights requires a holistic consideration that takes into account the profile of workers and addresses adequately the particularities of their occupation. First, the intersectionality of class, gender, and race discriminations translate into the conditions and lack of opportunities domestic workers have regarding mobility within the labour market, but also in accessing housing and education. Second, those intersections take on a compounding effect when one considers that their place of employment is the private household of middle and upper class families. And finally, domestic work involves an element of care, intimacy, and proximity that often obfuscates demands for more professional and contractual work arrangements.

The intersections and dynamic interplay of class, gender, and race, are understood as the historical and socio-political forces that inform dominant views of domestic labour, as well as the hierarchies, social norms, and cultural notions of servitude that shape interactions in Brazilian households. These forces also affect the processes of identification of women domestic workers. The women who participated in this study express an awareness of the ways in which racialized, gendered, and class-based identifications shape their opportunities, dislocations, and the interpersonal relations they establish with employers and other household members. They speak of power asymmetries by describing the ways in which these categories inform employers' exercise of verbal, spatial, and ideological strategies to undermine their occupation and dignity as workers. Those mechanisms of domination and control reinforce the racialization and undervaluation of their labour, and ultimately make workers feel exploited, disrespected, inferior, and/or othered. The ways in which research participants articulate and respond to the subjugation of their labour varies and is influenced by other aspects they consider meaningful in the quality of their employment. Domestic workers who participated in this study deploy counter-discourses to resist forms of subjugation and domination, as well as class, gender, and race stereotypes that perpetuate the precariousness of their working lives. Participants resist, for example,

the notion of being treated as “one of the family,” which produces conflicting and ambivalent feelings of belonging, and undermine their ability to challenge unreasonable working conditions and treatment. Still, a couple of the interviewees expressed a wish to leave the occupation all together, a desire to move away from hegemonic constructions of the naturalization and undervaluation of their labour.

On an individual level, participants’ narratives carry dynamic self-definitions that stretch the fluidity of identity construction. This substantiates the notion that the cumulative disadvantages they experience are not homogenous or fixed, but are a result of diverse experiences, including the quality of relationship with employers. Research participants spoke from a multitude of perspectives according to the themes we discussed, as working class women, *domésticas*, and low-income mothers. Their subjectivities are permeable and shaped by inequalities and the affective qualities of the labour they deliver. And yet, their individual stories are entrenched in a larger narrative where the articulation of class, gender, and race categories are tied to the social imaginaries and hegemonic discourses that constitute the domestic worker occupation in Brazil.

The women domestic workers who participated in this study also express their social location and working lives in terms of affective forces that emanate from their relations with employers and the residual effects that influence their well-being in the spaces where they work. Those forces are tangible in their accounts of daily tasks and responsibilities, the level of expectations on the part of employers, and their ability to lead fulfilling private lives. Those accounts are infused with sentiments of well-being, self-worth, and respect. At the same time, several participants expressed being overwhelmed by the demands and level of expectation on part of their employers. As previously discussed, one of the women domestic workers interviewed used the *bombril* analogy to explain this experience. *Bombril* is the Brazilian equivalent of steel wool, a household item that is known for its versatility and capability of cleaning-off anything. This analogy relates to the ways in which employers project their expectations and demands upon their employees with regards to the execution, intensity, and pace with which they should perform all the physical tasks covered under domestic work. Those expectations likely surpass the level of tidiness and cleanliness individuals would consider if they were performing those tasks themselves. This is one of the challenges, along with raising consciousness about the dignity and social economic value of their labour, that domestic workers face (and resist) regarding unreasonable workloads and expectations.

Amidst the early stages of the *PEC*, there is evidence of some uncertainty with regards to the applicability of the specific provisions of the new law and its implementation. I observed this on the part of workers as well as employers in interviewee responses and secondary data analysis. In seeking to understand the significance of the *PEC* in the working lives of women domestic workers, I was able to draw the following insights from participants' narratives: research participants capture the significance of the *PEC* but they are also aware of the fact that members of the employing classes display a level of resistance to comply with labour codes thereby continuing to un-valorize and un-recognize the worthiness of this occupation. While this instills a sense of ambivalence on the part of workers, it also serves to animate a sense of collective empowerment based on the knowledge that unless they bring their demands forth, employers are unlikely to do so. From my interviews, I take that there is an inherently dialogic process between individual experience and the transformative potential based on the collective identity of women domestic workers. The participants in this study often relate their individual stories to the experiences of other women domestic workers they know and to the information they gather of broader political change and increase in labour rights. They carry a remarkable sense of political and labour consciousness, in spite of having no affiliation to local unions. Race, gender, and class emerge as common identifications informing conviviality and a political sense of belonging with other women labouring as domestic workers. Their sense of collective self-determination comes from a sense of belonging to an occupation much maligned and a common struggle for greater recognition in the wider society stemming from their affirmation of the value of paid domestic work. Interviewees recognize too how the undervalorization of their labour contributes to poor treatment and low remuneration in their places of work. In order for labour legislation to serve as a framework and opportunity for women domestic workers to overcome centuries of cumulative disadvantages, the articulation of legal rights needs to be theorized and applied through notions of a historical social exclusion and a contemporary reality of limited access to and exercise of their citizenship.

This holistic awareness is precisely what the non-for-profit organization *Cunhã Coletivo Feminista* identified as one of the limitations of the legislation itself, and what motivated the design of their campaign. For this reason, their work is concerned not only with domestic workers' labour rights but their ability access those rights and exercise their citizenship more broadly. Hence, *Cunhã* designed a campaign denouncing the

exploitative and retrograde characteristics, conditions, and mentality affecting domestic workers, and pointed to the ways in which these forms of domination – such as the discourse of being “like one of the family” – remain stuck in servitude. This organization’s work recognizes that the issue of rights alone does not suffice to improve the working conditions, wages, and lives of *domésticas*, or guarantee access to those rights. Labour legislation needs to be accompanied by consciousness raising, legal protection, and policing. The valorization and recognition of domestic work as work is required to dismantle class, race, and gender discriminations, and begin to heal centuries of stigma imposed and endured by domestic workers. *Cunhã* also provides the space and support to empower domestic workers as women and workers, individually and collectively, in the form of *oficinas* (workshops) through, for example, role-playing exercises known as *Teatro do Oprimido* (Theater of the Oppressed). In spite of numerous studies on domestic workers organizing, scant attention has been directed towards the nodal points of those coalitions between domestic workers, unions, and feminist organizations, and new forms of militancy, activism, feminism, and unionism emerging from those relations (Boris and Klein 2014; Ferree and Tripp 2006; Nadasen 2015). Judging by one of the exceptions in the literature (Barbosa 2013), this form of bottom up organizing would provide great material for a cross between community-based research (Kirby, Sandra, and McKenna 1989), organizational ethnography (Neyland 2008; Simon and Cassel 2012), and participatory research (Cornwall and Sardenberg 2014).

Besides the initial concern that increasing regulation would trigger unemployment, the passing of the *PEC* is seen to have heightened a sense of animosity between employers and employees who lacked formal work contract, with for example, evidence of increasing number of litigation between employers and employees. However, as the first-hand accounts in this study demonstrate, the reactions of the employing classes were diverse and include, but are not limited to, compliance to and expansion of the extended rights, failure to address and implement changes, as well as choosing to retract from formal employment contract to hire instead part-time workers on a *diaristas* status. In regards to the latter, there is evidence of employers deciding to re-arrange their domestic service needs to hire someone who will not press them with a formal work contract and what that would entail. In other words, since *diaristas* continue to be excluded from those legal protections afforded to *mensalistas*, employers fall back on this type of service and thus by-pass the legislation (the *PEC*) they see disfavours them financially if they were to employ a *mensalista* and comply with

the new clauses in the legislation. In any case, domestic workers see the immediate polemic regarding the *PEC* and even the risk of higher unemployment as a worthwhile, perhaps, inevitable part of a process of transformation they see underway, where domestic work will be more regulated, and better remunerated and respected.

The question of whether and how labour rights can be extended and also serve to improve the private lives of women domestic workers require further examination. From the interviews I conducted, I gathered numerous ways in which better working conditions and formal employment status can provide more than greater financial security. Labour rights can serve as a framework for work arrangements that protects domestic workers' ability (and right) to live fulfilling private lives. For example, from the interviews I discerned the tendency for live-out work arrangements to be considered favourable in securing privacy. However, workers have to weigh the odds of coping with housing expenses and long daily commutes. Having access to more reliable/effective public transit between the urban core and its peripheries for example, is an element that does not fall into labour law *per se* but could serve to improve the quality of their daily commutes and lives. In the meantime, two women who participated in this research explained that they negotiated their work schedule to avoid long commutes during rush hour, by either starting work earlier in the morning or working late into the night.

The issue of informality continues to plague workers' ability to establish formal work contracts and access their new labour rights. The specific provisions and regulations brought forth by the *PEC* remain difficult to negotiate considering the difficulty to implement the changes. I found evidence of a lack of comprehensive understanding of specific provisions of the new law and its implementation on the part of workers and employers (via workers' comments). There is evidence of continuous engagement on the part of the federal association and local unions, and the national media to disseminate awareness and understanding of the legislation through "know-your-rights campaigns" (Sweet 2015). Yet developing effective strategies to disseminate, implement and enforce the new rights remains one of the biggest challenges for supporters and allies of *domésticas*. Perhaps Brazilian activists can learn from initiatives in Uruguay where information about policy reform regarding domestic workers rights was introduced in 2009 and activists delivered pamphlets designed as doorknob hangers to the homes of employers to remind them of their legal obligation to register

household employees for social security (Ferrari and Vence 2010 in Goldsmith 2013). In the years following the legal reform for domestic work in Uruguay, labour inspectors reached approximately 9,000 households in a campaign to verify whether or not employers had registered their domestic workers for social security (Goldsmith 2013). Those and other factors contributed to the ILO choosing Uruguay as “a model for good government practices” regarding the legal protection of domestic workers (Goldsmith 2013:2).

Finally, this thesis reinforces the argument that a one-dimensional approach to labour law regarding paid domestic work fails to address the specific challenges and vulnerabilities of women working in the occupation. In other words, who is doing the work and the lack of value assigned to their labour is tied to the precarious conditions and informality that continues to represent challenges from the standpoint of legal protection and law enforcement. The multiple axis of discriminations domestic workers experience, on the basis of class, gender, and race, affect workers experience both in relation to the household (private sphere) and society at large (public sphere). Public policy has yet to implement an emancipatory discourse in the language of labour rights explicitly addressing the gendered, racialized, and class oppressions that stand in the way of domestic workers ability to achieve social status and recognition as real workers.

6.2. Potential Application and New Directions

While conducting fieldwork in the city of São Paulo, Harris (2007) asked research participants whether they could imagine a future where domestic work was non-existent. All respondents answered “no.” This points to the importance of studying privilege by looking at middle and upper class attitudes about domestic work. This form of “studying up” (Aguiar and Schneider 2012) would uncover the opinions, perceptions, and experiences of the employing classes, and inform a more nuanced cross-class examination of the issues surrounding paid domestic work and labour rights. This could also serve to inform public policy in terms of how to bridge the private sphere of Brazilian households and transform the mentality that prevents a number of workers from enjoying contractual agreements, access to labour rights, and a dignified relationship to the individuals they work and care for. Some of the questions that would be worth examining are: How do middle and upper class Brazilian households negotiate and understand household and reproductive labour? How do those notions translate into employers’ views of the recruitment, arrangement, remuneration, and valorization of paid domestic service? What are their understandings of the specific regulations regarding paid domestic work? Has

the *PEC* translated into changes their arrangements for domestic work and relationships with their employees?

The present study suggests that the *PEC* has brought forth changes that serve to improve the conditions of work of women domestic workers who are hired as *mensalistas* to varying degrees and regarding different aspects of the characteristics and demands of their labour. However, considering the small sample that informs the empirical data, it is important to underscore the fact that whether or not this argument is representative of broader changes and/or regional trends in Brazil is yet to be determined. Continuous research is required in order to assess the impact of the *PEC* and to examine how effective and sustainable are the changes seeking to improve domestic workers' exercise and access to labour rights. The significance of this legislation would benefit from an inter-disciplinary, and perhaps collaborative approach where insights from an economic, social, political, as well as activist and transnational perspectives could gel and form a more comprehensive understanding of domestic work, workers and the role of different actors in the occupation. From an empirical and analytical perspective it is significant to observe the evolution and the trends in the re-configuration of domestic work, including a more thorough investigation of the difference in working as a *mensalista* from that of working as a *diarista*. This topic, though noted and previously accounted for, requires further examination in particular as it relates to the crossroads that women domestic workers are confronted with when choosing one or the other. Designing a legal framework to protect the latter remains a challenge for the local and federal unions who struggle to de-construct hegemonic notions of autonomous workers in informal economies and their marginalization in the broader labour market. And from a critical standpoint it seems relevant to consider how, in theory, the legislation served to place domestic work in the same footing as workers in other occupations, when perhaps this might be insufficient considering the historical contingencies of their labour. In other words, while the *PEC* has served to grant domestic workers the same labour rights as workers, the forms of exclusion, marginalization, and domination that domestic workers experience are unlike that of other professional work categories. Domestic work is a particularly vulnerable constituency, with workers suffering from particularly acute forms of marginalization and historical domination. But their labour also takes place in the confines of private households, and labour rights might be insufficient in addressing fully those forms of exclusion. Considering the ways in which domestic work continues to be feminized,

racialized, and a de-regulated, the vulnerabilities and needs of domestic workers go beyond standard labour rights and need to be understood within a framework of intersecting inequalities, affective qualities, and access to citizenship.

As it relates to the theoretical underpinnings of this study, I observed that, in fact, the multiple jeopardies experiences by women of colour in Brazil, is yet to be recognized in a broader political sense. The early commitments of intersectionality, which Kimberley Crenshaw wrote as the: “juridical intervention that exposed the failure of anti-discrimination law to attend to black female plaintiffs’ injuries” in the U.S. (in Nash 2014:46), would be a powerful lens to examine the litigation processes of domestic workers against their employers. Beyond the field of labour legislation, it is important to stay vigilant of how broader systems of justice apply the law and whether the framework for those cases view the multiple jeopardy that domestic workers are confronted with. For example, domestic workers’ cases of abuse and sexual assault in the workplace need to be articulated as the injury of gender and race discrimination and as categories that are “intimately entangled and unknowable apart from each other” (Nash 2014:57).

An intersectional methodology would also benefit from a more sustained and prolonged fieldwork period where one would have an opportunity to engage in numerous encounters, including shadowing workers at their jobs, doing follow-up interviews, and organizing round table conversations (an informal focus group) with research participants. Informal focus groups are of particular importance as they carry the power to generate collective oral testimonies and enable domestic workers to see “their own experience gain visibility as a result of collective sharing and analysis” (Cornwall and Sardenberg 2014:76). This would draw a more detailed and complex picture of domestic workers’ identities and subjectivities, and witness the building of their relationships on the basis of diversities, common experiences, and interests. While a closer examination of the “spatial” and circular dimensions of *domésticas*’ daily trajectories is begging to be put to work and be used as tools for thinking through and stretching out the applicability of intersectionality, this can only be possible with more sustained contact with research participants as they commute and traverse between various public and private spaces. In this way, shadowing would move beyond the confines of workplace to other sites and social contexts in which their lives unfold. The effects of Brazil’s current political turmoil and economic downturn, which brought the country to its worst recession since the 1930s, are yet to be seen.

However, the crisis might intensify the neoliberal roll back of the welfare state, social programs of poverty alleviation, as well as spike unemployment. Future studies will help us understand the ways in which those changes affect working class women and how it might influence the organization of house and care work.

Whether the *PEC Das Domésticas* represents a legal framework with limited transformative power due to the lack of enforcement, or a watershed for a historical and political redress, this study suggests that it carries a force to subvert white hegemony and re-define domestic workers' political agency and sense of self-worth. Considering we are living in a time when social uprisings and political revolutions are accelerated through social media, a powerful example of the force I speak of is the recently launched Facebook page and Twitter hashtag #EuEmpregadaDoméstica (#IDomesticWorker), created by Joyce Fernandes, a former domestic worker and now history teacher, rapper, and political activist (Barrucho 2016). After centuries of virulent racism and internalized stigma #EuEmpregadaDoméstica is a collective political outlet of re-existence, where domestic workers are coming forth, contesting their marginalization, and denouncing the forms of discrimination, humiliation, harassment, and abuse they experience. Exposing the inhumane treatment of employing classes is one step towards dismantling other harmful, but culturally accepted, mechanisms of domination and discourses of the social and economic worth of women labouring as domestic workers. The subject remains close to home and as such I hope this study portrayed the perspectives of research participants in fairness and perhaps contributed, even if slightly, to the incessant questioning of the status quo, and the possibilities of a renewed consciousness of a broader notion of social and economic justice.

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Appendices

Appendix A Interview Guide in English

Research Project: Bringing Rights to the Table: A Case Study of Intersectionality in Domestic Workers' Experiences Defending Labour Rights in Brazil

Principal Investigator:

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Purpose of the Study: This research is for the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts thesis project. This is a study about domestic work and labour rights in Brazil. The research focuses on the recent changes in legislation (*PEC Das Domésticas*) and its significance on the lives of women domestic workers.

Confidentiality: Research participants' identities will remain confidential in this study. You will be assigned a pseudonym and only the pseudonym will be recorded in the interview notes and used in the thesis and other written work by the researchers. If the interview is audio recorded, the recordings and digital files will remain in a secure location to which only the researchers will have access. All documents (written or digital form) will be securely stored for a period of 5 years after the publication of the C-I's thesis at the office of the principal investigator (at the University of British Columbia – Okanagan). After that period all documents will be either shredded or permanently deleted.

Study Results: The research findings and results of this study will be a part of Ms. Nogueira's thesis, the material may also be used for publication in journal articles and books. A copy of the final thesis (in English) will be publicly available on the Internet through cIRcle (UBC's Digital Repository). The CI will produce a report and a pamphlet based on the thesis, which will be translated into Portuguese and made available to you (via email, mail, and/or recruitment location).

Information about these interview questions: This interview guide is meant to give you an idea what I would like to learn about domestic work in Brazil. You will be asked questions about your background, history of employment, status and conditions of current work, perceptions on domestic service and workers' rights, as well as the significance of the recent change in legislation (*PEC Das Domésticas*). This interviews will be one-on-one and open-ended (not just "yes or no" answers). For that reason, the exact wording may change a little. At times, I will use short questions to make sure I understand what you told me or if I need more information when we are talking such as: "*So, you are saying that ...?*", to get more information ("*Please tell me more?*"), or to learn what you think or feel about something ("*Why do you think that is...?*"). You do not have to answer any question if you do not feel comfortable to do so, and can leave the interview, or choose to withdraw from this study at any time.

- 1) Information about you:
 - a. Full Name
 - b. Birthplace
 - c. Place of Residence

- d. Age
 - e. Level of Education
 - f. Marital Status
 - g. Children
 - h. Colour/Race/Ethnic identification
 - i. Age started working
 - j. Number of years in the profession
- 2) Can you tell me about your life trajectory, your first experience labouring as a domestic worker?
 - 3) What about more recent work experiences? Tell me a little bit about the work arrangements, your living situation, and relationship with employers, etc.
 - 4) Do you think the conditions of domestic work have changes since you started working?
[] Yes [] No / Please tell me more about why you think that?
 - 5) What is your current work arrangement? How long have you been at this job?
 - 6) How would you describe your relationship to your employers, other household members, and co-workers (if applicable)?
 - 7) How do you feel about the space of the household you work and/or live in?
 - 8) If you reside in your own home, what is your trajectory to work like?
 - 9) What is your opinion about labour rights and the *PEC Das Domésticas*?
 - 10) Have you experienced changes in the arrangements and conditions of your employment?
 - 11) Where do you look for information and/or assistance if you have issues in the workplace?
 - 12) What is your opinion regarding society's view of domestic work?
 - 13) Is there anything else, either about domestic work in general, or a particular topic you consider valuable that we did not cover in the interview?

Thank you for your time and contribution for this research project.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns about the information we shared during this interview. Alternatively, if you have any concerns or complaints about this study, you may contact the Principal Investigator Dr. Luis Aguiar (see contact provided above).

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics toll free at 1-877-822-8598 or the UBC Okanagan Research Services Office at 250-807-8832. It is also possible to contact the Research Complaint Line by email (RSIL@ors.ubc.ca).

I will keep your contact information and contact you when my thesis and other research publications are available.

Appendix B Interview Guide in Portuguese

Projeto de Pesquisa: Defendendo Direitos Trabalhistas: Um Estudo de Caso de Interseccionalidade Sobre a Experiência de Trabalhadoras Domésticas no Brasil

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Objetivo da Pesquisa: Essa pesquisa faz parte do requerimento de tese para conclusão do programa de Mestrado em Estudos Interdisciplinares, na Universidade da Columbia Britânica. Esse estudo visa explorar a experiência de mulheres trabalhadoras domésticas e suas percepções sobre direitos trabalhistas, bem como a recente legislação (*PEC Das Domésticas*) e seus significados da vida de mulheres trabalhadoras domésticas.

Confidência: Sua identidade e privacidade serão respeitadas e toda informação dada por você será considerada absolutamente confidencial. Seu nome verdadeiro será omitido de todo material, e a pesquisadora irá usar um pseudônimo em todas as anotações e na sua tese. Todo o material (digital e físico) será mantido sob os cuidados do pesquisador principal. Com a sua permissão essa entrevista será gravada. Todo o material da entrevista (redigido e gravado) será absolutamente confidencial e protegido por senhas digitais, ou em arquivos físicos seguros. Somente os pesquisadores, Marina Nogueira e Dr. Luis Aguiar terão acesso ao material da entrevista.

Resultados da Pesquisa: Os resultados dessa pesquisa serão usados na tese de conclusão de curso, e o material pode vir a ser publicado como artigo ou capítulo de livro. Você terá acesso a tese em totalidade em inglês (online). Uma cópia da tese estará disponível ao público via internet (em inglês) pelo site CIRcle (UBC). A pesquisadora, Marina Nogueira, vai produzir um relatório e um panfleto em português, os quais estarão a sua disposição (via e-mail, correio, e/ou na localização onde você encontrou o pôster de recrutamento).

Informação sobre entrevista e procedimento: Esse guia serve para demonstrar as áreas de interesse da presente pesquisa sobre trabalho doméstico no Brasil. As perguntas da entrevista são dadas em aberto (procurando respostas além de “sim” ou “não”). Por tanto, as frases podem não ser ditas exatamente como redigida e a sequência irá depender da direção das suas respostas. Em algumas circunstâncias, posso pedir esclarecimento, quando tiver alguma dúvida em relação a algo que foi dito, ou posso vir a pedir mais detalhes, com perguntas como: “*Você quer dizer...?*”, “*Por favor, você pode me contar um pouco mais sobre isso...?*”, ou “*Como você se sentiu sobre, ou porque você acha isso...?*”

- 1) Informações sobre você:
 - a. Nome Completo
 - b. Lugar de Nascimento
 - c. Lugar de Residência
 - d. Idade
 - e. Nível de educação

- f. Situação Matrimonial
 - g. Filhos
 - h. Cor, Raça, ou Etnia
 - i. Idade que começou a trabalhar
 - j. Número de anos na profissão
- 2) Você pode me contar um pouco sobre a sua vida, trajetória, trabalho e experiência como trabalhadora doméstica?
 - 3) Você acha que as condições do trabalho doméstico melhoraram desde que você começou a trabalhar na profissão?
[] Sim [] Não / Você pode me contar um pouco mais o por quê?
 - 4) Quais são as condições atuais do seu trabalho? Há quanto tempo você está nesse trabalho?
 - 5) Você pode me contar sobre a sua relação com seu patrão/patroa, outros membros da casa onde trabalha, e outros empregados (se aplicável)?
 - 6) Como você se sente em relação ao espaço físico da casa onde trabalha e/ou mora?
 - 7) Se você more na sua própria residência, como é a sua trajetória diária para o trabalho?
 - 8) Qual é a sua opinião sobre direitos trabalhistas?
 - 9) E sobre a *PEC Das Domésticas*?
 - 10) Você diria que houve alguma mudança nas condições do seu trabalho?
 - 11) Onde você procura informação e ajuda se você tiver algum problema no trabalho?
 - 12) Você acha que houve alguma mudança em relação a valorização do trabalho doméstico na sociedade Brasileira?
 - 13) Há mais alguma coisa, em relação ao trabalho doméstico em geral ou algum assunto específico que você considere importante, que não surgiu durante a entrevista?

Muito obrigada pelo seu tempo e contribuição para essa pesquisa.

Por favor, sinta-se a vontade para entrar em contato caso tenha qualquer pergunta ou dúvida sobre o conteúdo dessa entrevista. Se você precisar de qualquer esclarecimento, tiver qualquer pergunta, dúvida, ou reclamações, favor entre em contato com a co-pesquisadora, Marina Nogueira, ou o pesquisador principal, Dr. Luis Aguiar, pelo telefone ou e-mail acima.

Se você tiver qualquer dúvida ou reclamação sobre seus direitos ou experiência como participante favor entre em contato com a linha do Conselho de Ética em Pesquisa da UBC +1 877-822-8598 ou por e-mail no endereço: RSIL@ors.ubc.ca. O Escritório de Pesquisas da UBC Okanagan +1 250-807-8832 também esta disponível para qualquer reclamação.

Entrarei em contato assim que a minha tese e outras publicações estiverem disponíveis para o público.