



# MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

„Maria: invisible worker?  
An analysis of paid domestic work in Mexico City  
with an intersectional perspective“

verfasst von / submitted by

Isabella Regina Spiegel, BA

angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the de-  
gree of

Master of Arts (MA)

Wien, 2016 / Vienna, 2016

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /  
degree programme code as it appears on  
the student record sheet:

A 066 589

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt /  
degree programme as it appears on  
the student record sheet:

Masterstudium Internationale Entwicklung

Betreut von / Supervisor:

Dr. Patricia Zuckerhut



**This is my reality:**

I do not have legally established working hours.  
My salary does not permit me to leave poverty.  
I do not have extra payments, just my Christmas bonus.  
I do not have holiday payments, nor holidays, nor mortgage credit.  
If I get sick, I cannot count on social security.  
If something breaks, they make me pay.  
I need to eat the rest of the food.  
I work my whole life without being able to go into pension.  
My daughters and sons cannot go to Kindergarten.  
They fire me without compensation, although I dedicated my life to their family.

*(Flyer 2014, CACEH, This is my reality)*

**Esta es mi realidad:**

No tengo horario de trabajo establecido en la ley.  
Mi salario no me permite dejar de ser pobre.  
No tengo aguinaldo, solo "mi navidad".  
No tengo prestaciones ni vacaciones ni crédito hipotecario.  
Si me enfermo no puedo contar con seguro social.  
Si se rompe algo me lo cobran.  
Me toca comer el sobrante de la comida.  
Trabajaré toda la vida sin lograr pensión ni jubilación.  
Mis hijos e hijas no pueden ir a guarderías del IMSS.  
Me despiden sin un quinto, aunque haya dedicado mi vida a su familia.

*(Flyer 2014, CACEH, Esta es mi realidad)*



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface.....	7
1. Introduction .....	8
2. Research Setting: Mexico .....	12
2.1. Demography .....	12
2.2. Economy.....	13
2.3. Migration processes.....	17
2.4. Summary .....	19
3. Methodological reflection.....	20
3.1. Data collection.....	21
3.2. Research trip.....	26
3.3. Limitation of data collection.....	27
3.4. Data evaluation .....	30
3.5. Summary.....	31
4. Theoretical Approach: Intersectionality .....	32
4.1. Origins and definition of intersectionality .....	32
4.2. Academic discourse on intersectionality.....	35
4.3. Categories of intersectionality: a tool for analysis.....	38
4.4. Summary.....	41
5. Concept of domestic work.....	43
5.1. A feministic perspective on care work.....	43
5.2. Global trends of domestic work.....	47

5.3.	Definition of domestic work.....	49
5.4.	Issues connected to domestic work.....	51
5.5.	Summary.....	55
6.	Domestic work in Mexico City.....	57
6.1.	Political organization of domestic workers in Mexico .....	58
7.	Applied intersectional theory of domestic work.....	64
7.1.	Identified categories .....	64
7.1.1	Work.....	65
7.1.2	Social Background / Generativity / Migration.....	75
7.1.3	Education / Income .....	83
7.1.4	Violence / Health .....	91
7.1.5	Legal situation.....	96
7.2	Summary.....	100
8.	Conclusions.....	102
	Bibliography.....	106
	Appendix.....	115
	List of abbreviations.....	115
	Mexican School System .....	117
	Interview questions in Spanish .....	118
	Questions for the expert interviews .....	119
	English Abstract .....	121
	German Abstract.....	122

# Preface

In my thesis, I am aware that I speak from the point of view of a *white* woman that grew up in Western Europe. I do not want to judge any person that is involved in this research. I have tried to do this research in a context I am not completely familiar with, but this may provide an opportunity to understand new perspective on the phenomena of domestic workers in Mexico.

This thesis will help us to understand the complicated and complex situation of domestic workers in Mexico City. It also shows that the discrimination and options these women face every day are embedded in structural and cultural norms of treating women, especially domestic workers and people from a lower class. In my opinion, all workers should have the same formal position as any other worker, which is why I support the fight of domestic workers, and I hope this thesis can help bring them closer to the goal of being accepted by society and appreciated for the dignified work they are doing. The goal of this thesis is also to make the interlinked processes, that the domestic workers are involved with, more visible.

I would like to thank the people who have accompanied me down my path until today. A great *Herzlichen Dank* to my family, especially my parents, for their unconditional love and support, who made it possible for me to study. Many thanks also to my amazing friends who have accompanied me during last years and have been a great support for as long as I have known them. I also want to thank my boyfriend for his support, patience and constructive criticism. A big thank belongs to the University Vienna for the generous support of the research trip and special thanks to the Department of International Development, which has encouraged us to do critical studies. I also want to thank the impressive domestic workers I got to know in Mexico as well as the team from CACEH, who provided me with interesting information for this research. Thanks to my interview partners for their time, openness and enlightening conversations. *Muchas Gracias* to Marcelina Bautista and Mary Goldsmith who shared their expertise with me. And a great thank you to my mentor Patricia Zuckerhut, for her excellent assistance, expertise and refreshing thoughts and advice. Thank you!

# 1. Introduction

“Make visible the invisible.”

In September 2014, during my first trip to Mexico, I stayed in the house of a friend in Mexico City. During my stay in the house, two young women, who were not part of the family, caught my attention, as they kept asking me if I wanted something to eat or drink. I was not used to being in a situation where, in a private house, domestic workers “serve” the family all day. The upper-middle class Mexican family, living in a nice area of Mexico City, gave instructions to the domestic workers every now and then. The two women appeared when the family wanted something, and the rest of the time, they were “invisible”. For me, it was an awkward feeling to have two workers in the house, 24/7, who not only did laundry and cleaning, but also served food, drinks and everything else that the family requested. Growing up,<sup>1</sup> I learned that female family members or cleaning ladies do the housework, but I never knew anybody who employed a live-in domestic worker. In my experience, only very rich people can afford to have a live-in domestic worker in their house.

Therefore, during this visit in Mexico, I became curious about this different household structure. Both parents worked a lot and the two domestic workers took care of the household, kitchen and the seven year old child. In my own environment, the mothers were usually the ones who took care of the whole household, and to do this, they stopped working to take care of the children. I was confused about the “unusual” roles of the domestic workers and the family, as they were not part of the family, but, in my eyes, they did tasks that are connected to - what I considered to be - the mother’s role.

Many question arose, such as: Why do they work as domestic workers? From what social background do they come from? What are their educational back-

---

<sup>1</sup> My own background is a middle class family in central Europe with a conservative environment. I saw that domestic work was carried out mainly by women. Due to the course “*Gender, Economics and post-colonial critique*” (University Vienna, Summer Semester 2014, Doucette, Schönflug), my interest has grown in this field. It gave me a good basis in the capitalist concept of domestic work. Thanks to this course, I partially understood what caused this work relation and the structural discrimination these workers face.



grounds and aspirations? What challenges and options do they have? Based on these questions, I started to look for more information about domestic workers in Mexico, particularly in Mexico City. I chose Mexico City as my research field as it is the major destination for domestic workers around the country and is central for the political movement in this sector.

In Mexico, the topic of domestic work has been researched since the 1980s. Mary Goldsmith was one of the pioneers in this field who made the precarious work conditions the domestic workers live in visible. Since her thesis (1976), she remains involved in academic research about domestic workers in Mexico. Her focus lies in the intersection of women, identity and power. Other important authors who are dealing with domestic work in Latin America in general are Elsa M. Chaney and Mary García Castro, who edited the book entitled "*Muchachas No More: Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean*" in 1989. It is a collection of articles about domestic work in various countries in Latin America, and it describes the historical development of the concept of domestic work until the 1980s, the ideological links with domestic work and how the workers started to organize themselves.

Academic literature about domestic work has focused on the female majority of the persons that perform this work. Furthermore, the focus on indigenous domestic workers is discussed in several papers, e.g. works by CONAPRED (2008), Olivera (2001) and Saldaña Tejeda (2013). The migration background of domestic workers is closely examined in the work of Díaz Prieto and Kuhner (2007) and Schirmer and Tienken (2009). Some papers focusing on the experiences of discrimination of domestic workers have been elaborated by the National Council to Prevent Discrimination (CONAPRED)<sup>2</sup> and backed up with statistics that they collected during a national survey about discrimination (CONAPRED 2008, 2011, 2012). The recent published articles focus on the legal aspect of domestic workers, and are probably influenced by the latest movements that are taking place, such as the signing of Convention 189 in 2011<sup>3</sup> (Guevara Bermúdez 2013, Eugen-

---

<sup>2</sup> In Spanish: *Consejo Nacional para Prevenir Discriminacion*. All Spanish-English translations done in this paper are made by myself, unofficially.

<sup>3</sup> Read more about the legal developments for domestic workers in Mexico in the section "Organization of domestic workers in Mexico" and details about the legal situation of domestic workers in chapter 7 on applied theory, specifically the section "legal situation".

ia de la O 2014, Moreno Ramirez n.d.). The book "*Trabajadoras en la sombra*"<sup>4</sup> is a recent collection of studies about domestic workers<sup>5</sup> in Latin America. In these studies, the relationship between gender, ethics and migration in the context of domestic work is researched. This book also takes into consideration unusual topics connected to domestic work, such as the employer's point of view, child labor and male participation in domestic work (Durin/Eugenia de la O/Bastos 2014).

These studies go into depth within each topic and mention other factors along the way. They do not specifically take into account the interaction between the different categories to construct the living reality of the domestic workers in Mexico City. This research resulted in the research question, "What are the living realities of paid domestic workers in Mexico City from an intersectional<sup>6</sup> perspective?"

This thesis aims to shed light on living realities of paid domestic workers in Mexico City from an intersectional perspective. It will focus on the challenges and possibilities in different areas of domestic workers' lives. The domestic workers are one of the most discriminated work groups in Mexico (Sánchez Ambriz 2013: 93). Many workers live and work in poor conditions, with high chances of discrimination of various forms. The majority of domestic workers in Mexico City are women; due to their gender, they already face social challenges, because of the patriarchal nature of Mexican society. Their social background is a major factor for domestic workers, as they tend to come from economically disadvantaged families. Domestic work gives an opportunity to satisfy the need for economic resources, migration from rural to urban area.

The living reality of this group of workers is an intersection between various categories. In this thesis, the categories discussed are education, violence, generativity, health, income, legal situation, migration, social background and work. All

---

<sup>4</sup> "Workers in the shadow"

<sup>5</sup> In this thesis, the term domestic worker and worker are used to refer to people who perform paid work in households of others. This term is explained in more detail in section 5.3 on the definition of domestic work. The author of this thesis is aware that this term has different connotation due to its context and the fact that domestic workers form a very heterogenic group according to their age, social background and their economic and social access on resources.

<sup>6</sup> The intersectionality theory is a way to analyze complex discrimination as well as privilege experiences that consist of different layers of categories. In the chapter on intersectionality, the theory and background are further discussed.

categories are always connected to the challenges and options the domestic workers have in Mexico. A low level of education influences the type of job a person will find and how high their possible income will be. As domestic workers are usually not very well educated, they also earn quite little. The other categories mentioned above have as well a big influence on how their lives are constructed. This thesis shows how these categories are interlinked and what the possibilities are to overcome dangerous intersections that can lead to discrimination patterns. The thesis begins with some general information about Mexico and domestic work specific to Mexico City. In the methodological review, the methods used to find the answers to the research question are explained. Data collection and evaluation are also described. The theoretical approach focuses on intersectionality. It summarizes the theories directed to the analysis of complex situations of discrimination and privileges within different layers of categories. After the theoretical basis, the concepts of domestic work and its definitions and issues are discussed. In the final part of this paper, several categories are described and their interdependency will be discussed. This leads to a more specific and complex explanation of domestic workers' reality in Mexico City. At the end of this thesis, a conclusion is given with a short summary of the research results and questions that remained unanswered. In order to comprehend the context in which this research took place, a short description of the demography, economy and migration processes is given.

## 2. Research Setting: Mexico

This chapter provides a brief description of Mexico, focusing on its population and its compilation. Afterwards, Mexico's economic development throughout recent decades and its effects on the labor market are detailed. Finally, the migration processes of Mexicans are discussed, with a focus on internal movements within the country.

### 2.1. Demography

The United Mexican States is a country in the southern part of North America, bordering with the United States of America to the north and Guatemala and Belize to the south (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores 2015). It is politically divided into 32 states, the capital city being Mexico City, which is situated in the center of the country. There are approximately 121.005 million Mexican inhabitants (estimated 2015), of whom slightly more than half are women (57.4 million). The Mexican population is very young; almost half of the population is younger than 27 years old (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores 2015), (Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook – Mexico September 2015).

Almost 77% (76.8) percent of the total Mexican population lives in urban areas (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores 2015). Nearly one-fifth of the population (20.843 million) lives in the capital Mexico City (Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook – Mexico September 2015). Mexico City is the economic and financial center of the country and, therefore, attracts a great number of national migrants seeking work opportunities (Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook – Mexico September 2015).

Mexico has been a federal republic since it gained its independence from Spain in the years 1810-1821. The current president, Enrique Peña Nieto, is the chief of state and head of government, and has held this title since he was appointed on December 1, 2012. Two political groups, the Institutional Revolutionary Party

(PRI) and the National Action Party (PAN), have been fighting for leadership of the country since the Mexican Revolution in 1910- ca. 1921. PRI has predominantly been leading Mexican politics since independence, except for the period between 2000-2012, when the government in Mexico was led by PAN (Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook – Mexico September 2015).

Sixty percent of the Mexican population is ethnically Mestizo<sup>7</sup>, about one-third is Amerindians<sup>8</sup> and nine percent Europeans. Though Spanish is the official language, there are 67 native languages. The vast majority of the Mexican population is Catholic (83.9 percent), about 7.6 percent are Protestant, and the rest belongs to a religious minority or does not associate themselves with a religious denomination (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores 2015).

## 2.2. Economy

There is considerable inequality in income distribution across Mexico. It has a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 2.143 trillion US Dollars (estimated 2014), of which the service sector accounts for 60.1 percent, industry 36.4 percent and the agricultural sector 3.5 percent. An estimated 52.9 million people make up the country's potential labor force, of which 60.4 percent were in the active labor force in 2014 (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores 2015). In 2014, the unemployment rate was 4.7 percent. The main export country for Mexican commodities is the United States of America.

According to the CIA Factbook, the Mexican economy lies below its potential economic growth, because a high proportion of the workforce is in the informal market and the corruption exists throughout the country (Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook – Mexico September 2015).

---

<sup>7</sup> "Mestizo" is a culturally strong influenced category used in Latin America to describe those with both Native American and European Spanish ancestry. The word roughly translates from Spanish to English as *mixture*. (Benz, Rainer: Mestizo, Definition, History & Culture n.d.) <http://study.com/academy/lesson/mestizo-definition-history-culture.html> [Accessed: 22.09.2015]

<sup>8</sup> "Amerindian", also "Native American", is used to describe a member of any of the indigenous peoples of North, Central, or South America, esp. those of North America. Collins Dictionary: American Indian [http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/american-indian#american-indian\\_1](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/american-indian#american-indian_1) [Accessed: 22.09.2015]

To give an international comparison for Mexico, some data about human development index and gender inequality will be introduced, since this issue is fundamental for the situation of domestic worker.

Mexico is ranked in the Human Development Index<sup>9</sup> at place 71 out of 187 countries. In 2013, the average life expectancy was 77.5 years, the expected years of schooling was 12.8 years and the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita was 15.854 Dollars PPP<sup>10</sup> (UNDP: Human Development Report 2014 Mexico 2014: 2). The Gender Inequality Index (GII)<sup>11</sup> reflects gender-based inequalities in three dimensions – reproductive health, empowerment and economic activity (UNDP: Human Development Report 2014 Mexico 2014: 4).

Mexico ranked 73 in the GII out of 149 countries in 2013. Fifty Mexican women die from pregnancy related causes for every 100,000 live births. An important figure to note regarding reproductive health is that 63 out of 1000 live births are adolescent mothers. Regarding empowerment, only 36 percent of seats in Parliament are held by women. From the educational point of view, 60.6 percent of

---

<sup>9</sup> The Human Development Index is a “summary measure for assessing long-term progress in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living. The long and healthy life is calculated by life expectancy. Access to knowledge is measured by: i) mean years of education among the adult population, which is the average number of years of education received in a life-time by people aged 25 years and older; and ii) expected years of schooling for children of school-entry age, which is the total number of years of schooling a child of school-entry age can expect to receive if prevailing patterns of age-specific enrolment rates stay the same throughout the child's life. Standard of living is measured by Gross National Income (GNI) per capita expressed in constant 2011 international dollars converted using purchasing power parity (PPP) rates.” It has been calculated by the United Nations Program on base of data that can be publicly accessed. The data bases are provided by “United Nations Population Division, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics and the World Bank” (UNDP: Human Development Report 2014 Mexico 2014: 2).

<sup>10</sup> PPP = purchasing power parity. Definition OECD: Purchasing Power Parities - Frequently Asked Questions (faqs). PPPs are the rates of currency conversion that equalize the purchasing power of different currencies by eliminating the differences in price levels between countries. In their simplest form, PPPs are simply price relatives that show the ratio of the prices in national currencies of the same good or service in different countries. PPPs are also calculated for product groups and for each of the various levels of aggregation up to and including GDP. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. 2015 <http://www.oecd.org/std/prices-ppp/purchasingpowerparities-frequentlyaskedquestionsfaqs.htm> [Accessed: 24.09.2015]

<sup>11</sup> This index, calculated by the United Nations Development Program, measures the loss in human development due to achievements according to gender equality in a nation. These achievements are measured in three dimensions – “reproductive health, empowerment and economic activity. Reproductive health is measured by maternal mortality and adolescent birth rates; empowerment is measured by the share of parliamentary seats held by women and attainment in secondary and higher education by each gender; and economic activity is measured by the labour market participation rate for women and men.” The data comes from publicly available international databases such as the World Health Organization, United Nations Children's Fund, World Bank, etc. (UNDP: Human Development Report 2014 Mexico 2014: 4).

male Mexicans finished school with at least the secondary level of education, while only slightly over half (55.7 percent) of women reached at least the same level of education. Another crucial point is economic activity: whereas only 45 percent of women are part of the labor market, 80 percent of men are actively working (UNDP: Human Development Report 2014 Mexico 2014: 4).<sup>12</sup>

The Gender Development Index<sup>13</sup> shows a clear divergence between GNI per capita of male and female Mexicans. On average, women earn only half of the income (10.060 US Dollars) that men earn (22.020 US Dollars) (UNDP: Human Development Report 2014 Mexico 2014: 5).

Since the colonial period, indigenous people in particular have faced institutional discrimination, including being enslaved, having difficult work conditions and the attempts of the Mexican state to eliminate them as a social category (Bartra/Otero 2005: 384). Before the Mexican revolution in 1910, dictator Porfirio Díaz pushed to expropriate the land of indigenous peasants and prevent them from having any possibility to work as independent agents. By doing this, he essentially forced them to offer their labor power and sell it on the labor market (Bartra/Otero 2005: 385). Through these expropriation processes, 90 percent of land that was originally owned by indigenous people came into ownership of the “large landholders in the private sector of Mexican agriculture” (Bartra/Otero 2005: 385). Throughout history, the ownership of the land turned into state property or stayed in private hands (Bartra/Otero 2005: 386). In addition to indigenous peasants, Mestizo peasants and poor urban population lost their own land as a result of capitalist economic politics (Hernández Navarro 2014).

Due to the economic crises, Mexico had to announce its bankruptcy in 1981/1982. After this event, the economy was oriented on the neoliberal economic system to build up the nation (Schirmer/Tienken 2009: 208). Many mi-

---

<sup>12</sup> In this data, no work in the informal market is shown. That’s where most of domestic work takes place.

<sup>13</sup> “...the Gender Development Index (GDI) based on the sex-disaggregated Human Development Index, defined as a ratio of the female to the male HDI. The GDI measures gender inequalities in achievement in three basic dimensions of human development: health (measured by female and male life expectancy at birth); education (measured by female and male expected years of schooling for children and mean years for adults aged 25 years and older); and command over economic resources (measured by female and male estimated GNI per capita).” (UNDP: Human Development Report 2014 Mexico 2014: 5).

grants went to the *maquiladoras*<sup>14</sup> in the north of the country, where they produced fabrics and other goods for exportation, because they could earn better than in their home regions. As a consequence of the neoliberal restructuring of the economy since the 1980s, a deep economic crisis started in Mexico, which led to smaller ability to satisfy the basic necessities for the population (Parnreiter 2000: 48). As a consequence, many people had to migrate to the “rich” USA to find economic security in order to financially support their families in the form of remittances<sup>15</sup> (Schirmer/Tienken 2009: 204).

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)<sup>16</sup>, signed in 1994 by the Mexican state, was initially a political action intended to improve the economic situation of the country (Schirmer/Tienken 2009: 209). NAFTA led to the hoped economic boom, especially the maquiladora industry, with its exports gained from the free trade. While NAFTA led to a national boom in the industry sector, it hit Mexico’s agricultural sector hard. Many small farmers could not compete against the technically developed farms in the USA and Canada and had to close their business. Therefore, many small farmers had to look for a job in plantations, in the cities or in the countries of the Mexico’s trade partners in the north: the USA and Canada (Schirmer/Tienken 2009: 210). Small businesses were also ruined by the strong competition from the North.

Due to the lack of social welfare state in Mexico, the basic services for people who are not economically well suited, such as health care, basic education and good infrastructure, are not provided. Furthermore, basic rights are not guaranteed for all people equally (Moreno Ruiz 2012: 369). This implies that many people living in poor conditions have limited options for their lives. Since paid domestic is part of the informal section of the economy, these workers are also excluded from the “general labor legislation”<sup>17</sup> of Mexico (Moreno Ruiz 2012: 369).

---

<sup>14</sup> *Maquiladoras* are factories in Mexico run by a foreign company that export its products to that company’s country of origin. <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/maquiladora> [Accessed 16.12.2015]

<sup>15</sup> Money sent back from migrants to their families at their origin place.

<sup>16</sup> Free trade zone with the USA, Canada and Mexico. The goal is an easier flow of capital, goods and information with no barriers (Massey 2000:70).

<sup>17</sup> The legal situation of domestic workers is more closely discussed in chapter 7 on applied intersectional theory, specifically section 7.1.5 on legal situation.



## 2.3. Migration processes

Mexican migration to “developed” countries has increased, with roughly 86.3 percent of emigrants moving to the USA (Moreno Ruiz 2012: 370, INEGI 2014: 27). Between August 2009 and September 2014, approximately 719,000 people left the country, two-thirds of whom were male. Their main reasons for leaving the country were to work, to study or to unite with family members (INEGI 2014: 28).

According to the latest development, female migrants are also leaving the country as “independent economic and social agents.” They are not following their partners, but are instead searching for ways to improve independent their socio-economic status (Díaz-Prieto/Kuhner 2007). The decision to migrate is sometimes accompanied by resistance within their families (Schirmer/Tienken 2009: 204).

In addition to transnational migration, internal migration from one state to the other, or from rural to urban areas, is very frequent. In 2012, a study showed that almost one-third of domestic workers were born in a state different than where they currently reside (INEGI 2012: 10). The reason that urban areas are more attractive is that the infrastructure is significantly better (Moreno Ruiz 2012: 370). The states with the highest immigration rates of domestic workers are Quintana Roo (83.3 percent) and Baja California (67.6 percent). In Mexico City<sup>18</sup>, 54.3 percent of domestic workers are migrants from other Mexican states.

Inside Mexico, internal migration is one of the primary characteristic for domestic work: About 80 percent of DWs (Domestic Workers) in Mexico are indigenous women from the poorest rural parts of Mexico, who migrate to the larger cities in order to improve their opportunities to economically support their families (Fox 2005 in Kirchhoff 2011: 70).

This high fraction of indigenous domestic workers is even more impressive when one considers that indigenous people make up only eleven percent of the total population in Mexico (Fox 2005 in Kirchhoff 2011: 70).

---

<sup>18</sup> In the data as Distrito Federal.

Recently, there has been controversy in Mexico City, because more people are leaving the capital than arriving. It has been one of the major destinations for internal migration for decades, but recently, Mexico City has seen more migrants leaving than arriving. On the whole, it has the highest level of migration in the country, with a negative number of migrants (INEGI 2014: 24). Many people who migrate to the city are supported by solidarity chains that have already existed for many decades. These social networks are well established and stimulate the decision to leave rural areas and find a new future in the city with a different social environment and workplace (Parnreiter 2000: 47f.).

It is also due to the lifestyle of urban families - when both parents work and have a house and children - that the demand to hire someone to perform domestic tasks has risen over the last decades (Sassen 2002: 259). Sassen sees the consequences in this process:

[This] dynamic produces a sort of double movement: a shift to the labor market of functions that used to be part of household work, but also a shift of what used to be labor market functions in standardized workplaces to the household and, in the case of informalization, to the immigrant community. This reconfiguration of economic spaces has had different impacts on women and men, on male-typed and female-typed work cultures, and on male- and female-centered forms of power and empowerment. (Sassen 2002: 259)

Women in some cases are more affected by the economic changes and the necessity to migrate. They experience a stronger push to migrate for extra income for the family than men do (Parnreiter 2000: 48).

In all the economic, social and political processes, the colonial history of Mexico needs to be considered. In the Mexican context, the colonial structures had, and still have, a big influence in society. Power relations have been institutionalized and are still in place (Mignolo 2012). The Catholic religion, brought by the Spanish colonizers, also influences everyday life and is an important factor from the work point of view, which consequently influences the workers' social interactions.

## 2.4. Summary

In this chapter, background information about the demographic and economic developments of this country has been discussed and elaborated. To understand the context in which domestic work takes place in Mexico, these three important fields are more closely illuminated. Furthermore, the fact that the majority of domestic workers in Mexico are women makes it important to find and analyze more demographic information. The majority of domestic workers in this context comes from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, which is to say, from the lower economic class.

Domestic work is mostly an urban phenomenon. This is why information about the migration processes has been identified and analyzed in this chapter. Many male and female domestic workers migrate to the economic and population center of the country: Mexico City.

### 3. Methodological reflection

To follow the research and understand how the research goals of this thesis were met, the following segments of this chapter will elaborate on how and where the data were generated. This chapter discusses what data were used, how the research was conducted in Mexico, how the interview partners were identified and contacted and, last but not least, how the data have been processed to get to the results of this study.

The data used for this research result from a literature review, interviews and participating observations. The evaluation of these data is a thematic analysis of the literature, an elaboration of the data of the narrative and experts' interviews oriented on the grounded theory<sup>19</sup> and notes during the participating observation. Throughout the research process, permanent reflections took place in order to process and analyze the reflected data (Russel 2006: 435). This permanent reflection is also a basic characteristic in grounded theory and one of the similarities between this research and grounded theory.

At the beginning of the research, articles, books and theses about domestic work were identified. What caught my attention were the specific topics that each one focused on. Up to this point, hardly any details about the connection between different topics had been analyzed in comparison to the research of this thesis, where different categories, such as migration, legal situation, and social backgrounds, are analyzed and the situation of domestic workers in this net of different structures is illustrated. The main concern of this thesis is to show a more profound profile of the connection of the different influences on the lives of domestic workers. To do this, the theory of intersectionality seems to be appropriate, as it interlinks categories like gender, race and class to allow us to understand specific contexts<sup>20</sup>. To answer the research question: "What is the life reality of domestic workers in Mexico City from an intersectional perspective?", dif-

---

<sup>19</sup> The grounded theory has its origins in the social sciences with qualitative research. The main issue that the grounded theory addresses is that it provides transparency and self-perception in studies, so the qualitative researches are easily comprehended (Schulz 2014: 75).

<sup>20</sup> A more detailed description about the theory is found in the chapter "Intersectionality".

ferent forms of data collection and their evaluation took place. The following section will describe first the data collections, like literature reviews and narrative and expert interviews. Additionally, the research trip that took place in Mexico is discussed, including how the contacts with interview partners were established. It will then be explained how the data have been evaluated and how the final results appear.

### 3.1. Data collection

The data for this study is based on qualitative interviews, participating observation and literature research about domestic work in general, as well as domestic work specifically in Mexico.

The literature review includes major authors in this field, like Goldsmith (1981, 1990, 1998), D'Souza (2010), Moreno Ruiz (2012), Moreno Ramirez (n.d.), Durin (2014), Eugenia de la O (2014), CONAPRED (2008) and Saldaña Tejeda (2013). For literature research, sources include the University of Vienna's database, the Austrian Foundation for Development Research (ÖFSE), Colégio de Mexico, the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) library of gender studies, as well as literature provided by the Mexican Center for Support and Training for Domestic Workers (CACEH)<sup>21</sup>. Further texts found on the homepages of CACEH and the International Federation Domestic Workers (IDWF) were also used. The literature found in Austria and Mexico has been evaluated with a thematic analysis, where a focus on domestic workers in Mexico, especially in Mexico City, took place. The thematic analysis is "a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun/Clarke 2006: 79). The data provided current academic research in this field and statistical material that has been used in chapter 7, "Applied Intersectional Theory of Domestic Work," to substantiate the statements of the interview partners brought added facts about domestic work-

---

<sup>21</sup> In Spanish: *Centro de Apoyo y Capacitacion de Empleadas del Hogar*. CACEH is a center for domestic workers who are active or looking for work in Mexico City. The main goal of this organization is to promote labor rights of domestic workers in Mexico. Find more information's about the origin and tasks of the organization in section 6.1 "Political organization of domestic workers in Mexico".

ers in Mexico. It showed the previous research that has been done about domestic workers.

For the empirical data collection, the qualitative interviews with six domestic workers and two experts represent the most relevant resources<sup>22</sup>. The reason I chose narrative interviews with domestic workers is the following: it allows us to get a deeper insight into the individual living realities and, therefore, it can be used to find parallels in their lives. Qualitative interviews were also utilized for this research, because they are “the common form of data collection in qualitative research, including grounded theory studies” (Charmaz 2014: 79). The interviews that are the base of this research were mostly performed in the form of narrative interviews of domestic workers.

Narrative biographic interviews enable one to obtain broader information about the context of their subjects - in this case, domestic workers in Mexico. The information about their work situation is in the foreground; therefore, it was necessary to go in depth to find out these workers’ backgrounds, to see social processes behind these phenomena and understand why they find themselves in a complicated employment situation. In order to learn more about domestic workers’ backgrounds, six women working on the same position were interviewed and shared their stories. Their interviews were compared to determine whether there were any parallels in their lives, attitudes or experiences. These narrative biographic interviews also enable one to see the intersections of different categories and, therefore, identify and explore the experience of discrimination and possibilities among domestic workers.

By posing an open question in the beginning of the interview, the interview partners were asked to talk about their lives from childhood until today. At the conclusion of this part of the interview, more precise follow-up questions were asked about their lives and work if they were not already mentioned. Some interview partners talked openly and freely about their lives, while others were more discrete, which required more precise questions during the follow-up. To have

---

<sup>22</sup> More details about the expert interviews with Marcelina Bautista and Mary Goldsmith are found on page 23.

comparable data, I prepared a questionnaire<sup>23</sup> that helped to follow up the spoken topics. This questionnaire, based on the pre-known facts from the literature and the thesis of Moreno-Ruiz (2012), gave me some ideas of what to ask during the interview; for example, “Who depends on you and your income?” “How much time does it take you to get to your working place?”

The interview partners were domestic workers who were selected randomly, some of whom were not members of CACEH and some of whom were active members.

<b>Name of interview partner<sup>24</sup></b>	<b>Additional information</b>
Regina	Active in CACEH Live-out worker
Ana	Live-in worker
Lorena	Live-out worker
Ximena	Active in CACEH Live-in worker
Catalina	Live-in worker
Camila	Active in CACEH Live-in worker

It was a challenge to get into contact with domestic workers that were not members of the organization, which is why I asked my own friends’ domestic workers. To find access to workers that were members of CACEH was much easier and, therefore, I asked them to do an interview concerning their work situations. The selection of workers from CACEH was random, with the only pre-condition being that they were willing to participate. Ultimately selected were two active members of CACEH, as well as one worker who is not as active in the organization.

The interview participants were contacted in two ways. The first was during a previous visit in Mexico in September 2014, while I was living in a friend’s house and had an opportunity to talk to the domestic workers working there. In February 2015, they were asked if they were willing to participate in this research. The reactions were divided; one was very happy to do so, while the other one was more reserved but eventually agreed.

---

<sup>23</sup> The prepared questionnaire I used during the interviews can be found in the Appendix. In the section on the limits of data collection, you will find a more detailed description how questionnaires can limit the research and its results.

<sup>24</sup> Anonymous names for interview partners.

In the beginning, there was a concern that by talking to the domestic workers of my own friends, the interviews would be influenced by my relationship with the family they work for. Due to their dependency on this job, there was a risk that they would not speak honestly and openly; however, after assuring them that the records of the interviews would remain confidential, they trusted me and my research and they began to speak openly about their lives and work.

The first interview took place in a coffee shop in Mexico City. The second one took place in the house where the domestic worker lives and works, but at a time when nobody else was home. Due to my personal relationship with these domestic workers' employers, it was also possible to do a participating observation. The third domestic worker, also employed by the same family, worked in a separate flat with a mentally handicapped person. Due to the possibility to stay in this flat for the research duration, it was possible to observe the everyday life of this particular domestic worker and interview partner, and she invited me to stay in her home outside Mexico City, which I accepted.

The second way to establish contacts was through CACEH. This organization helped me find domestic workers who were willing to participate in interviews for this thesis. CACEH invited me to workshops where domestic workers participate every second weekend, which gave me an opportunity to better understand what their main missions are, and it helped me establish personal contacts with some of the workers. Following this meeting, contact information with several potential interview partners was exchanged and I called three of them to set up a time and date to conduct the interviews. The interviews with the domestic workers from CACEH took place in parks, as well as my place of residency, without anybody else present.

In general, the organization of the interviews was much slower than expected. Additionally, because of the working hours of the domestic workers, the only time to talk was on the weekends or after work, provided that they were not live-in workers.

For the interviews with experts, I used questions<sup>25</sup> to guide the interview in order to obtain specific information that was not available or could not be found

---

<sup>25</sup> The prepared interview questions for the experts' interviews can be found in the Appendix.



anywhere else. I interviewed Marcelina Bautista, because she has an impressive knowledge about the movement of domestic workers in Mexico and all over Latin America. She was also able to inform me about the challenges and possibilities the organization CACEH has for domestic workers. The conversation took place in CACEH's conference room. I also interviewed Mary Goldsmith, as she has academic knowledge of the situation of domestic workers in the last decades in Mexico. The exchange of information with her took place in her office in the University of UAM (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana - Xochimilco).

These interviews were important, as they answered crucial questions of the research, such as historical development of the organization of domestic workers and the specific academic understanding of this topic. They also helped understand the broader view of the situation of domestic workers in the city, in addition to the six narrative interviews with the domestic workers, and they provided me with a background to the information provided by the narrative interviews.

CACEH also provided the contact information of experts via email, which allowed me to request an interview with CACEH's founder, Marcelina Bautista. They also recommended that I interview Mary Goldsmith, one of the most important researchers in this field, and gave me her contact details. Due to their busy schedules, it was difficult to arrange a date to meet with both of them and, therefore, the time to give interviews was limited. However, they were very interested in my research, which is why they agreed to give me an interview.

To be a part of the meetings of the organization for domestic workers in Mexico City brought a feeling to the political fight of the worker and these meetings were used for participant observation. Russel explains that: "Participant observation gives you an intuitive understanding of what's going on in a culture and allows you to speak with confidence about the meaning of data." (Russel 2006: 355). These participant observations can provide new data regarding the relationship among persons and how they treat each other. It also shows invisible hierarchies that people are not consciously aware of. Participant observation also allows one to see such phenomena that were not included in the interview partners' statements.

Throughout the research process, I kept a journal that helped me to reflect on the newest information found during this time. In the following, first discussed are the research visit and the process of getting in touch with my interview partners.

Because the focus of this thesis is on the perspective of domestic workers, particularly to find out their own realities, the perspective of employers would be out of the scope of this thesis and, therefore, employers were not interviewed.

## 3.2. Research trip

As mentioned in the introduction, my first trip to Mexico took place in September 2014 and the first contact with domestic workers in Mexico City led to my curiosity and interest in this topic. In the course of searching for the information about domestic work in Mexico, CACEH appeared in many articles and documents. Realizing it is an important stakeholder in this field, contact with the organization was established before my research trip in February 2015.

At the beginning, before I started to contact people in Mexico who are important players in the topic of domestic work, I was afraid of being rejected by them, due to the fact that a young European woman wanted to ask for information about an unpleasant reality in Mexico. The biggest fear was that the organization and domestic workers would not talk to me because of my origin and, therefore, believe I lacked knowledge about their working context and this topic. It was my hope that, with this research trip, I would get access to this field and get the insight in the lives of domestic workers and the struggles that CACEH has in their fight to improve work conditions. After gathering information about CACEH and their leader, Marcelina Bautista, I hoped to receive interesting information that cannot be gathered by statistics alone, but also by insiders. To be prepared for the encounter with Bautista and the domestic workers, I elaborated a questionnaire for the expert and narrative interviews.

I also contacted the organization CACEH in Austria to ask for their help with getting in contact with domestic workers and to ask if they were willing to have an interview with me. They answered very friendly and assured their help. After arriving to Mexico, on the second day I visited their office. I did not expect the office to be the size of five square meters with three women working there, sharing one computer. I was also surprised when I met Marcelina Bautista, because this small, young woman had already achieved so much in the fight for domestic

workers in the last fifteen years. They welcomed me and invited me to participate on their activities, which I gratefully accepted.

The research trip to Mexico City, Mexico, in February of 2015 revealed two different issues to be important and present in the situation for domestic workers in the city. The first one is that the government of Mexico needs to ratify Convention 189 of the International Labor Organization (ILO), known as the Domestic Workers Convention<sup>26</sup>. All of CACEH's activities have been focused on achieving this. The other important issue is forming a labor union, or to otherwise try to be a part of the Mexican workers' union. Subsequently, these topics were discussed in details in the experts' interviews.

Empirical data were collected during this visit to Mexico City over the span of one month. CACEH was contacted prior to the visit, and consent was obtained in order to receive assistance in making contact with domestic workers and to talk to the leader of the organization, Marcelina Bautista, who plays a crucial role in the movement of organizing domestic workers. Throughout my stay in Mexico, information was retrieved from the local libraries. This kind of data was not available online or in Austrian libraries, and it helped to provide a good overview on the situation of domestic workers in the area. Additional benefits of this research trip included personal visits with CACEH members, weekend housing provided by one of the domestic workers and the ability to meet other domestic workers in different households. I had several conversations with Mexicans on this topic, but more from the employer's point of view, which allowed me to better understand the situation.

### 3.3. Limitation of data collection

One of the biggest limitations of this research is that the working situation of domestic workers in Mexico City is only given from two perspectives: the workers' perspective and the academic perspective<sup>27</sup>. Employers were not inter-

---

<sup>26</sup> More information about the Convention 189 from ILO can be found in section 6.1 on "Political organization of domestic workers in Mexico".

<sup>27</sup> In the PhD thesis of Moreno Ruiz (2012), the perspective of employers of domestic workers and people who actively decided not to have a domestic worker are discussed. The thesis of Kuenz

viewed, because I wanted to focus on the domestic workers and find out why they work in other households, although an employer could have “verified” the statements of the workers, and add his/her problems faced with workers. Additionally, due to time constraints, it was not possible to continue the research and interview employers or employees of domestic work agencies, which would have given a full perspective on the domestic workers’ situations in the city.

Another disadvantage is that, coming from another country, culture and language, I do not have a full knowledge and understanding of Mexican society and working context. To feel a closeness and distance simultaneously was a constant companion during the research. I felt a deep connection with some of the domestic workers, and at the same time, I felt that I am different regarding my beliefs, possibilities and limitations. This identity conflict between being both native and foreign was always present. It is not possible to write objectively about a group, because we are always involved with them, whether it is through fieldwork or globalization (Narayan 1993: 676). This personal relation cannot be forgotten in this kind of research and needs to be constantly reflected on, especially concerning research analysis.

My interest in Mexico in recent years has resulted in some knowledge about the cultural customs, which lowered the personal barriers to get into conversation with my interview partners. I think my openness and interest in them was the key to being received and opened many doors for interviews and further invitations. During the meetings and interviews, a personal relation was built, which led to friendships I still have today.

Doing the research in three languages (English, Spanish and German) made it more difficult. This was particularly apparent during the interviews, because the small nuances of Spanish are still not possible for me to hear and understand, which can make a difference in understanding precisely what is being said. However, just as this can be a disadvantage, it can also be seen as an advantage, as it allows me to see aspects that would be hidden or not talked about explicitly by a Mexican researcher.

---

(2012) about domestic work in South Tyrol includes the perspective of employers and employment agencies and their role – which would also be an interesting approach in Mexico.

Another important aspect to mention is my personal relationship with the domestic workers in my friend's house. Due to the possibility of being in the house at various times, it was possible to see how the domestic workers interact with each other. My personal relationship with their employer could have made the interview partner more afraid to speak honestly, but once we discussed the issue of confidentiality, the interview partners in general were very open and talked freely about their lives. Living with one interview partner also affected the research, as a lot of information had been exchanged before the actual interview.

With questionnaires prepared before the actual interviews with the domestic workers, the outcome of the research results is pre-determined and significantly influenced. Therefore, during the research analysis, it was important to stay as open as possible to be able to see new ideas and perspectives. Charmaz, an often-quoted academic within the grounded theory, questions how much pre-knowledge of the researcher influences the code giving process and, therefore, the study (Charmaz 2011a: 118). In this research, the interview questionnaire codes were pre-given, but there were also open-ended questions that allowed the interview partners more possibilities to talk about their experiences. The research conducted remained as open-ended as possible throughout the entire process of preparing interviews, data survey and intersectional analysis.

One of the main limitations of interviews is that the things people say are not necessarily what they mean. Taking this into consideration, some results may come up that skew data that could otherwise have been interpreted differently (Atkinson, Silverman 1997, In: Charmaz 2014: 78).

Another limitation that became apparent after one interview was that I said the research is about discrimination of domestic workers. Having this in the mind, the interview partner often referred its statements to discrimination and explicitly denied it. This provided a valuable lesson not to give more information than necessary beforehand, so that the interview would not be influenced.

In the next section, the evaluation of the collected data like the interviews and participating observation is described.

### 3.4. Data evaluation

The software program *Dual Writer* was used to transcribe the audio records and put them in a written format. The interviews were written in Spanish, in order to analyze them with a focus on the content of the statements. Within this process, first impressions and ideas arose and it became clear what categories would be useful to analyze the interviews (e.g. education, migration, region, etc.).

To evaluate the data, I familiarized myself with the qualitative content analysis of Mayring (2010). The goal is to reduce the collected material to its core contents and finally have the main information (Mayring 2010: 65). With a software program, *atlas.ti*, interview sections were coded<sup>28</sup> to provide structure and allow for an easier analysis at a later time. The codes I used were partly pre-identified and connected to the categories of the intersectional pattern of Degele and Winker (2007: 26). Other categories chosen for the intersectional analysis were elaborated; meanwhile, the analysis of the narrative qualitative, biographic interviews were conducted and compared to information found in the literature (Charmaz 2011b: 93). Paraphrasing the statements from the codes, generalizing them and comparing them with each other led to the final findings of the different categories that are discussed in chapter 7 on applied intersection theory of domestic work<sup>29</sup> (Mayring 2010: 70). Within this process, ideas that came up were noted, which was helpful in developing the final findings.

Through biographic, narrative interviews, general trends can be discovered that are relevant for the whole working segment. They identify a wider, collective thinking behavior and recognition pattern (Hitzler/Eberle 2007: 116). However, through the choice of the form of interviews, the outcome of data is pre-structured (Dannecker/Vossemer 2014: 154), so choosing a certain kind of interview influences the possibilities of what results the research brings.

Due to financial and time constraints involving travel to Mexico, the study was more specific to the immediate information necessary to explore the situation of

---

<sup>28</sup> “Code” is a keyword that summarizes the phrase of an interview. It helps to analyze a big amount of data, like the interviews made for this research. An example of a code would be social background. Under this code, all the information of the worker about her background are marked with this keyword.

<sup>29</sup> In chapter 7, “Applied intersectional theory of domestic work”, the final results are discussed.

domestic workers in Mexico City and the question of, “What are the living realities of paid domestic workers in Mexico City from an intersectional perspective?” Memos were written for each code, which were later categorized. In the grounded theory, memos represent the main tool to analyze data. It describes what the interview partners are saying about one topic, for example, education. The elaborated memos are the basis for the written analysis of the interviews. In this process, it became obvious how the different categories intersect with each other, for example, the category education intersects with income. This is discussed in chapter 7 on applied theory.

### 3.5. Summary

This chapter explains how I found and analyzed my data. First, the literature review was discussed, which was an important basis to having knowledge about domestic work from an academic point of view.

Furthermore, the empirical data collection; narrative and expert interviews as well as participating observation were described. The six narrative interviews with domestic workers were open-ended, in order to gather information about their living realities in a broad context. The experts’ interviews with Marcelina Bautista and Mary Goldsmith were guided interviews to collect extra information, like the development of domestic work in Mexico during the last decades. CACEH's struggles were also discussed, as well as my methods in making contact with the interview partners and conducting the research trip.

The limitations of the research for this thesis were elaborated, such as the issues in conducting interviews and the restriction of the group of interview partners.

Finally, the process of data evaluation was reviewed. Through coding the written interviews, the first step of structuring took place. Further reduction, through paraphrasing and comparison within one code, took place to eventually obtain the final findings. The final results are put into a theoretic framework called intersectionality. This concept to analyze complex situations, like the living realities of domestic workers, is illuminated in the next chapter.

## 4. Theoretical Approach: Intersectionality

The intersectionality theory is a way to analyze complex discrimination as well as privilegation experience that consist of different layers of categories. In the case of my research, there are various factors that impact domestic workers, for example, gender, level of education or socio-economic situation. These factors can lead to the need to work as domestic workers. With this type of work, different forms of discrimination and possibilities are connected. The intersectionality theory analyzes the intersection of these categories that lead to the current living realities.

This theory explains phenomena that consist of different categories such as gender, class and race<sup>30</sup>. For this thesis, it is an appropriate theory to analyze the work and lives of domestic workers, because it allows us to see the interdependence of the categories that lead to their current work situations. It also shows what possibilities this work relation has.

### 4.1. Origins and definition of intersectionality

The initial discussion about intersectionality began in the USA among women of color<sup>31</sup> and their political fight. This goes back to the 19th century, the time of the first women and abolition movements. The political movements focused on the multidimensional suppression of women of color in the Abolitionist Movement and female suffrage (Kuenz 2012: 14). The speech “Ain’t I a Woman” by Sojourner Truth at the Women’s Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, in 1851, led to a lot of excitement. She put the focus on the marginalized position of women of color

---

<sup>30</sup> In section 4.3 “Categories of Intersectionality: a tool for analysis”, categories in general and the categories that have been used in this research are discussed.

<sup>31</sup> Women who are not white and not privileged. This term is used primarily in the USA to describe any woman who is not white.



(Truth cit. after Brah/Phoenix 2004: 77). Furthermore, Anna Julia Cooper talked about the “double enslavement” of women of color, and Mary Church Terrell, the first president of National Association of Colored Women, referred to the harsh discrimination of women of color (Church Terrell 1904 cit. after King 1988: 42).

In the mid-1950s, during the African American Civil Rights Movement, while people of color rebelled against racial segregation and discrimination, women of color again brought their specific situation to the forefront. Authors like Fannie Lou Hamer, Alice Walker, Audre Lorde, Angela Davis, bell hooks and Deborah King expressed their specific interest as women of color and wanted to emphasize their in-between position, specifically between white feminists and male black power movement (Kuenz 2012: 15).

This problem is not a new one. The term “intersectionality” goes back to Kimberly Crenshaw (1991 [1989]) and the image of an intersection where different power axes cross. This new concept, where suppression forms are not added or multiplied, but interrelated, led to a breakthrough in the debate on concepts of inequality. Crenshaw’s metaphor of an intersection, where traffic from different directions cross at one point, is simple and makes this concept easily comprehensible (Crenshaw 2010: 40).

Crenshaw developed her concept in connection with the recruitment and dismissal policies of General Motors in the USA, where women of color suffered from strong discrimination, due to the recruitment and dismissal policies of General Motors. The combination of gender and race put them in an undesirable position, where they had worse working conditions than other employees in the same company. Women of color were discriminated against due to the combination of their race and gender, but no other workers that fulfilled only one of these categories, such as men of color or white women, faced similar discrimination (Klapeer 2014: 60). Crenshaw, a lawyer who dealt with this phenomenon, started to analyze this specific experience of discrimination of women of color and saw the interdependence between both categories (Crenshaw 1991 [1989]).

This approach can, therefore, identify various factors and interconnections within one theory. The factors for discrimination against domestic workers do not combine, but are instead independent and lead to a situation such as this one (Klapeer 2014: 55). It is an approach to analyze phenomena that have inequality at their core, and to realize the opportunities of the researched group. The inter-

sectionality theory tries to focus on interwoven “inequality” factors such as class, race, gender, sexuality and disability (Klapeer 2014: 55).

This theory is used in social sciences to illustrate that inequality is not a result of added categories, such as the ones mentioned above. Intersectionality demonstrates the dependence of different categories that lead to an unequal situation (Klapeer 2014: 56). The focus lies on the crossing, interweaving of social categories and their reciprocal effect on each other (Walgenbach 2011: 113). Through the theory of intersectionality, it is possible to analyze situations of discriminations and possibilities that lay behind various categories such as gender, class, and race. It is important to understand that the focus lies on the specific context the phenomena reside in (Klapeer 2014: 57).

The concept of intersectionality is formed by the perspectives and experience of people who have been “multiply-marginalized”, particularly women of color. This experience is a reflection of racism, sexism, colonial history and other forms of class oppression and politics, and intersectionality seeks to find an adequate frame in which to analyze all of them (Choo/Ferree 2010: 131).

In order to analyze a phenomenon with the intersectional perspective, it is necessary to identify the specific and relevant structural categories from societal context and see the intersections among the identified categories. Additionally, one must also see “unmarked” categories, or those that are generally unnoticed due to their inherently “default” characteristics, such as being white, heterosexual or not disabled (Klapeer 2014: 62).

Through open, qualitative research, categories that were not immediately obvious can appear. This creates new categories that can become equally relevant (Klapeer 2014: 63).

The categories for an intersectional analysis operate on different levels. The complexity of the situation can be shown and elaborated through its analysis (McCall 2005). In her article “The Complexity of Intersectionality”, McCall (2005) introduces the reader to three approaches to be used for the intersectional analysis. First, the anti-categorical complexity approach deconstructs the categories for analysis. The second approach, called inter-categorical complexity, assumes that “scholars provisionally adopt existing analytical categories to document relationships of inequality along multiple and conflicting dimensions”. Finally, the intra-categorical complexity approach acknowledges “the stable and even dura-

ble relationship that social categories represent at any given point in time” (McCall 2005: 1773).

According to the McCall’s theory, it is clear that the use of various methodologies produces differing knowledge and information, and from her point of view, many different methodologies are needed to fully understand and analyze an issue or topic. She further defines methodology as, “a coherent set of ideas about the philosophy, methods and data that underlies the research process and the production of knowledge” (McCall 2005: 1774).

At the core of the inter-categorical approach is the theory that complexity and unequal situations are the result of a group’s social interactions. This approach illustrates those relationships, and it therefore needs provisional categories to do so (McCall 2005: 1784). It is important to see categories not as a static concept, but as changing and adapting concepts that are embedded in social construction (McCall 2005: 1785).

This research can be considered as an intra-categorical approach, as McCall defines it, because it focuses on the social group, the categories they construct and what inequality is shown in the field of domestic workers.

This approach does not only show the existence of different categories, but also the interdependence of different categories. However, it does not assume that categories can be added and lead to double or triple discrimination (Walgenbach 2007: 61). For example, a domestic worker in a poor economic situation may feel the need to accept any work condition the employers offer. On the other hand, a domestic worker, who has some savings and can live for a while without employment, can choose to look for better working conditions and does not need to accept whatever is offered.

## 4.2. Academic discourse on intersectionality

The discourse on intersectionality has lately focused not only on how many categories and which categories are relevant to understand a complex inequality situation, but also the analysis of the categories in their specific social context, and poses questions regarding the origins and reproduction of the named categories

(Riegel 2010: 77). A dynamic phenomenon, such as the one of domestic workers, can be put into its specific context of practices, structures and cultural discourses and be further analyzed; this way, it can truly be understood in its full potential (Klapeer 2014: 64). It also brings the understanding of the effects and functions of the categories in their cultural and social environments (Klapeer 2014: 64).

Hill Collins states that, “intersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and that oppressions work together in producing injustice.” (Hill Collins 2000: 18).

In the theoretical discourse, it is important not to assume that one category, such as gender, is an inequality factor *per se*. This category must be contextualized in its social and historical context. In *Under Western Eyes*, Mohanty points out that white feminists from the Global North need to be careful not to assume that there is a universal patriarchy. She states that there is no homogenous “third-world-woman”, and any analysis of unequal gender relations needs to be put in its specific context of history with a focus on colonialism and racism (Mohanty 1984: 335).

Risman describes the relationship between inequality studies and its context as follows:

We cannot study gender in isolation from other inequalities, nor can we only study inequalities' intersection and ignore the historical and contextual specificity that distinguishes the mechanisms that produce inequality by different categorical divisions (Risman 2004, 443 cit. after Degele/Winker 2007: 3).

Consequently, this theory is particularly appropriate for this thesis, because the phenomenon of domestic workers is complex. Domestic workers in Mexico City face a variety of discrimination categories, including, but not limited to, gender, class and race. Using the intersectional approach, the interdependence of these categories can be appropriately analyzed. Because the intersectional approach is broad and open, it is available for a wide research setting (Kuenz 2012: 17), particularly in social sciences.

Because the concept of intersectionality is analyzing the complexity of “multiple dimensions of social life and categories for analysis” (McCall 2005: 1772), the methodology for analysis is not entirely clear. In this regard, the open narrative

interviews generated the categories that this research ultimately focus on in the analysis: education, experience of violence, generativity, health, income, legal situation, migration, social background and work. The categories ultimately used for this research have been strongly influenced by the concept of Degele and Winker (Degele/Winker 2011).

The current discourse on intersectionality concerns how many categories should be considered and which levels of analysis are convenient (Degele/Winker 2011; Degele/Winker 2007; McCall 2005;).

The discussion on how to conceive the interdependence of different inequality factors is broad. Sauer and Wöhl state that the triad of “race-class-gender” is legendary but, at the same, time empty (Sauer/Wöhl 2008: 252). Kathy Davis is convinced of the opposite, believing that the terms are open and, therefore, give a wide range to use them in different contexts to analyze intersections in social practices (Davis 2010: 58f).

The initial categories are race, class and gender, but in many cases, it is more appropriate to use more precise categories in order to find the intersections of inequality. In this research, domestic workers as a social group are part of different categories, like gender, class and race. It is important to be careful to differentiate between the categories according to their power relation. Not all social differences show a power position (Yuval-Davis 2006: 191). Degele and Winker suggest that intersectionality is:

a system of interactions between inequality-creating social structures (i.e. of power relations), symbolic representations and identity constructions that are context-specific, topic-orientated and inextricably linked to social praxis. The multi-level approach we [Degele and Winker] suggest will be able to analyze the interactions of categories of difference on both a single level and throughout all three levels. (2011: 54).

Degele and Winker not only refer to the identity level, but also to the levels of symbolic representation and social structure. The level of identity construction takes place as individuals create their identity by belonging to a group and through their interactions with other people. When creating categories in the research, it is also important to be aware of how to invalidate them (De-

gele/Winker 2011: 54). The symbolic representation is used to justify norms, ideologies and representations and create a hierarchical system of different categories (Degele/Winker 2011: 54). The social structures, on the other hand, focus on the structural level to identify power relations and their interrelations (Yuval-Davis 2006 in Degele/Winker 2011:54).

### 4.3. Categories of intersectionality: a tool for analysis

In this research, nine categories have been identified, analyzed and elaborated: education, violence, generativity, health, income, legal situation, migration, social background and work.

Education is an important category, as it usually determines the type of work a person will do. To perform domestic work, no formal education is needed, but practical household skills are necessary. As more commercially produced food is demanded by employers, domestic workers need to know how to read instructions on the packaging. Workers also have to know how to read and write, so they can help the children with their homework. Some knowledge has been lost through these changes, such as getting stains out of clothes and cooking without commercial ingredients (Goldsmith 1998: 89). Although one of my interview partners is studying at university in addition to working, most women performing this job have only a basic education. Usually, they finish secondary school and immediately begin working at the age of 16. It is complicated for many to continue further with their studies, because 60 percent of domestic workers are not allowed to attend classes, because their employer prohibits them from doing so (CONAPRED 2011: 39). Some employers even do not allow their domestic workers to leave the house (Sánchez Ambriz 2013: 95). This leads to the next category: experience of violence.

The experience of violence is divided into physical and psychological violence. Within this research, both types of violence have been named and experienced by my interview partners. One interview partner experienced severe physical violence by her partner (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015). Very often, people stay with a

violent partner because there is an emotional dependence, as they are raising children together (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015).

Generativity marks a differentiation between women who are mothers and other women who have not yet become mothers. It also explains the difference between mothers and fathers in the employment market. Generativity makes a difference for domestic workers, because if the worker has children, she cannot take them to work and she needs to find someone to take care of them. One domestic worker had to start to work in order to provide economic support for her sick parents (INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015).

Health is also an important category, because the most domestic workers do not have social security and, therefore, access to the health system is very expensive and difficult. Good health care is expensive and requires a minimum wage to be able to pay for health service when needed.

Income is one of the main categories, as domestic workers in Mexico are often exploited and earn low wages, though there are people who are financially dependent on them. Paid domestic work with hierarchical relations has existed in Mexico since colonial times. During this period, African and indigenous slaves were forced to fulfill services for the colonizers with European origins. They had to cook, wash, sew, take care of children, clean and serve the personal needs of their masters. The characteristics of this service changed over time, and by the end of the colonial period, the majority of domestic workers were receiving some kind of payment, often monetary (Goldsmith 1998: 88). All of my interview partners told me that they are doing their jobs to earn money, either to contribute to the family budget or because they have children or other family members that depend on them. The minimum wage that CACEH fights for is 300 Mexican Pesos (about 16 €) a day, but this is not legally regulated.

The legal situation for domestic workers is not well regulated by the state and many workers do not know their basic labor rights. Although the legal situation is very unclear for domestic workers, many women migrate to Mexico City in order to find work. Fighting for the implementation of basic labor rights can have both positive or negative effects on the work relations between worker and employer. The high rate of migration leads us to the next the category of migration, which shows that many workers leave the countryside to look for a job in Mexico City. Most of the domestic workers in Mexico City are coming from rural areas or pe-

ripheral states to work. This implies different issues faced by many domestic workers, including social isolation, being used to other customs (urban-rural difference) and being unable to find an alternative job closer to home. In the migration process, the network of family and friends is crucial to facilitate the movement from the original place to destination.

The social background of the domestic workers plays a major role, as many domestic workers perform the same work as their mothers do/did. This affects the structure of the family and the expectations of the responsibilities of women. Which background the domestic workers come from influences their expectations for their future workplace.

Work is the final category, which is very broad, because it explores the reason that women start performing domestic work at the first place, the nature of their work conditions in the households and what needs to be changed to give them safe work environments. Throughout recent decades, working tasks have also changed. With more electrical household machines, the work became less manual. The number of household members has decreased in the last decades; therefore, one worker needs to know and fulfill different tasks like cooking and cleaning, because there are no longer several workers working for one household. “They [the families] tend more to live in an apartment [...] [where they] do not have a room for a domestic worker” anymore (Goldsmith 2015). The number of live-out workers that come and go every day has increased significantly in the recent years. Previously, live-in workers shaped the majority of domestic workers (Goldsmith 1998: 89). Live-out workers have the advantage of having more independence to organize their time, which leads also to more freedom. As live-out workers have less contact with their employers, it also leads to less conflict (Stefoni 2009 in Morales 2014: 99). Sometimes, live-out workers work in more than one household and their workload is, therefore, higher. There are different tasks performed by the domestic workers nowadays. Many workers prefer not to work as a live-in worker, because they would feel isolated and it means more work. It can also be difficult to get social contacts and build networks of friends and solidarity as a live-in worker (CONAPRED 2008: 28). However, this form of domestic work is also better paid than live-out work (Morales 2014: 99). Usually, live-out workers have the advantage, in that their support networks are more solid, and they have more knowledge about their labor rights and the capability



to move inside the city (CONAPRED 2008: 29). Live-out workers in Mexico City include a great number of second-generation indigenous, which means their families moved to the city in their infancy or that they were born in the city. Non-indigenous women are also active as domestic workers (CONAPRED 2008: 29).

In Mexico City, the majority of domestic workers have indigenous roots from the poorest parts of the country. The Commission of Human Rights in Mexico City (Comisión de Derechos Humanos del Distrito Federal) announced that more than the half of indigenous people in the city (57 percent) work as domestic workers (CDHDF 2007: 38). In the past few decades, many young girls between the ages of twelve and fourteen started to work as domestic workers in Mexico City (INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015; INR03: Camila, 17.02.2015).

The three initial categories of race, gender and class intersect with these nine categories and are explained within the more specific ones. Gender is a relevant category because the vast majority (90 percent) of domestic workers are female (CONAPRED 2011: 52). Race is a category which is present, as many domestic workers are indigenous women. The majority of domestic workers are from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, which limits their economic and social options – described in the category of class.

## 4.4. Summary

After the explanation of the categories as a tool of analysis, the following section points out how the theory of intersectionality and domestic work can relate.

I chose the intersectional approach due to its ability to identify and analyze not only different categories, but also the relationships among the categories and how they compound the difficulties and possibilities faced by domestic workers in Mexico City. From the intersectional perspective, the women who work in other households to earn money are a part of different categories like education, social background, health, etc. The difficulties they face do not just happen in obvious ways, such as low wages; they are also embedded in structural discrimination that leads to disadvantages in a broader sense, for example, a woman with a secondary school education is more likely to work in the household than a wom-

an with a university degree. Domestic work can also be a chance for women to get a higher income than they would earn in other low-paid jobs. The reasons vary, because some enter domestic work because they say they earn a higher wage; others, because they need no extra qualifications.

In summary, the intersectional theory is a tool to analyze complex situations of inequality analyzing the work and living realities of domestic workers in Mexico City. The origin of this concept is dated back to the 19th century where women and abolition movements made visible the multidimensional suppression of Women of color and their specific suffrage from racism and slavery. The term intersectionality goes back on Crenshaw in 1989, who researched about Women of color employed in the USA who suffered harsh discrimination due to their intersection of race and gender.

Degele and Winker (2007) identified intersections at three levels: identity, symbolic representation and social structures. The categories for an intersectional analysis are tools to analyze the lives of the domestic workers. The categories that have been elaborated and intersect in this thesis, specific to domestic workers in Mexico City, are education, experience of violence, generativity, health, income, legal situation, migration, social background and work. Through the description of these categories in chapter 7 on applied theory, the interdependence among these categories is made visible and the marginalized work positions that domestic workers encounter are discussed at length. The explanation for why domestic work is not considered to be work in society and what problems are connected to this assumption is discussed in the following chapter.

# 5. Concept of domestic work

In this chapter, a general overview of care work is given. In historical development, the living realities of white housewives were at the center of feminist discussions. Black feminist perspectives throughout this process are described and their reasons for disagreeing with mainstream movements are explained. Afterwards, the global trends of domestic work are depicted and definitions of the domestic work are defined and discussed. Finally, the major issues that domestic workers face are discussed.

## 5.1. A feministic perspective on care work

In the 1970s, the new movement of women put a focus, for the first time, on living realities of women from political and academic perspectives. Suddenly, this research about women made their everyday realities visible to the public (Gather/Geissler/Rerrich 2002: 7), but the dominant feminism focused mainly on living realities of white, middle class women. Their main activity was being a housewife. Therefore, the issue of housework performed by women was raised in the hegemonial feminist critique. Many feminists saw free housework performed by women as an expression of patriarchal suppression (Kuenz 2012: 32).

An often-quoted article on the issue about domestic work, where the researchers see domestic work as a labor of love, is "*Arbeit aus Liebe – Liebe als Arbeit*"<sup>32</sup> by Bock and Duden (1977). The researchers claim that "labour of love" is the opposite of "work for money", and that domestic work is gendered and structurally diminished. Therefore, Bock and Duden stated that, through payment, domestic work could be visible and valuable (Bock/Duden 1977: 185). Many feminists agreed, as they saw a wage for housework as the key to emancipation (Kuenz 2012: 33), but some critics understood it as an institutionalization and consolida-

---

<sup>32</sup> "Work out of love – love as work."

tion of gendered division on productive and reproductive work (Kuenz 2012: 33). However, the goal of the campaign “loan for domestic work”<sup>33</sup> was to make the cultural construction of domestic work as private, naturally female, unproductive work visible (Lutz 2008: 17). Domestic work is not socially considered to be work and, therefore, has not reached its own dimension to be considered in society (CONAPRED 2011: 51). Bock and Duden show that, in a capitalist setting, female domestic work is hidden work, necessarily so for this type of economy to function effectively. Housewives are part of a workers’ group that is exploited and they work for free in the reproductive sector under capitalism. They say that the employer gets one worker who is paid, and one housewife that works for free. In the work context, all paid work seems like work, while everything that is not paid for is not work (Bock/Duden 1977: 177f). In the logic of sexual work division, productive work takes place in public spaces, whereas reproductive work takes place in the private sphere (Ceballos López 2014: 338). Therefore, domestic work is a special case, because productive (paid) work takes place in the reproductive space (Colen/Sanjek 1990). This implies an intersection between public and private places.

In the 1970s, western feminism focused for the first time on domestic work as productive work that is not only an issue of the family, but the basis of societal production cycles (Kuenz 2012: 33). These discussions about domestic work and housewives were based on a white, middle class woman. Although their approach was not homogeneous, there is still a certain pattern that can be referred to as the “western” frame (Kuenz 2012: 34). Based on experience of socially privileged white women in Europe and Northern America, the living realities of domestic work were discussed as universal (Kuenz 2012: 34), but class, ethics and other forms of relations between men and women were not considered.

Women from the Global South did not agree with the discussion and claimed that women in general, and particularly women of color, have other issues, as well, and they drew attention to their marginalization of their specific issues and experience. Authors who criticized the “mainstream” discussions about housework are Patricia Hill Collins, Angela Davis, Deborah King, Audre Lorde, bell hooks and

---

<sup>33</sup> Domestic work should be paid monetarily so it is not self-evident. This should also lead to a less asymmetrical power relation between men and women.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty (Kuenz 2012: 34). Many of these writers originate from families where the mothers used to work as domestic workers for white, middle class women (Hill Collins 2001).

At the first international conference of women in 1975, held in Mexico City, feminists from the Global South stated that patriarchal suppression takes place differently in the Global South than in the Global North. Gender discrimination lies below structured discrimination of other categories, such as race and class, not only gender. Race and class are not considered by the dominant white feminists and their concepts of domestic work. In the Global South, the category of gender is not as central as in the Global North. It is important to focus on class, race and gender, because it effects men and women differently across society (Kuenz 2012: 34).

Women of color also claim that concentrating solely on gender blinds us other forms of power suppression. Gendered discrimination forms should not be prioritized over other inequality patterns:

The assertion of commonality, indeed of the universality and primacy of female oppression, denies the other structured inequalities of race, class, religion and nationality, as well as denying the diverse cultural heritages that affect the lives of many women. [...] Feminism has excluded and devalued black women, our experiences, and our interpretations of our own realities at the conceptual and ideological level. (King 1988: 57f)

When taking class and race into consideration, a different reality of women in the Global South becomes apparent. The different experiences of women of color led to a reconsideration of the dominant feminist pattern that had, up to this point, been considered universal.

Although the role of women was to be mother and housewife in the bourgeois ideology of the 19th century, some women were not part of this ideal. Davis states that the housewife, as a phenomenon, has its origins in the middle class, as a symbol of economical welfare (Davis 1982: 218). Black feminism shows that expulsion from the labor market and the public sphere was mainly a reality of socially privileged white women (Kuenz 2012: 35). Davis states that, in this context, women of color were forced to work outside their homes as slaves. They

were not “female enough” to prevent themselves from working on cotton or tobacco plantation. The “natural” characteristics of women being a “nurturing mother, gentle companion and housewife of the husband” referred only to white women (Davis 1982: 11). Women of color had to be housewives and work outside of the house, and they had the burden of both working for a wage and doing housework for free. Usually, in the cases of workers, poor and marginalized women were not solely “housewives” (Davis 1982: 220), as many white, middle class women had the privilege. Smith confirms this process, as in the case of poor, Guatemalan mestizo women, the majority did not have the privilege to stay at home and be a housewife (Smith 1995). King states the following about the difference of women: “[...] the option not to work outside of the home is a luxury that historically has been denied most black women” (King 1988: 71).

One major factor of having the luxury of being a housewife is that the husband earns enough money so the wife can stay at home and does not need to do paid work. Black feminists claim that, because of racial discrimination in the labor market, women of color were forced to work in order to be able to maintain their families. According to King, “As the wives and daughters of men who did not earn a family wage, women of color’s participation in the labor market was crucial to the survival of themselves and their families” (King 1988: 65).

Black feminists indicate that mainstream, white feminists do not pay attention to social, political or anti-racist topics and, therefore, have another focus. White feminists and women focus on their fulfillment of being white women, while women of color are directing their political actions towards basic survival issues (Eichelberger 1977: 16). This different emphasis of black and white feminists can be shown clearly in their perception of the private sphere: the house. White women refer to their houses as a place of suppression of patriarchal patterns, while women of color refer to their houses as a secure place. This protects them from racist attacks from the outside on the basis of slavery. The house is the only place they can be human (Davis 1982: 21).

In Mexico in beginning of the 1970s, urban, feminist student movements questioned the predominant lifestyle and family structures where women had the role of reproductive mothers and housewife (Purkharthofer 2013: 115f). They demanded that private matters are also political matters, and they discussed topics like volunteer motherhood, violence against women and free sexual expres-

sion (Lamas 2006, Tarrés 2007). These feminists originated from the Mexican middle class and, therefore, had privileges according to their education opportunities and access to the labor market (Purkharthofer 2013: 117). Initially, topics in this movement focused on sexuality and the body, while social inequality was left out. Through the influence of left wing activists, the topic of domestic work moved to the center of attention (Purkharthofer 2013: 117). In the uprising of the EZLN<sup>34</sup> in Chiapas in 1994<sup>35</sup>, indigenous women raised the question of the interdependence of class, gender *and* race (Purkharthofer 2013: 121). This led to new challenges for Mexican mainstream feminists, as they now had to include rural and indigenous perspectives in their discussions (Lau Jaivén 2006: 188). In summary, white feminists (in Mexico, the middle class feminists) had a different context to speak of, compared to black feminists (in Mexico, the indigenous and rural women), about the issue of housework. White, socially privileged women saw being a housewife as a form of male dominance. Black feminists did not agree with mainstream household concepts, because the most of the women of color lived a different reality and, therefore, they focused not only on gender issues, but also on class and race, which had a major effect on the whole family.

## 5.2. Global trends of domestic work

This section gives an overview of global trends of domestic work. It explains the importance of domestic work in economies and in which part of the economy it takes place. It also summarizes the general movements in the world that affect domestic work.

In general, paid domestic work is a mostly female occupation and is present in most countries worldwide. This work takes place mainly in urban areas. In recent decades, the migration of workers from rural areas or across borders to find work opportunities in the domestic sector has increased significantly. In some parts of the world, domestic work has also increased child labor, as young girls start to work in domestic service, usually at a distance from their own families

---

<sup>34</sup> Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional – National Zapatista Liberation Army

<sup>35</sup> Signing of the NAFTA Agreement. See section 2.2 on economy.

(D'Souza 2010: 12). Girls and women from indigenous areas, in particular, are frequently employed as domestic workers in households.

Ninety percent of domestic workers are female (CONAPRED 2011: 52). The link between female workers and their labor possibilities are explained by Moreno Ruiz, as follows:

The extent of paid domestic work and its feminization would seem to be linked to issues of gender and socio-economic inequalities as well as to the structure of the labour market that each country or region develops. The share of household workers in the active population may be linked to the options opened for those who are at the bottom of the ladder, - both people from the country and people who may be imported as migrants; the feminization of the occupation in gendered societies will depend on the qualities associated with women and men, with the opportunities opened to both of them and with the conditions offered by paid household work (Moreno Ruiz 2012: 140).

The percentage of domestic work in the national economy varies within different countries globally. Therefore, a “natural necessity” for domestic work in societies is not evident. Its presence and form is a result of particular historical, economic and political contexts (Moreno Ruiz 2012: 140).

Because domestic work is part of the informal economy, gathering specific numbers is difficult. Undocumented migration also makes it difficult to know how many women work as domestic workers (Kirchhoff 2011: 57). But still, in Mexico, CONAPRED succeeded in getting an overview to show the situation of domestic workers more clearly (CONAPRED 2011). Showing a particular discrimination against domestic workers in comparison to workers in other occupations, it is obvious that there is a great gap between what the law states and how the workers are actually treated (Moreno Ruiz 2012: 133). The low wages of paid domestic work makes it possible for middle class households to have someone working for them. It also shows the average wage gap between the domestic workers and their employers (Moreno Ruiz 2012: 140f). In Mexico, households of workers and farmers also receive, under special circumstances, extra support from other members of the household. When they need help in the field of domestic work, it



is even possible for poorer households to pay a domestic worker, as this kind of work does not cost much.

The 100th session of the ILO's Annual Conference was an important turning point for the measurement of this work sector. At this event, Convention 189 on decent work for domestic workers was introduced (Moreno Ruiz 2012: 137). At the moment, Convention 189 is the legal basis for domestic workers' organizations worldwide to fight for decent work conditions for domestic workers (ILO 2011).

Through the work of domestic workers, it allows their employers to work in the public and private sectors of the economy during the day. Without having an external person who performs all the tasks of the household, the employers would not be able to go to work or do their hobbies. These men and women can go to work because they have a domestic worker in their houses, preparing food, cleaning, ironing and washing clothes and taking care of their children, among other tasks (Sánchez Ambriz 2013: 100).

Domestic workers have a long history in Latin America. Even now, there are many workers active in this sector, and the numbers have remained quite constant. Additionally, discrimination patterns against specific ethnic groups and gender continue, as history shows (Chaney/Garcia Castro, 1989). The global economic crisis has greatly influenced the work sector and forced the domestic workers to accept even worse work conditions (Bautista, 2010).

### 5.3. Definition of domestic work

In Spanish, there are many different terms to describe the activity of working in a house(hold). *Trabajo doméstico* refers to the reproductive tasks, whereas *empleo doméstico* focuses on the commercialization of this work (Durin/Eugenia de la O/Bastos 2014: 27). In this thesis, the term "domestic work" is used. I am aware that this term is problematic within different contexts. As mentioned before, in the Mexican context, there are many terms used for domestic workers in a disrespectful and discriminatory matter. I refer to domestic work as paid work.

There has been a campaign in Mexico that is attempting to determine an appropriate name for the profession of domestic worker. The majority of names currently used to refer to domestic workers are discriminating or offensive.

There are a variety of names that have been established in society, which are even used by youth to refer to a person that is not well seen<sup>36</sup>. This status affects domestic workers, disqualifies them, diminishes their self-esteem and stigmatizes the women (Sánchez Ambriz 2013: 97). Having participated in surveys in public spaces, the domestic workers themselves chose to be called *empleadas del hogar*<sup>37</sup> (Sánchez Ambriz 2013: 98).

There are many definitions of domestic work. What are the characteristics of the domestic work? Domestic work takes place in households. A domestic worker is employed by a person to work in her/his household part-time or full-time. Domestic workers may be, for example, cooks, servants, nurses, child-minders, carers for elderly or disabled persons, chauffeurs, porters or gardeners (Caritas Internationalis 2009).

The ILO defines domestic workers in Article 1 of the draft convention “Decent Work for Domestic Workers”, stating:

a) the term ‘domestic work’ means work performed in or for a household or households; (b) the term ‘domestic worker’ means any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship; (c) a person who performs domestic work only occasionally or sporadically and not on an occupational basis is not a domestic worker (ILO 2011).

This statement shows that there is no exact definition of domestic workers in the ILO. During the International Labor Conference in 2010, there was a long discussion about the definition of domestic workers. Employers and workers were arguing for their own advantage:

the employers’ group attempted to restrict the definition, while the workers’ group advocated for an inclusive definition. They referred to the fact that the sector is characterized by a huge variety of concrete employment relations that of-

---

<sup>36</sup> Information from an informal conversation with domestic workers.

<sup>37</sup> “Employee of the home.”

ten move between formal and informal, legal and irregular, but that workers' rights need to be granted for all workers. (Heimeshoff/Schwenken 2011:5).

This shows that having a clear definition is important for including all people working for others in the household and for enforcing their labor rights. In Mexico, in the Federal Labor Act, "domestic work" is defined as taking place in private households, excluding hotels, restaurants, hospitals, boarding schools and similar workplaces (ILO 2010).

An important date for domestic workers is the 22nd of July. Since 1983, at the conference of II Congreso Feminista Latino Americano, this has been celebrated as the International Day of Domestic Workers. The purpose of this day is to make domestic workers visible and recognize "invisible" domestic workers. This international day also aims to fight for social value of domestic work, regardless of whether it is paid or not (CONAPRED 2008: 96).

A distinction of domestic workers is made between live-in and live-out workers. "Live-in worker" defines a person that lives in the same house with the family he/she works for. These workers usually see their families and friends only on their days off, meaning on Sunday. "Live-out workers", on the other hand, come and leave their workplace every day. They usually live with their own families and are working for another family for few hours a day. Live-out workers do not necessarily work for the same family, as some work for different households throughout the week. In Mexico, live-out workers make up only fourteen percent of all domestic workers (CONAPRED 2011: 36). This means that the majority of all domestic workers are live-in workers. The advantages and disadvantages of being a live-in and live-out worker will be described in the next section. In the following part, the issues domestic workers face are described.

## 5.4. Issues connected to domestic work

Domestic work is connected to many different issues, like labor rights, dependence relations between worker and employer and certain work conditions. In this section, these issues are more closely examined and explained.

A big issue that Mexican domestic workers face is that they are not considered “real” workers by the Federal Labor Law. Although they are explicitly integrated in Chapter XIII, labor rights are not precisely regulated. It is only stated that:

the law prohibits any verbal and physical bad treatment of DWs (Domestic workers) (Art. 337, I), prescribes sufficient breaks to eat and drink (Art. 333) and a comfortable and clean room to sleep for live-in DWs (Domestic workers) (Art. 337 II), (Ley Federal del Trabajo, Art. 331-343) it neither regulates working hours, nor determines a minimum salary (Kirchhoff 2011: 70).

CACEH, among others, is demanding a wide-ranging reform of Chapter XIII (Bautista 2015) to provide exact labor rights, so that domestic workers have legally assured working conditions.

Another issue for domestic workers is that their legal situation is not known by the workers themselves and their employers. Marcelina Bautista asserts that, “one of the biggest problems that domestic workers face is that they do not have sufficient information to defend their rights.” (Sánchez Ambriz 2013:96).

The ignorance of many domestic workers regarding their own labor rights also gives an advantage to the employer. If the workers knew their rights, they could use them to defend themselves. Not knowing their rights leads to less reporting of abuses, and, when abuses are reported, hardly any persecution follows (BBC Mundo 2006). “The low importance of the existing legal regulations is also reflected by the fact that only five percent of the nearly two million DWs in Mexico possess a signed labour contract.” (ADITAL 2010). “Correspondingly, unjustified dismissal (without severance pay) is a common problem” (Iglesias 2010).

Another point in the personal relationship between workers and employers is the fear that workers have of their employers, as the workers often depend on them. Through the high economical pressure that lies on the workers, knowing about labor rights and their enforcement is not necessarily in their favor, because they are afraid to lose their jobs, because their incomes are needed for survival<sup>38</sup>. This structural dilemma consequently means bad work conditions. This unequal working relationship is in favor of the employer, as she or he has the power to

---

<sup>38</sup> More information about this dilemma is discussed in section 7.1.3 on education and income.

determine working conditions. This power relation has not changed for a long time, which is why it is sometimes referred to as modern slavery (Sánchez Ambriz 2013: 95). The desire of many domestic workers is to have a better life, better paid job and more freedom. To move socially upward is difficult as a domestic worker, due to factors such as low education and missing alternatives in the labor market. Therefore, domestic workers usually only move horizontally. D'Souza explains this phenomenon as follows:

Many enter domestic work as a temporary strategy for survival. However, given the average low level of education of domestic worker and their lack of other alternatives in the labour market, they remain trapped in the circle of domesticity and in a situation of deepening economic exploitation and social immobility. Horizontal mobility is a common trend as domestic workers often change their place of work. Many women move from live-in to live-out work thus acquiring a certain degree of freedom. However, upward mobility to other jobs in the hospitality sector is limited in most places by the lack of certified skills training for this occupation (D'Souza 2010: 11).

In this study, D'Souza concludes that upward mobility for paid domestic workers and being able to leave the workplace every day is a big liberation for women, but many other factors make it difficult, for example, going back home. When one lives in another person's house, it is usually far away and, therefore, it takes a lot of time to get there. Paying rent is a disadvantage if one's income is very little. Domestic work sometimes is undertaken because it offers a place to live, food and a wage; it is not about vocation. New migrants from rural areas prefer to start working as live-in workers in the beginning, because it offers them everything for a living and they can start saving money (CONAPRED 2012: 2f). Usually, domestic work is not well paid, but having one's own place to live gives the worker more autonomy, and makes it easier to manage their work hours (D'Souza 2010: 11).

One of the main issues that domestic workers have is that their work takes place in private spheres. The public space is the political space, where workers can fight for different treatment and realize their rights, but in the private sphere, it is hard to make their requests regarding the working conditions visible (Hoyos

Carrero 2013: 5). These workers are invisible, as they perform their work in private households; therefore, their issues are not in the public eye. The employer can easily put pressure on their workers, as their relationship is not publicly viewed or controlled by any institution.

The president of CONAPRED, Ricardo Bucio, says this is modern slavery, because there is no formal agreement of the work, no labor contract and not even a clear definition of the duties of domestic workers. The employer decides the type of benefits, which varies between individual employers. There is also no legal framework of working hours; sometimes, workers are not even allowed to leave the house. In the world of domestic work, considerable inequality between employer and worker is recognized (Sánchez Ambriz 2013: 95). According to Bucio (CONAPRED), the structure of society has not changed significantly since colonial times. In this system, there is a dominant culture in which a minority of the society has power over a wide social group (Sánchez Ambriz 2013: 95). This unequal power relation in society, connected to other structures that lead to strong inequality, makes it possible for employers to have power over domestic workers and the situation of their workers.

Mary Goldsmith, a researcher from Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana (UAM) Xochimilco, states that the economic crisis and the unemployment rate in Mexico force domestic workers to accept the low wages and bad working conditions that are imposed (Goldsmith in Sánchez Ambriz 2013: 93). These two economic factors, which cannot be influenced by individual domestic workers, are crucial for domestic workers, and they often do not have any other options other than to accept the conditions imposed by their employers. In this case, again, the employer has the power to decide how the worker has to fulfill his or her work. Because of the recent economic crisis, there has been a change in the socio-economic group of domestic workers. "Young people, who finished their studies, as well as professional women between 50-60 years, increasingly started to take up jobs as DWs (Domestic Workers)" (Organizacion Editorial Mexicana 2009). This could imply different power relations, as well educated workers may be able to more easily access information.

According to Camus and Eugenia de la O, the relations of serving not only reflect the social order, but also reproduce and naturalize them in a way that employers are socially positioned over the domestic workers (Camus/Eugenia de la O 2014:

168). According to this hierarchical relation, employers think that their domestic workers will stay with them for many years and that the workers' daughters are also at their service. Some even think they have the right to surveil the moral aspects of the life of the worker (Camus/Eugenia de la O 2014: 168). Within the group of domestic workers, there are different positions. There are a variety of domestic workers, as some receive privileges from their employers, while others have low education and receive low income (Camus/Eugenia de la O 2014: 168). Also employers represent a varied group, as some have domestic workers because they are part of the middle-high class and want someone who serves. Others are working themselves and have the necessity and economical possibility to have someone to take over these tasks.

## 5.5. Summary

In the 1970s, the women's movement focused mainly on the living realities of the white, middle class women, who considered it their main task to be a housewife. The academic and political discussion about domestic work, realized by external persons and as a paid profession, arose immediately as a critique from the feminists of women of color. Domestic work was considered, in these discussions, as an undervalued asset of the capitalist economy system, as it was carried out for free by usually white, middle class women and very poorly paid to women of color who worked for other families as domestic workers.

In Mexico, feminist movements focused on sexuality and body. Strong social inequality was only discussed when left wing activists put it at the center of their discussion. It was in this way that paid domestic work became a central topic to be discussed.

Domestic work is mainly performed by women in urban areas. This work sector's presence is a result of historical, economic and political development.

In general, domestic work pays poorly and, therefore, can be afforded not only by upper class households, but also by middle and occasionally low income households. Having a domestic worker fulfill household tasks allows employers to go to work. The discussion about the concept of domestic work leads eventually to the

definition of this work. Several explanations are discussed, as some focus on the “formal” character of the work relation, while others focus on the full-time activity of performing household tasks. In general, all tasks done in the household are included, like washing clothes, cleaning the house and cooking, and can be extended to taking care of children and pets. Domestic workers are distinguished between live-in and live-out workers. Live-in workers reside in the houses of their employers during their work time, for example, Monday to Friday. Live-out workers leave their employer’s houses every day to sleep in his or her own house.

The legal context of domestic work is complicated, because Mexican federal law is insufficient for this particular sector. Civil society is demanding a reform to have exact labor rights defined and enacted for domestic workers. As a basis for the new labor law, ILO Convention 189 can be used, as it demands clear rights for decent work conditions. General problems concerning domestic workers’ legal situation are that workers and employers do not have sufficient information to fulfill legal requirements. Furthermore, the worker-employer relationship makes it difficult for the worker to insist on labor rights. Often, the worker depends on the income made through domestic work and is almost forced to stay in their current situation. Domestic work can also be used as a form of independency, however, because women are able to leave their (rural) home and work and live in a household, in an environment where they can eventually study and save money.



## 6. Domestic work in Mexico City

In this chapter, I will present statistics and specific numbers regarding the domestic work in Mexico and Mexico City. A brief, historical summary of the development in the last decades is given. Finally, a description of the political organization of domestic workers in Latin America and Mexico is presented in the last section.

Up to today, there are still many active workers in this sector, and their numbers have been largely constant ever since recording. This also applies to discrimination patterns against specific ethnic groups and gender, as the history shows (Chaney/Garcia Castro 1989). As already discussed, women dominate the field of domestic work (90 percent) (CONAPRED 2011: 52).

In 1981, Goldsmith stated that the situation of domestic workers had not changed since the 17th century, referring to low wages, unlimited working hours and lack of access to social security (Goldsmith 1981). She also claims that these issues have been marginalized by academics and politics.

In the 1980s and 1990s, research about domestic work was at its peak. Many theses, books and articles were published about paid domestic work in Mexico and throughout Latin America. In Mexico, notable authors on this issue included Garduño, Grau, Leff, Luna and Salazar (Goldsmith 1981).

In the 1970s, the politicization of feminism in Mexico developed differently in comparison to that in Europe and the USA. The issue of domestic work was taken from feminist groups to left wing political parties and independent labor unions. This shows a minimization of this topic in general. Because the context in Mexico was very different, feminists had to realize that this issue was full of personal contradictions. They had privileges according to their class that other women did not have (Goldsmith 1981).

A study about domestic work in the USA by Ehrenreich and English shows the change of its concept from the 18th to the 19th century. In the 18th century, cleanliness standards were much lower than today. Therefore, women used most of their time to produce clothes and other materials for their houses. After indus-

trialization in the 19th century, the activities changed, as proletarian women started to work in the fabrics industry and middle class women had more time at their disposal. Consequently, they started to have a mystical relationship with their “home”, and the “housewife”, with all its implications, was born (Goldsmith 1981).

Most of the domestic workers in Mexico are Mexicans; few of them are born in a foreign country. Mexico is an emigrant country to the USA, where many female migrants work in households (Fitzgerald 2008: 2 in Kirchhoff 2011: 70). Internal migration in Mexico is one of the key characteristics of domestic work. About 80 percent of the national migrants are indigenous women looking for a job in urban areas to improve their living standards and that of their families, because they come from poor, rural areas (Kirchhoff 2011: 70). As mentioned previously, domestic work is mostly an urban phenomenon – 83 out of 100 domestic workers fulfill their work in an urban environment (INEGI 2012: 4). In 2002, there were about 205,000 people who performed this kind of work in Mexico City (Bautista 2006: 163). Approximately nine percent of domestic workers speak their native languages (INEGI 2012: 4). Often, they do not have Spanish as their first language, and many start working in the city at a very young age. The majority (69.4 percent) of domestic workers are between 20 and 49 years old (INEGI 2012: 4) and have very little education, because they usually leave school in order to work and earn money to support their family (BBC Mundo 2006, Henkel 2010 in Kirchhoff 2011: 70).

## 6.1. Political organization of domestic workers in Mexico

Important political developments in the recent decades took place in Mexico and Latin America. In this section, these developments are described, including what happened and what effects it has on domestic workers in the region.

An important date for domestic workers is the 22 of July. In 1983, at the conference of II Congreso Feminista Latino Americano, the international day of domes-

tic worker was created, regardless of whether or not it is paid work (CONAPRED 2008: 96).

The 100th Session of the ILO annual conference was an important catalyst for the measurement of this sector. At this event, Convention 189 on decent work for domestic workers was introduced, and this was an important movement because it was the first time, globally, that a legal base for domestic workers was established (Moreno Ruiz 2012: 137). Right now, the Convention 189 is the legal base for domestic workers' organizations worldwide to fight for decent work conditions (ILO 2011).

[a]s previously referenced, domestic workers are entitled to the same basic rights as those available to other workers, including weekly days off, limits to hours of work, minimum wage coverage, overtime compensation, social security, and clear information on the terms and conditions of employment. The new standards oblige governments that ratify the convention to protect domestic workers from violence and abuse, to regulate private employment agencies that recruit and employ domestic workers, and to prevent child labor in domestic work (HRW 2013).

At the moment, another major issue for CACEH, and for the domestic workers worldwide, is the ratification of Convention 189. The convention is a great global achievement, as it provides a legal basis for all domestic workers and clarifies the work relation between the employer and worker (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015). It is also necessary to implement the Convention in national labor laws for domestic workers, to have a legal base in case they are violated and can be fought for. To get the national labor law, they first need to be considered formal workers, and then they can count on any support any other workers have right now.

International coordination between domestic workers' organizations and international standards for domestic work leads to an improvement of the situation of workers in this sector, and this needs to be emphasized. One of the main actors in this process is the ILO. This organization succeeded in realizing Convention 189, in which the working conditions for domestic workers are defined. In Recommendation 201, countries that have ratified Convention 189 find a more detailed

guide on how to implement the Convention into practice (Eugenia de la O 2014: 42).

As Michell Bachelet, executive director of UN Women, states: “Convention 189 and its recommendation is a matter of social justice and dignity. It is an awaited and wide recognition of the extraordinary work of millions of women employed as domestic workers in the entire world.” (Sánchez Ambriz 2013:97).

CACEH is a support organization for all domestic workers that are active or looking for work in Mexico City. Its main goal is to promote labor rights of domestic workers in Mexico. They also focus on placing workers with new employers, helping workers when they have any issues related to work and, most of all, building awareness among the domestic workers, informing them about their rights and making them more confident about their work (CACEH 2015).

In 2000, Marcelina Bautista founded CACEH as an autonomous space to fight for the demand of domestic work. CACEH offers workshops on legal rights, self-esteem, human development and more. It also helps domestic workers to solve problems with their employers, if they could not do so before, and, in some cases, they offer legal help. Another function of CACEH is to show domestic workers how to improve their practical skills; they also offer to place workers in other households. When the worker begins to work in a new household, the worker and employer secure a contract to ensure the minimum labor conditions for the domestic workers (Sánchez Ambriz 2013: 97). The team that is supporting Marcelina Bautista are Rosario Ortiz, former deputy of PRD (Partido de la Revolución Democrática), specialized in labor rights of unionized women; Mary R. Goldsmith, researcher of Women, Identity and Power in the UAM Xochimilco; and Angelica Gonzalez, lawyer (Sánchez Ambriz 2013: 98).

One of CACEH's noticeable goals is to spread information about the labor rights and obligations of domestic workers. One of my interview partners is a part of this unit. It is difficult to get in contact with domestic workers, because they work and live in different houses. Thus, the organization sends a small group of members with flyers with the information to parks on Sundays, where the domestic workers usually spend their day off and rest. Then, they approach the workers and start the conversation. This way, trust between the rights promoter and the domestic worker is created, and finally, they can talk about the organization and the labor rights they promote (INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015). A big issue in this

process is that women do not like to identify themselves as domestic workers, because there is a lot of shame connected to it. Mexican society does not see them as workers with labor rights, and they are often treated in a disrespectful manner (CONAPRED 2012: 5).

One active member of CACEH is convinced that workers need to know their rights and stay in contact with the organization in order to develop this process of promoting the rights and achieve that domestic work is recognized as a dignified work (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015).

CACEH wants to make domestic work a dignified work, a formal work that requires contracts, is supported by a labor union, and most of all, is professionalized. Its goals are to offer courses in how to perform domestic work and to give certificates to course participants and, in this way, make it more professional, because, so far, “any woman” can do domestic work (Bautista 2015).

A problem the organization commonly faces is that not all members are reliable. Some domestic workers use the organization to solve a problem with their own employers, but they do not want to participate in workshops or political activism to improve the general situation of domestic work (Bautista 2015).

Therefore, starting a labor union is an important part of achieving coordination of workers in order to show collective power in fighting for legal rights in the national legal system. During the research, the process of founding a labor union was present. After the achievements Marcelina Bautista had in her national and international work for organizations of domestic workers, one important step was still missing; a labor union for domestic workers in Mexico. It took a long time of preparation, until the first labor union of domestic workers was founded. On September 11, 2015, the first labor union of domestic workers in Mexico, National Union of Domestic Workers (SINACTTRAHO), was established. This is the result of fifteen years of fighting to make domestic workers visible on a labor and social level. Workers from different parts of Mexico (Puebla, Colima, Chiapas, Distrito Federal and Estado de México) united to form this union. Marcelina Bautista was instrumental in achieving this important step for the domestic workers. It is

a crucial step to formalizing this sector and making domestic workers stronger in the institutional system (Bautista 2015) (IDWF 2015 b)<sup>39</sup>.

In Mexico City, Marcelina Bautista organized the First National Forum of domestic workers and signed a pact, with the commitment of everyone involved, to form the first national domestic workers' union in 2015. This pact was supported by representatives of CONAPRED, the Ministry of Labor and Employment (STyFE), as well as academic and civil organizations in the meeting (IDWF 2015 a).

In 1988, Marcelina Bautista was one of the founders of the Confederation of Latin America and the Caribbean of Domestic Workers (CONLACTRAHO)<sup>40</sup>. Its slogan is "*no basta tener derechos*",<sup>41</sup> meaning that we need to have consciousness about the situation of domestic workers and improve this process. The reason for establishing this political association was the absence of labor rights for domestic workers. The only way to defend themselves is to get organized internationally and fight together for labor rights (Sánchez Ambriz 2013: 96).

Marcelina Bautista was the prime secretary of the organization from 2006 to 2012. During her time working for CONLACTRAHO, the organization started fighting for the ratification of the ILO's Convention 189 and Recommendation 201 (Sánchez Ambriz 2013:97).

In 2013, 75 percent of the Mexicans had little or no confidence in Mexican government, according to Latinobarometer (Latinobarometro 2013). Therefore, movements like those of the labor union for domestic workers or CACEH are necessary to fight for a change in the law and improve the situation of domestic workers.

Domestic work mainly takes place in the informal market, where a legal basis is missing. Convention 189 is an important, global legal foundation for domestic workers that should be implemented in Mexican employment law. CACEH fights for labor rights of domestic workers in order to improve the working conditions of these workers. The recent foundation of the labor union for domestic workers is important, as the workers are treated as other formal workers and have the same labor rights.

---

<sup>39</sup> Information from an informal conversation on 26.08.2015 with Marcelina Bautista.

<sup>40</sup> In Spanish: Confederación Latinoamericana y del Caribe de las Trabajadoras del Hogar

<sup>41</sup> "It is enough not to have rights."

The legal situation of domestic workers is only one category that has been elaborated in this thesis. In the next chapter, the different categories that resulted from the narrative interviews are presented and interconnected.

# 7. Applied intersectional theory of domestic work

In this chapter, the categories that have been elaborated through the narrative interviews with domestic workers are described and analyzed. This information is supported with statistics and information from the literature found about domestic workers.

## 7.1. Identified categories

The analysis of the interviews is based on the twelve-category system established by Winker and Degele (2007: 26). I chose this model, as it is an adequate way to analyze the complex life situations of domestic workers. I made minor modifications in order to get a broader perspective on the phenomena of domestic workers. The basic categories of race, gender and class are not specific enough to identify the intersections in the case of domestic workers. Additionally, one of the core categories in this thesis is “work”, which is also listed in the aforementioned model of Winkler and Degele (2007: 26), along with education, generativity, income and social background. In addition to these categories, I have identified the categories of violence, health, legal situation and migration, which brings the number of categories discussed in this thesis to a total of nine.

These nine categories are consolidated in five groups. The first one is work. In this section the general opportunities and challenges domestic workers face are discussed, because they are always connected to their work condition. It gives a general overview of the situation in Mexico City. The second group first describes and then shows the intersection of social background, generativity and migration. Social backgrounds describes the family roots of the workers. In generativity the roles of the mothers and the implications as domestic workers is described. Finally, most domestic workers leave their home regions to work in the urban center. This movement has major influence in the family structure. The



third group describes the intersection of education and income. These two categories are closely linked, as education is a matter of available resources such as time and income. The fourth group describes the violent experiences domestic worker have experienced. In the chapter about health, access to social security and health institutions is discussed, because hardly any worker can cover this basic need. Finally, in the fifth chapter the legal situation and changes about labor law and rights are discussed.

### 7.1.1 Work

In this section, the intersection of the different categories with work of domestic workers is shown. The work conditions and the tasks of domestic workers, as well as the reasons why domestic workers enter this job, are discussed.

The social and economic devaluation of domestic work has been detected in the studies of various researchers (e.g.: Chaney/García 1993, Goldsmith, 1990, 1998, etc.). In these studies, the devaluation is detected because of the links of different axes like gender, class and ethnics. Discourses about the traditional norms of femininity and masculinity shape the powerful “gender division of labor” (Moreno Ruiz 2012: 153). The discrimination against girls/women is still present, and which can be shown in the way daughters are treated in their families (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015). Housework is an obligation to be done by the female members of the family. The conservative patriarchal system still works in most families, especially in rural areas (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015).

Domestic work, such as cleaning the house and taking care of the family, are seen as the obligation of women, which is the reason why domestic work is not considered to be work (Durin 2014: 23).

In particular, the unequal balance between worker and employer needs to be considered. The historically-developed asymmetry in power as it relates to race, class and gender makes this job one of the most discriminated jobs in Mexico (Bautista 2015). Because of the lack of better job opportunities, the worker enters this asymmetrical workforce. This unequal power relation between the em-

ployer and domestic worker goes back to the “cultura de servidumbre”<sup>42</sup> in colonial times. At that time, the foundation for class society was established, and ever since, it has influenced the conceptions and practices of social relations between people (Camus/Eugenia de la O 2014: 147).

It results that from the point of view of the employer, domestic workers are sometimes seen as a part of the family. Only one out of six women I talked to sees herself as a part of the family she works for. She worked for the same people for about 20 years and says she is respected (INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015), but she also makes it clear that she works so she can earn for a living.

The line between being a part of the family and being a worker at the same time is very difficult to draw (CONAPRED 2012: 5; D’Souza 2010: 26). Because the work takes place in a private environment, the tasks of the worker permit the worker to go into intimate places of a family’s life, and they know exactly what is going on in their employer’s house. The asymmetric power position between worker and employer shows the ambivalent relation between the both. The worker knows secrets and is asked for loyalty. This loyalty can also be enforced due to the higher power position of the employer. On the other hand, the worker can gain power with the secrets that the family wants to keep (INR03: Camila, 17.02.2015). Still, it is important to keep distance in order to make clear that it is a work relation and not a personal relation, or other patterns where the exploitation of the worker are facilitated (Bautista 2015).

Yet from 2003 to 2005, statistics show an increase of the average age of domestic workers of four years – that is, the average age has increased from 34 years to 38 years old (CONAPRED 2008: 30). One interview partner confirmed this trend, as she explained that, before, many young girls started to work as domestic workers at the age of twelve. Nowadays, they do not start so young (INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015).

Beginning to work at a very young age is connected to various problems; for example, if girls start to work at a very young age like twelve or fourteen, they can-

---

<sup>42</sup> Cultura de servidumbre – culture of serving: a concept where the domination-subordination relation between groups of people leads to one subordinated group that works for the dominating group in giving personal services or traditional work (Camus, Eugenia de la O 2014:146).

not attend school. This has effects for the rest of their lives, because their lack of education prevents them from accessing a wide range of future job opportunities.

The treatment of domestic workers by their employers varies immensely. As you can expect, some employers treat their workers with respect and give them recognition for what they are doing with money or praise (INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015; INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015). If the workers were asked directly if they feel discriminated against, they would usually deny it, but in the conversations I had with them, they made comments on being discriminated against and feeling discriminated (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015; INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015; INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015). At this point, it is crucial to consider the personal relationship worker and employer has. The employers open their doors to a strange person and invite them into their most private spaces. On the other hand, the worker depends on the job and does his/her best to keep the jobs. In every human relation, sympathy and other factors can influence how one treats other people. Treatment is a subjective matter at many different levels, and can therefore be misunderstood from both sides. Some employers treat their workers indifferently and are not interested in fulfilling labor rights (INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015; INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015). The same employer can treat two employees differently, wherefore psychological research needs to examine why this is. This unequal treatment needs to be kept to a minimum. Employer-worker relationships are as unique as any social relationships are (INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015; INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015).

Among my interview partners, all workers have both positive and negative experience with their employers. On one hand, some employers encourage their employees to study (INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015; INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015; INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015) and provide them with study equipment or materials, but on the other hand, the same employer treats the workers poorly by, for example, shouting at them or expecting punctuality even when the employer himself/herself is not punctual (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015). The provision of materials leads to a dependence relationship. The workers feel they owe something the employers and feel the pressure to stay with them, just because of everything the employers provide for the workers. Furthermore, the “family” bond between

worker and employer is a reason to stay<sup>43</sup>. Ultimately, the treatment can be ambivalent for the workers.

One worker explains that the treatment of her employers completely changed when they saw the flyers of CACEH. Suddenly, they treated her indifferently, which made her feel uncomfortable. This discomfort led to a change of her workplace (INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015). During the last few weeks that Ximena spent with the family, they treated her badly. Others commented that during the interview at CACEH with their employers, their employers promise to respect the workers' rights, but after one week, they changed their treatment and did not fulfill what was initially promised (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015). A strategy to get out of unfair treatment from their employers is to not do the tasks as fast as usual, which is stressful (INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015).

There are various reasons why many domestic workers stay in households where they are treated badly. One of the major factors is that they are afraid of the new workplace, because the new employers could treat them worse than the current ones. One of my interview partners said, that most domestic workers have this fear (INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015). She says that sometimes, employers even tell the workers that no other house will give her what she receives right now. By doing this, they keep the workers quiet.

Si, entonces que muchas personas tienen el miedo de salir de las casas. Porque pues, o sea, los mismos empleadores los dicen que las van a tratar mal. O que no va tener las oportunidades que tienen con ellos. Entonces ellos se quedan con esas ideas. Y al momento, de querer tomar decisión o el cambio de trabajo, dicen no. Que tal si me tratan mal? [...] Así como que con muchos miedos, nos perdemos de varias oportunidades (INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015).<sup>44</sup>

Another important factor in the decision to stay with the employer is how many people depend on the worker. If there is a family that needs to be nurtured, the

---

<sup>43</sup> Find more details about the workers' feelings regarding being a part of the employers' family in section 7.1.2 on social background, generativity and migration.

<sup>44</sup> Yes, so many people are afraid to leave the houses, because the same employers tell them they will treat them badly or that they will not have the same opportunities as they have with [the current employers]. So [the workers] stay with these ideas, and at the moment of making a decision or changing their workplace, they say no. What if they treat me badly? So with all the fear, we [worker] lose several opportunities.

worker will stay in unfair and uncomfortable work conditions, because of the urgent need of money. Usually they accept the bad conditions, because they are dependent on the income (INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015; INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015).

Some domestic workers consider their work conditions very good, as they feel comfortable in their working environment. Camila comments she received very kind treatment and a lot of help from her employer; for example, she could travel for a month and come back to her workplace (INR03: Camila, 17.02.2015). Regina mentions she receives very good feedback about her work, which boosted her self-esteem and makes her like doing the job (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015).

Others mentioned in the interviews that they had bad experience, like extensive work, bad treatment, disrespectful treatment and even sexual harassment. Two of my interview partners who experienced this kind of treatment left and looked for a new work place (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015; INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015). One worker explains her positive work conditions with her employer and mentions all the encouragement she receives from her employer:

Nos (her and the co-worker) ha puso mucho a que estudiemos por esto .. ella es la que: “Y estudia y echale ganas. No toda mi vida te vas a quedar aqui de haciendo me comida. Tienes que salir adelante y todo.” [...] Y pues la seniora (the employer): “Ensenia las a tus hijas, que tu puedes y impulsalas y todo.” Eso es su parte buena! como todo, Porque pues luego hay patrones que la verdad, ahora si que (mitan) su distancia. Y lo que tu hagas no les importa. Es tu vida... Y ella (The employer) nos ayuda, y nos pregunta: “ya vas a la escuela? ya hiciste tu examen?” (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015).<sup>45</sup>

When working in this sector, often there is no space for further education, due to extended working hours and a private life apart from working. One interview partner stated that she had worked for an employer who did not allow her to go

---

<sup>45</sup> She helped [me and my co-worker] to study, and [the employer] gives us support like: “Keep up and study. You are not going to stay with us forever, making me food. You have to move forward.” And the [employer says]: “Show your daughters that you can do it, push them.” This is the good part, because sometimes there are employers that keep a distance and they do not care what you do. It is your life. And [the employer] helps us and asks us, “Are you going to the school? Did you do your exams?”

to school (INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015). In the study of CONAPRED (2011), it was found that 60 percent of domestic workers were not allowed to go to school because of their employers (CONAPRED 2011: 39). In the case of the interview partners I talked to, three out of six are actively supported by their employers to study (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015; INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015; INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015). Their working conditions are adjusted so they can attend classes or study during the day. Domestic work, with encouragement and support to study, allows Lorena to continue school (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015), which her parents could not provide. Once she graduates high school, her job options will become broader (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015).

One interview partner states that she works as a domestic worker, because she has little education and there were almost no other options for her at the time she entered the job. For her, it is especially difficult to finish her studies because she has two daughters that she needs to take care of on her own. After work, she often feels too tired to study. In this case, the combination of parenting, working and studying is a great responsibility that can cause a lot of stress (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015).

The weekends are the only time the live-in domestic workers can go and see their families, which does not leave a lot of time to study for university. It requires support from employers, a good organization of the time and a lot of will to succeed. Having more money and a better paid job would leave more time to study and see their families.

Regina chose to work in a household, so she can spend time with her family on the weekends. Other jobs, like waitressing, do not allow that (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015).

In agreement with Jelin (1997) and Goldsmith (1990), there is evidence that there is a difference of living situations for women of different ages, depending on the generation they belong to. Young and single women tend to be live-in workers, while older and married women tend to go to work and return home the same day (Durin/Eugenia de la O/Bastos 2014: 25).

In case of live-in workers, a room and food is provided by the employers. This would result in less monetary income, but as the worker lives there, working hours are higher (INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015; INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015). In all cases of the interview partners, live-in or live-out, employers offer food for the

workers. One worker emphasized that one meal for an eight hour working day is the right of the workers (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015). Live-out workers have higher costs, as they need to pay rent, food (they consume at home) and transportation costs, in comparison to the live-in workers, who have an easier time saving money because they hardly have any expenses. One mother states that her house is 1.5 hours away from her workplace, so it takes three hours to go to and from work (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015). The long distance between the houses of the live-out workers and their employers is a factor that costs workers a lot of time. It also takes them so long, because they have to use public transport; private vehicles and taxis would be too expensive.

Some women, before they get married, work as live-in domestic workers to earn money. Two of my interview partners are young women that are working as live-in workers and completing their studies at the same time (INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015; INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015). Often, as soon as the young women get married and have children, they either give up their jobs as live-in domestic workers and change to live-out workers, or they look for another job that allows them to take care of kids (Goldsmith 1990: 237). One interview partner started as a live-out domestic worker, because she has two young daughters and the job allows her to be paid and still be able to take care of her children before and after school. The informality of domestic work was a blessing for her, as she could immediately get a job after private troubles with a degree from secondary school (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015).

The following table<sup>46</sup> shows the results from the narrative interviews according to the work realities of domestic workers in Mexico City.

---

<sup>46</sup> Missing information in this table is a result of the open narrative interviews. With this interview method, the information given by the interview partner is not necessarily comparable, because during the open interview situation, the flow of words cannot be interrupted and every interview partner considers different information as important. With open questions, different information is given.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Working hours<sup>47</sup></b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Social Security</b>	<b>Extra payments</b>
Lorena	7-8 hours per day, 1 day off per week. Sometimes on Sundays for 24 hours.	1500/week	No	No payment for extra hours. 1 week vacation in a year.
Catalina	24 hours, 3 days on the weekend. Off work on weekdays.	Enough to live	Yes	No payment for extra hours.
Ximena	8-10 hours Monday-Friday. 2 hours Saturday.	-	-	-
Regina	8 hours per day, Monday-Friday.	1500/week	Yes	-
Camila	24 hours, 3 days per week.	2000 for this period a week	No	-
Ana	12-14 hours per day, 6 days per week.	1500/week	Yes	No

Income is also a point of conflict, because wages are usually not regulated in written form and, therefore, the amount of the payment and working hours depends on the employer (CONAPRED 2012: 8). The majority of domestic workers do not have a written work contract that establishes their work conditions. Only seven out of 100 workers have a labor contract (CONAPRED 2011: 33), and only one out of the six workers interviewed in this research has a written contract (INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015). When my interview partners (except Catalina) began working in the house, they only had a verbal agreement of what they will earn, but they did not discuss working hours or an eventual raise (INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015; INR03: Camila, 17.02.2015; INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015; INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015; INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015).

There are various ways for domestic workers to find a workplace. One way is through an agency that will place workers in the households (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015). An example of such an agency is CACEH, which is working to guarantee that the employers fulfill the domestic workers' labor rights (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015). Another common way is word-of-mouth advertising, so if an employer is looking for a worker, he/she tells their friends, neighbors and family

---

<sup>47</sup> The working hours are not fixed, because it depends on the workload and can therefore change every day.



and he/she ask their domestic workers if they know someone (INR03: Camila, 17.02.2015; INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015). In this aspect, trust is a big issue, because employers do not want to have a stranger in their houses and private spheres. Employers also recommend their employees to other employers, who have satisfied their needs. The third way to find a domestic worker is through advertising in the newspaper (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015, INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015).

The workers often spend much time alone in the house, so the employers need to trust that the workers will do the tasks they are asked to do. The workers also need self-commitment to fulfill the tasks. Catalina, Ximena and Regina mention they like to work as domestic workers, because they have a certain independence to do the tasks in a routine they want (INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015; INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015; INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015). The work tasks of workers can vary considerably; usually, there are some core tasks that almost every domestic worker does (such as cooking, cleaning and washing clothes), but some are principally a caretaker for children, elderly and handicapped people (INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015; INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015; INR03: Camila, 17.02.2015). The tasks related to this can be more exhausting than “lighter” work, such as cleaning or cooking. The hard work that the domestic workers do in houses becomes substantially difficult as the workers get older. In the interviews, two workers stated that, through the years, their work tasks adapted to them and their age. Now that they are older, they fulfill physically lighter tasks (INR03: Camila, 17.02.2015; INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015). One interview partner told me that she works as a caregiver, but she would like to find another job because it is physically very difficult to fulfill the requirement (INR03: Camila, 17.02.2015). She said that employers prefer young workers, because they are more resilient and usually not rebellious.

All interview partners mentioned that, in their work places, they learned how to fulfill certain tasks, such as cooking, caregiving and even administering a household and a small firm (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015; INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015; INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015; INR03: Camila, 17.02.2015; INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015; INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015).

In my interviews, I spoke to two women that are caregivers for elderly and handicapped people, so they primarily take care of their dependent and there is less

housework (INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015; INR03: Camila, 17.02.2015). Sometimes, domestic workers even fulfill tasks they have no formal education for; for example, when they give medical treatment without knowing first aid (INR03: Camila, 17.02.2015).

It is interesting that, within the domestic worker sector, there is a clear tendency of what is female and male work. In Mexico, tasks like taking care of children, disabled or elderly persons, washing, ironing and cooking are “female” tasks, as more than 95 percent of these tasks is done by female domestic workers. On the other hand, almost 99 percent of personal drivers are male domestic workers. So even when the most of the domestic workers in Mexico are women, there are men working for other households who are hired to bring the family members to different places. This shows that women occupy the inside of the households, and the male domestic workers occupy the public space (INEGI 2012: 4). The reason for this division is mentioned in the article of Ceballos López, where she emphasizes that female employers put a limit to their male domestic workers, because they feel a threat ensuing from them (Ceballos López 2014: 339).

An important statement that Regina made in our conversation is that she thinks that domestic work needs to professionalize in order to defend a good wage (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015). She says that a person cannot ask for a good salary if he or she does not know how to do the work.<sup>48</sup>

### **Summary**

In this section, it has been realized that the devaluation of domestic work, usually done by women, results in little payment. This leads to poverty, which is difficult to get out of. The demand for labor rights is basic, as it assures better working conditions. Domestic work is closely connected to the concept of “cultura de servidumbre”, which describes the working relationship between employers and workers in the colonial time period. The suppression of the workers is necessary, so they “serve” their employers. This is still present in the way some employers treat their workers, but the workers I interviewed also talked about positive experience they had with their employers, who treat them well. Furthermore, the tasks of domestic workers have been discussed. Some tasks, like care taking of

---

<sup>48</sup> CACEH is offering courses to professionalize domestic work; for example, how to use electronic household devices and how to be more efficient in cleaning.

elderly, can be more exhausting than cleaning and cooking. Finally, the reasons why people enter domestic work have been discussed: in most cases, the search for income and no better alternative option. To find a workplace, agencies or the family network of employers and workers are used.

### 7.1.2 Social Background / Generativity / Migration

Social background specifically concerns the family and social context from which the domestic workers come. As mentioned before, domestic workers often choose to work in other households, because their families need money, such as their children, parents, siblings or even themselves (INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015). An interesting fact of this research is that all women I interviewed are daughters of (former) domestic workers (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015; INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015; INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015; INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015; INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015; INR03: Camila, 17.02.2015). Somehow, there needs to be a link between the family and work.

For many women, the supportive and loving family members are very important. Family has a high value in the society and the workers wish to spend as much time as possible with them. One factor faced by the families of live-in domestic workers is that they spend all week with another family and can only spend the weekends with their own families and children. Which leads us to a very important category: generativity.

Generativity shows a divergence between women who are mothers and women that haven't become mothers. It also distinguishes between fathers and mothers at the labor market. Massive contradictions between gender and sexual identity and its practices are present in connection to the education of children (Degele/Winker 2007: 12). Often, in the traditional roles of families, the domestic work has to be done by women. Some privileged women "volunteer" to continue working after having a child, but most of the times domestic work is not divided between the father and mother and, therefore, the domestic work is passed to another woman: the domestic worker.

In Mexico City, 43.2 percent of domestic workers are married or in a partnership. Almost four out of ten women (39.5 percent) are single. The remaining 20.9 per-

cent in the city are not in a relationship for example because of separation, divorce or being a widow (CONAPRED 2008: 33). The ones that do not have children feel some societal pressure to become a mother (Englander/Yáñez/Barney 2012: 69). The young worker I talked to, who does not have children yet, wants to wait to have children. First, she wants to finish school and establish a stable environment so the children have better opportunities (INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015, INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015).

In society, women are described as “harmony seeking” and having “weaker character”; therefore, women are pushed into the role of being a mother and wife (Schirmer/Tienken 2009: 205, Saldaña Tejeda 2014: 206). Until the 1970s, Mexican women were determined as external subjects, supported by the Catholic Church and nationally supported gender discourses; self-chosen actions were not accepted (Schirmer/Tienken 2009: 205). Still, a high percentage of domestic workers in Mexico City do not have any children (38.5 percent), perhaps due to their ages. One in five workers has either one or two children, almost one-third (27.3 percent) of the workers have three to five children and 13.2 percent of domestic workers has five children or more (CONAPRED 2008: 33).

Another factor that plays a big role is the family constellation. Domestic workers are highly affected by not living with their partners. Often, the fathers of the children do not help out in any way, so the families of these women need to take care of the children. The responsibility for the children lies entirely on the mother’s shoulders, to provide for material and moral care. These family patterns, which separate mothers from the children’s father or the other way around, also happened in earlier generations (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015).

Eighteen percent out of all mothers in Mexico do not live with their partners. These are 5.3 million women, and the most of them work (70 percent) and get an income. Being a single mother and domestic worker at the same time comes with many difficulties. The interview partners that have children are all single mothers (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015; INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015; INR03: Camila, 17.02.2015). It seems that there is a high rate of single mothers among the domestic workers (INMUJERES 2012). They have a tough time, because most of the time, workers cannot have their children in their employers’ houses (CONAPRED 2012: 2f), so the children either grow up with relatives of the mother or are in

kindergarten or other day care institutions. This, in turn, requires both the income and time to bring them there and pick them up after work.

The single mothers from my interviews did not receive any help from the children's fathers (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015; INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015; INR03: Camila, 17.02.2015). Mexican law says that both parents need to take care of the children when they are separated and, therefore, the partner who does not live with the children has to pay a certain amount of money to support the partner who takes care of the children. With this money, the costs for the children need to be covered partly. By law, this is valid until the child turns 21 (Ortemberg & Asociados 2015). Being a single mother can have advantages, as they are the bosses of the family, so they can make family decisions in an independent manner, and by earning the family's income, they decide how to spend the money (Morales 2014: 108).

In Mexico, the economic and personal safety net for single mothers is their family – especially female family members like mothers, aunts and grandmothers. There are government programs<sup>49</sup> for free day care for children of working mothers, but the offer does not meet with the demands of domestic workers' realities, so many women need to find alternatives. The working conditions for domestic workers in Mexico City are especially difficult for women that need to reconcile their work and family lives without hardly any help from the state (Saldaña Tejeda 2014: 260).

The fact that domestic workers can go to other households to work while having their own families is only possible because of family members that help to take care of each other.

When domestic workers have children, they usually take some time off during pregnancy and the first years of taking care of the children (Morales 2014: 100). Indigenous women from the countryside, as explained in Morales' article "*Nije nocha karirili: yo trabajo en casa*<sup>50</sup>", look in this period of life for different work, like producing and selling handcrafts, which permits them to be with their children (Morales 2014: 100). Morales also explains that older women who have

---

<sup>49</sup> E.G: SEDESOL: "Estancias Infantiles para Apoyar a Madres Trabajadoras".

<sup>50</sup> "I work in a house(hold)."

older children, and very young women, dedicate their time “constantly” to domestic work (Morales 2014: 101).

In general, the traditional family concept is considered as the basis of reproduction of society. In domestic work, the women without children tend to work as live-in workers, while mothers tend to be live-out workers (Goldsmith 1990: 264). When a mother works as a live-in domestic worker, the main problem is that she only sees her children and family on the weekends. Here, we introduce the concept of “care drain”, which describes “marginalized” women migrating to the city to take care of children of middle class or high-class women. The issue then arises: who takes care of the children of the domestic worker? In most cases, it is the network of family and friends that takes over this task.

Meanwhile, the domestic workers take care of children of other families, while leaving their own children to be taken care of by others. Two interview partners have experienced this. This leads to a care-chain that goes through the entire country, where domestic workers take care of children of privileged mothers (Durin/Eugenia de la O/Bastos 2014: 31).

A term used to describe the concept of care work that is passed on, introduced in 2003 by Arlie Hochschild, is “care drain” (Hochschild 2003). The care work chain is care work done by migrants from the Global South for inhabitants of the Global North.

Hochschild argues that the winners are families at the top of this global care chain, who buy care work and additionally gain what she calls “emotional surplus value.” At the other end of this global care chain, however, are families in the sending countries, in particular children and elderly people in need of care, who pay the social and emotional cost of the deficit of care and emotional work. (Lutz, Palenga-Möllenbeck 2012).

This concept can be put in a national context, as some domestic workers leave their homes in rural areas in order to go to work in the city. By doing so, an empty space is generated, where the mother and main caretaker of the household leaves. As a result, other family members, such as grandparents or older children need to take care of the children and the household. The migration of a mother can mean a change of the roles in the family. Usually, the fathers or men of the

family are the main nurturers, but if the wife migrates to work and sends remittances to the family, it can lead to a change of economic power. This may lead to a different position in decision making (Parella 2008: 10), and it can open new spaces of possibilities where the women can be more active (Schirmer/Tienken 2009: 204). This position of becoming main financial supporter can lead to a higher power position, with the ability to decide how to use the money (D'Souza 2010: 6). For example, one interview partner bought property and built a house with the money she earned as a live-in worker (INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015).

Furthermore, the concept of motherhood changes when the mother leaves the family to earn for a living. These translocal mothers create a new form of parenting, whereas the traditional one is usually connected to physical and emotional closeness. In a study of Parreñas in 2001, Filipino migrants, who are mothers and do not see their children for a long period of time, offer both financial support and economical support for the education of their children. Trans-migrational motherhood also leads to big contradictions for mothers, as they should be “good mothers” and earn money for their children and families, but at the same time, be “good mothers” and stay with their children (Hondagneu-Sotelo/Avila 1997). In the context of live-in domestic workers, the mothers fulfill the motherhood with the children of middle class women and miss a lot of the experiences of being mother with their own children (Saldaña Tejeda 2014: 260).

Many children of domestic workers grow up with their relatives and see their mother only at the weekends, which must have a big effect on the relations between the mother and child (Schirmer/Tienken 2009: 231). The nuclear family of the worker is an important support system for domestic workers. In case of migration, the family and friends are helping the workers to move to the city and provide them with information and financial support. The new role in the family of migrated domestic workers affects the family constellation, because it can give the workers more decision power over the use of money<sup>51</sup>. The reason for this is that they are the main provider for their families. Their physical absence also influences the relation they have with their children. Often, other family members take care of the children. In general, domestic workers come from a poor socio-economic background, which is why they start working in other house-

---

<sup>51</sup> Find more information in section 7.1.3 on education and income.

holds as a chance to earn income. The work conditions they encounter when starting working in another home varies.

The process of a mother who migrates to another part in the country leads to a change of motherhood and the role of the mother in the family changes. Now the mother, against the traditional family concept, is the main earner of the family income, which can lead to more decision-making power within the family. Single mothers also have more decision power, as they are the head of the family. On the other hand, for a single mother, it is difficult to manage work and family, due to time constraints. The low income associated with domestic work puts a bigger burden on mothers to provide for their children. The family, in many cases, provides considerable support.

Domestic work has been an important job for women in the 20th century. In the beginning, as part of rural-urban migration, women left their home regions because of the work opportunities. Because of urbanization in Mexico, in the 20th century, many women came from rural areas to the cities to look for jobs as domestic workers (Durin/Eugenia de la O/Bastos 2014: 29). According to Arias (1995), the big internal migration in Mexico took place during the development of urban industrialization between 1940 and 1980. Married women and mothers stayed in their home regions to take care of the family; meanwhile, single women migrated to the urban centers. In Mexico City, there was a connection between the rising middle class<sup>52</sup> women who participated in the labor markets and the presence of young women who came to the city to do domestic work for this group of people (Goldsmith 1990: 237).

The process of rural-urban migration is called transmigration and appeared in the 1990s in the migration academia (Gualotuña/Tuider 2009: 233). Transmigration is the commute of a person in different geographical and national spaces, with correlated cultural areas (Gualotuña/Tuider 2009: 233). So life and social practices take place in different places at the same time, as these translocal spaces arise. Through modern technology, such as telephones and the internet, it is easier to stay in touch with each other. This way, decisions can be made together,

---

<sup>52</sup> The middle class is vanishing in the last decades, due to the changing distribution of income (Huesca Reynoso 2004: 23).



as the migrant mother is always able to communicate with others (Gualotuña/Tuider 2009: 235).

As already discussed, Mexico City is a highly urbanized city. Many women migrate from rural areas to the city. More than half (54.3 percent) of the domestic workers active in Mexico City are not born in the capital (INEGI 2012: 10). Domestic workers are an important factor in the economy of Mexico City. Most of my interview partners had to leave their hometowns in order to find work in Mexico City. Two workers come from small villages in the state of Puebla (INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015; INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015), one is from a village from the state of Querétaro (INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015), another is from a village of the state of Tlaxcala (INR03: Camila, 17.02.2015), and one from a village in the state of Veracruz (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015). Only one worker was born in Mexico City, but also has a migration background, as her parents migrated to the city (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015). The five migrant workers are from states bordering Mexico City, except for Veracruz.

The fact that families leave to another city shows their need to find a job that has a higher income, than they could find in their hometowns.

One worker first migrated to a bigger city next to her village and stayed with the family so she could work. Because she did not like it at all there, she took the opportunity to migrate to Mexico City to work as a domestic worker. This shows that migration can take place in different stages, where the final destination is not clear at the beginning of the migration process. Work as a live-in domestic worker is convenient, because the work provides housing, food and some income (INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015). Another worker describes her experience of migration as follows:

(empezó trabajando) con catorce años. Y fíjate que lo más curioso cuando yo llegué, efectivamente yo soy del estado de Tlaxcala, por ahí hay una hacienda. Y los dueños de esa hacienda conocían muy bien a mi mamá. Mi mamá enviudó muy jovencita. Entonces como que la conocían muy bien, la señora le dijo a mi mamá: Prestame a tu hija, para que vaya a cuidar mi hija, porque la operaron del

ojo. No se puede agachar, no se puede baniar, ya sabes, no? Y con esa finalidad yo llegué aquí a México a cuidar a la chica (INR03: Camila, 17.02.2015).<sup>53</sup>

In this case, the mother decided to give her daughter to another family to work there. One of the workers, who is active in CACEH, knows many stories of young women coming from villages to Mexico City to work in households. She says that the people in the village tell girls from a young age that they were born to work in the house and they do not serve for anything else (Bautista 2015).

Family networks and friendships play an important role in the migration from their hometowns to the city. These relations are formed by female relatives such as sisters, cousins and friends, which represent a great support system in the transition process (Morales 2014: 89). These networks provide an option to migrate to the city and make migration easier, as they are a channel of information. This support can be information about the experience that family and friends have had in their destination region. They also can give financial support for transportation, which leads to a dependency relation even before the migrant starts to work (Schirmer/Tienken 2009: 206). One example of these networks and information channels is that one worker said she heard about a workplace in Mexico City from her cousin (INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015). Another one started to work in Mexico City because her mother knew a family that was looking for a domestic worker (INR03: Camila, 17.02.2015).

There has also been a trend from indigenous regions to the centers since the 1970s (Durin 2008), which has been researched in the last decade in Mexico (Durin 2014: 31). It has been shown that, through domestic work, indigenous people find an entrance into their destination societies (Durin 2014: 32). Parents also think their children have better opportunities regarding school and university, as the infrastructure in their villages is not very good (INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015), so the hope to have a better life in the city is great.

---

<sup>53</sup> I started to work when I was fourteen years old. I was very curious when I arrived here. I am from the state of Tlaxcala, and there is a ranch. And the owners of this ranch knew my mom very well. My mom was widowed very young. Because they knew her very well, the lady said to my mom, "Lend me your daughter, so she can take care of my daughter because she had eye surgery. She cannot lean forward, cannot take a shower, you know, no?" With this goal, I arrived here to Mexico City to take care of this girl.

Migration can take place because young women want to realize their wishes and start another way of life. In most cases, the decision to migrate is made by weighing the related possibilities and economical costs. Sometimes in the decision process the family can be involved (Han 2003). In some cases, migration can be an exclusive decision, as it is an opportunity to flee from domestic violence (Schirmer/Tienken 2009: 205). Women who experience violence from their partners or families can feel independence and live without fear of domestic violence in the city.

### **Summary**

The reason why people migrate to the city can be the limited options they encounter in their hometowns. In order to find financial resources, they leave their original place. Their desire to fulfill their wishes (e.g. to study) can push people move to an urban center. This research has focused on the internal migration taking place, with the destination being Mexico City. The interview partners migrated to the city from rural areas for different reasons. Issues connected to the migration are usually the new structure of the family, as young women and sometimes mothers leave their families to provide income for other family members<sup>54</sup>. This leads us to the social background of the domestic workers who work in Mexico City.

### 7.1.3 Education<sup>55</sup> / Income

Education is often seen as a key factor of what career a person will have in his or her life. Studies have shown that the education level within this sector of workers is rather low. In 2011, one-third of the workers did not finish primary school, of which eleven percent does not know how to read or write. Another third of the domestic workers finished primary school, and of the remaining third that finished secondary school, only 5.9 percent managed to go to university (CONAPRED 2011: 61).

---

<sup>54</sup> Find more details about this aspect in section 7.1.2 on social background, generativity and migration.

<sup>55</sup> In the Appendix, there is a table that explains the Mexican school system.

To be a domestic worker, no specific education is needed. This may be an important factor in explaining why this work sector experiences high structural discrimination (CONAPRED 2011: 56). On average, the schooling of domestic workers takes three and a half years less than for the average working women in Mexico (CONAPRED 2011: 61). The grade of passed education influences their work conditions, as better educated workers tend to have more knowledge about their rights. On the other hand, the less educated workers are more vulnerable and their opportunities in the job market tend to be worse regarding the well paid jobs (CONAPRED 2008: 32).

This trend of young domestic workers being better educated has been verified by a 2010 survey from INEGI, where it is showed that the analphabets rate of domestic workers is quite frequent (8.4 percent). This number is two times higher (4.1 percent) than analphabetism in other occupations. The percentage of domestic workers that cannot read and write are higher in the age group of 60 years and older (INEGI 2012: 6), which goes back to a generation that did not have access to basic education, especially in rural areas.

This research showed that, of the interview partners, the younger domestic workers (up to the age of 30) are better educated, as one finished secondary school and two completed high school are currently studying at university (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015; INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015; INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015). Of the older co-workers, however, one finished primary school (INR03: Camila, 17.02.2015) and two completed secondary school (INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015; INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015).

The expectations of who should receive education are still diverse. Regina had to fight for education since her early childhood, as her father thought she does not need to go to school because she is a woman and will get married anyway (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015). Her parents are analphabets, and for them, education is not significant, especially for women. Finally, her mother secretly sent her to school, and after some time her father also accepted the fact that the children need basic education. In the study of ENOE (Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo) a national survey about occupation and work showed that, in Mexico, there are still 1.7 million boys and 1.4 million girls, between the age of five and 17, who do not attend school (UNICEF 2015).

What education children receive depends not only on economic reasons, but also on their parents' attitude regarding education. If parents encourage children to study, support them and convince them that it is very important, the children will be more motivated to study (INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015). During my research, I realized that the women I interviewed see education as one major factor to improve life. Maybe it is also a shift that happened in society, because education is an important basis for a future job. UNAM, the National Autonomous University of Mexico, is fighting for a reformation of the national education system. They are convinced that good education leads to better economic well-being, less inequality in the society and progress of the nation (UNAM 2012). It is the foundation of better development of Mexico.

Education is an important asset to having a better life. For another interview partner, it is important to find a partner that is better educated than her, because she also connects education with a stable material life. She thinks better studies lead to a better job and a better life. Therefore, this worker tells her daughters to study hard, so they will not have to do such a demanding job (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015).

Si no estudias te vas tocas por cualquier cosita. Por estar este liempiendo y os a trabajas los pesados. Queriendo tener mas estudios. [...]. Le digo esta setando datras de unos escritorios. Con su computadora con sus vestiditos, esta con. Si no estudies vas estar igual que yo. Y por eso echale ganas (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015).<sup>56</sup>

Therefore, one of the interview partners stated that she will try to prevent her future children from becoming domestic workers by making sure they obtain higher education. She thinks that with a better education, children are better prepared for work life and do not need to have the same experience she did (INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015).

It is also interesting to see that all the workers try to give their children a better education so that they do not need to end up working in other households, as

---

<sup>56</sup> If you do not study, you will have to do anything, like cleaning or other annoying work. I wish I had more education. [...] I tell you, sitting behind a desk, with a computer and dresses. If you do not study, you will be the same as me. That's why you need to put effort [in studying].

their mothers do. Although they agree that domestic work is not the worst work, they all would prefer that their children study and do another type of work (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015; INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015; INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015).

One of my interview partners is convinced that high school graduation (Bachillerato) is the minimum requirement in the labor market nowadays (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015). Statistically, the higher education a person achieves, the lower that person's possibilities are of working as a domestic worker (INEGI 2012: 8). This statement shows the importance of education in society and that with good education, jobs with other working conditions can be attained. Additionally, the desire to finish school or university before getting married shows a trend of women finding economic independence, helping their parents economically and moving out of the parents' houses or traveling (Morales 2014: 94). The goals of one domestic worker that is currently studying at university are:

Pues sí. Lo que yo siempre he tenido así la idea, es tener un patrimonio digno para que yo ofrecerle a mis hijos. Y casarme, tener familia pero muy estable, que mis hijos están orgullosos de mí. Pueden decir que: "mi mamá hace así, trabaja así, pero ahorita, con su esfuerzo de ella salí adelante." eso quiero! (INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015).<sup>57</sup>

This statement indicates, again, the importance of education in improving a person's lifestyle. Another interview partner was in her high school years, and in the beginning, she did not want to study because it was not the school she wanted to attend; however, after some time she realized she had to study hard in high school to be able to get to public university afterwards (INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015). She did not succeed in getting into public university and she did not have the money for private university. This blowback even affected her health, and it forced her to go to a city to look for a job (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015).

Education is closely connected to money and family. If the family has enough resources to send the child to private university, the pressure to study at public one

---

<sup>57</sup> Yes, I always had the idea to have a dignified heritage that I can offer my kids, and to marry, have a family but be very stable, so my kids are proud of me. They can say, "My mother did it, working and now with all her effort she could move on." That's what I want.

is not as high and there is always a second possibility. But if there are no resources, public universities are the only option and it is very difficult to get there. In one case, the domestic worker was lucky to earn a lot, and could therefore send her daughter to a private university. This extra money made it possible for her daughter to break out of the cycle of having to work at a young age in order to provide for the family (INR03: Camila, 17.02.2015).

To enter work also is a way to get financial resources to continue education. What needs to be clarified is that those who are supported by their employers in their studies are the young workers, ranging from 20 to 30 years old (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015; INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015; INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015). There is a higher discrimination towards older workers, as they do not receive the same support as the younger ones. One worker, who is older, would like to study and get a formal education in taking care of elderly, but she said the public universities do not accept older people and she does not have the money for private universities (INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015). This worker was interested in studying when she was younger, but because she worked from Monday to Saturday, she had only one day left and wanted to spend the weekend with her children (INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015). In this case, the intersection between the working hours and being a mother did not leave her space to educate herself when she was younger. Now that she has the time, other factors, such as age, prevent her from doing so.

In this regard, the interview partners I talked to who had achieved high education are rather an exception, compared to the average employee in this working sector<sup>58</sup>. The opportunity for domestic workers to study in university is closely connected to their work, because they have the chance to work and live in the city, close to university. These two workers experience great support from their employers to be able to attend university (INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015; INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015).

Both workers and employers have an advantage when the employed person is well educated, because to manage the household and to be able to read and write

---

<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, due to the economic crisis, well-educated women started working as domestic workers. (Organización Editorial Mexicana 2009). Find more information on page 47.

is a basic skill. If the worker is better educated, she can also help the children with their homework.

Education can also be closely connected to identity and self-esteem. One interview partner told me that she feels embarrassed when she gets to know people with higher education and has to admit to them that she only finished secondary school. She also feels embarrassed for her work and does not like to share this information with strangers (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015).

The level of education a domestic worker has depends on the influence of different categories. In particular, the income of their parents, the importance of education within family and the availability of resources like money and time have an impact on the level of education the domestic worker achieves in school and, therefore, these factors are very important for domestic workers. Due to inter-linked discrimination patterns like low financial resources, the domestic workers tend to have a lower education level than the national average. There might be a certain connection, as the tasks themselves do not require special education. Being a fulltime, live-in domestic worker does not leave a lot of time to study outside of work. Some employers even do not allow their workers to attend school, and a lower education level can lead to more vulnerability. On the other hand, active support from the employer in the professional career can lead to independent, well-educated domestic workers. This does not only benefit the worker herself, but as well her employer benefits, as she can do more tasks to organize the household. Some people work as domestic workers in order to receive a financial resource to fund the studies.

Domestic work is the main source of income for all of my interview partners. In this section, the issues connected to income will be described in detail.

Although there has been a growing recognition of domestic work in Latin America in the last few decades, domestic work is still a considerably low paid job, and only a small number of domestic workers receive social security and benefits (CONAPRED 2011: 52).

Often, the low income domestic workers receive, in absolute and relative terms, leaves them in situations of poverty, especially women (Moreno Ruiz 2012: 143). The global economic crises have greatly influenced the work sector and forced the domestic workers to accept even worse working conditions (Bautista, 2010).



The Latin American and Caribbean Confederation of Domestic Workers (CON-LACTRAHO)<sup>59</sup> shows that many domestic workers in Mexico suffer from discrimination; for example, 41 percent of all domestic workers receive less than the minimum wage<sup>60</sup> (Perez Ocaña 2002 in Kirchhoff 2011). This leads to fewer possibilities to move out of poverty.

Income is an important category in the living realities of domestic workers. Two interview partners stated they started to work as domestic workers since they argue it is better paid than working in a factory, which can be true in some cases (INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015, INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015). Two out of ten domestic workers are the heads of the household and, therefore, need to provide income for the family (CONAPRED 2008: 33). In the 2010 study by CONAPRED, the major problem identified by domestic workers is that they work too much and earn very little (CONAPRED 2011: 37).

Since 2015, the minimum wage in Mexico is 70 Mexican pesos per day (about 3.70 Euro) (CoNaSaMi 2015), but because domestic work is not part of the labor law, this is only an orientation for employers (Kirchhoff 2011: 71). Statistical data state that 41 percent of domestic workers do not earn their minimum wage. Almost half of workers in Mexico earn between 500 and 1000 pesos a week, and roughly one-fourth of all workers only earn between 250 and 500 pesos a week (CONAPRED 2011: 38). Just over one percent (1.2 percent) do not earn anything for providing their services (INEGI 2012: 12). About 75 percent of domestic workers neither receive any benefits (CONAPRED 2012: 10). During her interview, Lorena stated that her employer pays her very little. She would like to be paid more, but she does not consider that she earns much more than the minimum wage. She earns 250 pesos per day. As mentioned above, many workers do not even receive the minimum wage of 70 pesos per day, which is extremely little income. To improve the economic situation and have a fair income of domestic workers, CACEH is fighting for a minimum wage of 300 to 350 pesos per day. The reason Lorena stays in this work, although they pay her little, is that they give her the opportunity to study while she is working, with adequate working hours.

---

<sup>59</sup> In Spanish: *Confederación Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Trabajadoras del Hogar*

<sup>60</sup> Since January 2015, the official minimum wage is around 70 Mexican pesos. As Domestic workers are excluded from that official labor law, this amount only serves as orientation (Kirchhoff 2011: 71, CoNaSaMi 2015)

Another point closely connected to income is the working hours. In general, domestic workers work many hours (up to 12) a day, without a fixed work schedule – especially the live-in workers. Therefore, their salaries per hour drop dramatically, because they are usually not paid overtime (CONAPRED 2012: 8). Legally, there is a fixed amount of hours a worker works a day, and every extra hour of overtime needs to be paid after four extra hours per week. Around half (44.7 percent) of domestic workers do not have a fixed working schedule (CONAPRED 2011: 39).

Only about thirteenth percent of the workers get paid per hour (CONAPRED 2011: 37). Three of the six interview partners indicated that they do not have fixed working hours (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015; INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015; INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015). It is expected by the employer that the worker stays longer than originally agreed, but without any extra payment (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015). One interview partner told me that the employers were satisfied with her work and when she did extra work, they also paid her extra (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015). Another worker confirms that she was also paid extra for working extra hours, but payment was inconsistent (INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015). One worker says her employer is very exact with her working hours, and that is something she likes a lot (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015). Two workers, Catalina and Camila, work three days nonstop over the weekends. The two workers, mentioned in the sentence before, as very few workers, have fixed working hours (INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015; INR03: Camila, 17.02.2015). Currently, Ana works three to four extra hours each week and does not get paid for it. The family she worked for before raised her salary every six months by 500 pesos. She wants to ask her current employers for a raise, but is waiting for the right time. She has worked for the family for three years and has not gotten a raise yet. She thinks that if they do not raise it, they should at least lower her workload (INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015). She now receives social security and earns the same, so actually her income increased.

One reason to change the workplace is because of better payment (INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015). All of my interview partners said that they would like to be paid better (INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015). Income is a big source of conflict with the employer. Because the workers totally depend on this money and if the employer does not pay what was agreed on, they have no chance to fight for it. The only

option they have is to argue about it or go to another workplace, which some consider as they have the confidence to do so.

Another interview partner looked for a job after the secondary school. She wanted to have money, helped her parents economically and did not see the value of education as a teenager. Being in a work environment made her forget about school, so she did not go back, even when she had several opportunities (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015). The fact that she helped her parents pay for her little siblings that still went to school, shows that her family needed the extra money that Regina earned through domestic work, although her father did not like that his daughter helped them financially. It also gained her some recognition, especially for her father, who preferred the sons, who had more value (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015). In this case, the intersection between money and education is quite obvious. Her motives – that is, to not get a higher education because she preferred immediate money and supported her family – become clearer.

### **Summary**

The main reason domestic workers enter their workplaces is the necessity of income to provide for their families. This is also connected to the decision to migrate, in order to find better paid work than they would in their hometowns. In general, the income of domestic workers is low compared to the average income, but paid well for low education. Thus, the question arises: would the professionalization of the occupation lead to a higher income? Working hours are also connected to income, because in most cases, there is only a verbal agreement between the employer and worker regarding income and working hours, which often brings up conflict between both parties. To find clarity in these issues, clear labor laws are necessary. This is further elaborated in section 7.1.5 on legal situation of regulating working conditions.

## **7.1.4 Violence / Health**

Gender-based violence has roots in the context of systematic discrimination and other forms of suppression because of gender. The historical unequal power relations between men and women are demonstrated in this violence, and they shape the lives in private and public sphere (Naciones Unidas 2006: 31). This structural

violence shows the “machista” culture<sup>61</sup> still present and deeply rooted in the society. The explanation they give the women is that they were born as women; therefore, they were born to have children, take care of them and the house and serve their husbands (INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015).

Violence against women can be done in the form of suppression, exclusion, subordination, discrimination, exploitation and marginalization. The problem in Mexico with the anti-women attitude, which has penetrated institutions and social life, is that violence against women can happen and it does not draw consequences. Social and national impunity does not constrain the gender violence<sup>62</sup> (Alfarache Lorenzo 2009: 106), so when crimes against women happen, often there is no further investigation, and the violator does not experience any consequences of these actions. This failure in the chain of legal prosecution leads to more insecurity for women in Mexico.

In 2007, a law called *ley general para acceso para mujeres a una vida libre de violencia*<sup>63</sup> was introduced in Mexico. This has been the success of feminist effort to fight against gender-based violence. It should lead to an adjustment of the national law in accordance with international human rights norms, so that a positive political, legal, social and cultural change can lead to the elimination of violence against women in Mexico (Alfarache Lorenzo 2009: 113).

Domestic workers, as the majority of them are women, are greatly affected by gender-based violence. The fact that they work as a domestic worker increases their discrimination due to their work context. As their work takes place in private houses, the violence the domestic worker face is often invisible and their possibilities to defend themselves are very limited (CONAPRED 2011: 56).

Some of my interview partners recounted their experience of sexual violence in their workplace and private context. “Domestic workers are probably the most exposed to sexual harassment and rape,” comments D’Souza (2010: 25). This experience of sexual violence had severe influence in the physical and psychological

---

<sup>61</sup> In Latin American culture, machismo is a social behavior pattern in which the Latino male exhibits an overbearing attitude to anyone in a position he perceives as inferior to his demanding complete subservience. Machismo is usually used and defined with a negative connotation; [...] aggressiveness, physical strength, emotional insensitivity, and womanizing. (Mendoza 2009)

<sup>62</sup> Impunity means no investigation, prosecution, arrest, accusation and conviction of the responsible person who violated rights (Alfarache Lorenzo 2009:107).

<sup>63</sup> “General law for access of women to a life free from violence”.

health of these interview partners. One woman totally isolated herself and avoided any contact with other people (INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015). Another woman stopped working for the family she was abused by (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015). Although those incidents largely affected the life of the worker, the offender did not face any consequence. The information about the incident did not spread to other family members or the police and, therefore, the offenders stayed protected. The offender can also act in this context because of the unequal power relation and usually does not fear any consequences of his/her actions. The domestic worker has a lot of fear and shame if abuse occurs (D'Souza 2010: 25), like in general cases of violence. A big problem with the violence faced in the workplace is that, usually, society believes the employers and not the workers (INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015). If there has been an incident of sexual abuse or physical violence against the worker, the employers tend to turn the situation around and accuse the worker of robbing the family or seducing the employer (CONAPRED 2011: 56, D'Souza 2010: 25)<sup>64</sup>. Violence also can be present in the workers families. It is not necessarily the case that women live with domestic violence, but even in my interviews, the workers talked about physical violence against them. Unfortunately, the women stay with their partners for various reasons, one of them being economic dependent (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015).

The violence faced by domestic workers includes both physical abuse at work and as well as in their own homes. One interview partner left her partner after long, ongoing physical abuse. At one point, she feared for her life and her children's lives and, therefore, she decided to leave (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015).

This experience of violence from her partner and leaving him made her independent, and she had to find a way to survive with her children on her own. This difficult situation and need of money essentially made her a domestic worker because domestic works is not formal; she was able to enter the field quickly and had an income. In this case, she also accepted any work conditions because of the urgency to find employment (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015).

Experienced violence can have big effects on their health. One worker has to get psychological help, due to sexual violence she experienced in her childhood

---

<sup>64</sup> In section 7.1.5 on legal situation, one worker mentions the same and expresses critique on these patterns.

(INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015). This worker understands now that health comes first, before work, and to be healthy is a basic necessity to perform good work and have a good life. Employers helped her find psychological treatment and showed understanding for the illness.

The health of domestic workers is an important issue, as only a healthy person can work properly. To assure the health of the people and healing in case of illness, access to the health system is necessary.

One of my interview partners said she is hardly sick, and still works even when she feels sick (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015). The reason is the necessity of earning money and the lack of access to the health system. Some of the interviewees receive medication from their employer, as she is a doctor (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015; INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015). This way, the worker avoids going to a public doctor or missing a day at work. This system of diagnosis and treatment needs to be seen critical, although it is better than no medical care at all. Having social security is basic to provide medical assistance in case of illness.

Even though LFT (Ley Federal del Trabajo, Federal Work Law) defines some obligations for employers in case of illness – they are required to pay up to one month of salary and have to provide medical assistance (LFT, Art. 338) - existing regulations systematically discriminated DWs (Domestic Workers) (Kirchhoff 2011: 71).

In 2010, almost 44 percent (43.8) of domestic worker did not have any access to public health services (INEGI 2012: 11). “Consequently, only 0.01 percent of these [domestic workers] receive social security benefits (ADITAL 2010). When domestic workers are ill or pregnant, they often do not receive any medical help, because their employers did not register them or process for them social security (Kirchhoff 2011: 71). Having social security would mean that they have the right to have a maternity leave, the right to receive a pension, a place in the kindergarten for their children, and other benefits (CONAPRED 2012: 10); however, since 1984, Mexican social security law inhibits domestic workers to enter this basic system, which leads to a structural discrimination (Pérez Ocaña 2002 in Kirchhoff 2011: 71). One interview partner said she had a big surgery and she could not go to work for one month. Her employers continued to pay her salary, but

because health treatment is very expensive in Mexico, her son had to pay for the surgery. If she had social security, these issues would not be the same (INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015).

The legislation in Mexico also says that “if the illness is not chronic the employer must provide medical assistance until recovery, or until another ‘service’ takes responsibility for the worker.” (Moreno Ruiz 2012: 129). If the worker has been employed in that house for more than six months before getting ill, the employer has to support the worker for up to three months of illness (Moreno Ruiz 2012: 129). Many domestic workers cannot retire because they have no entitlement to a pension (Iglesias 2010 in Kirchhoff 2011: 71). Pension after retirement is included in the social security system (Kirchhoff 2011: 71).

Usually, after one week of work, the employers are supposed to complete social security registration, including the health insurance, according to Regina. Some employers, however, make the workers wait, because they say it costs them time and effort, and if they are not sure if the worker will stay and do a good job, they do not want to do the bureaucratic process (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015). One employer made one worker wait for months, providing one excuse after another until the worker finally decided to leave the workplace, because there was no change in sight (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015). The older workers in particular see the importance of having social security, because knowing their health bills will increase and that having the security system will keep them from having to pay large expenses for doctors’ appointments and medication (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015; INR03: Camila, 17.02.2015; INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015).

The family can also be a support system in case of health issues. One worker stopped working to take care of her sick husband (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015).

One of the workers I talked to could not go immediately to university after high school for economic reasons and health issues within the family. She preferred to take care of her sick parents instead of continuing with her academic career. This also shows hidden patterns of young women taking care of their families and re-signing their own life goals (INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015). So, in case of emergency, the family needs to give support to all family members, especially when social security is absent.

## **Summary**

Gender-based violence is rooted in a context of systematic discrimination and suppression of women, connected to racism. In Mexico, the biggest problem with violence is the impunity. When violations happen, the offender often does not fear any consequences, because the victims often do not report the incident, the legal system does not work independently and society and law enforcement tend to believe the employer. In the case of domestic workers, violence against them often stays invisible, because the workers depend on the income of their jobs and employers have a better position in society. For this reason, judges tend to believe the employer instead of the worker. When women experience violence in their private homes, live-in domestic work can be a way of escape<sup>65</sup>. It also offers a fast income source, as the work takes place in the informal market and the workers can start working without a long recruitment process.

The main issue regarding health for domestic workers is having access to the health system. Ninety-six percent do not have access to this basic provision of health care (Rubi in Schwenkes/Heimeshoff 2011: 71). According to this, hardly any worker has social security, including access to the health system, pension and benefits. The biggest problem is that employers often do not want to give social security to their domestic workers for various reasons. Legally, employers are obligated to pay for sick workers. In the case of domestic workers, some depend on their families to help pay the bills for doctors, as well as for care-taking during recovery.

### 7.1.5 Legal situation

The legal situation of domestic workers is a difficult topic. Because domestic work takes place in the informal economy, the legal framework for it is not considered. Another issue is the ignorance of the labor rights by both the employer and employee. The employer has benefits if the worker does not know his or her legal rights and obligations, and when this is the case, the employer makes the rules.

---

<sup>65</sup> This is more closely discussed in section 7.1.2 on social background, generativity and migration.



Domestic workers want to be recognized as workers, just like any other workers in Mexico. They demand basic labor rights such as a fair salary, stable working hours, safe and adequate working conditions, treatment with dignity, social security and a meal a day when working eight hours, pension, national holidays off, etc. However, the working reality of domestic workers is often not as demanded. The very lucky ones are employed and have working conditions similar to workers in other sectors. “The low importance of the existing legal regulations is also reflected by the fact that only five percent of the nearly two million DWs in Mexico possess a signed labour contract.” (ADITAL 2010) “Correspondingly, unjustified dismissal (without severance pay) is a common problem” (Iglesias 2010).

In the interviews with the domestic workers, it became clear that those who are not active in CACEH have a limited and unclear understanding of their rights (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015; INR03: Camila, 17.02.2015; INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015). On the other hand, the interview partners who are members of CACEH are very clear about their rights, and try to implement these rights in their place of employment (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015; INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015; INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015).

Knowledge of workers’ rights is a basic asset for every worker, but implementing them at work and turning them into reality is another story. Marcelina Bautista states that one of the biggest problems that domestic workers face is that they do not have sufficient information to defend their rights (Bautista in Sánchez Ambriz 2013: 96). The women that *do* have the knowledge about their rights from CACEH know that labor rights also come with labor obligations. These two sides are inseparable, because they give security to both the worker and the employer and both know what to expect from each other (INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015).

As mentioned earlier in section 7.1.3 on education and income, one interview partner has a written contract (INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015). Three out of six have fixed schedules (INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015; INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015; INR03: Camila, 17.02.2015). Three out of six have social security, which guarantees access to health system and benefits (INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015; INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015; INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015). All of the workers I interviewed earn more than the Mexican minimum wage, but depending on their personal lives and how many people depend on them, the money they have available is limited.

As already mentioned, the work performed is not formal; therefore, many workers and employers do not think that labor rights apply. Mexico City is one of the metropolitan zones in Mexico where labor rights of domestic workers are not respected. According to CONAPRED, 42.2 percent of workers feel that their labor rights are not respected (CONAPRED 2011: 26). One interview partner also mentioned that employers say that workers have no rights, because they pay them and the live-in workers do not pay rent and everything is provided for them (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015). Another “justification” for minimizing domestic workers’ rights is that they are socially seen as assistants that are part of the family<sup>66</sup> (CONAPRED 2012: 5). Furthermore, there is a persistent stereotype that has been socially created by the dominant culture concerning domestic work, which is that women naturally know how to perform domestic work because they learned it in their early childhood (CONAPRED 2012: 4).

The lack of labor rights in the context of domestic workers provokes the exploitation of the workers who are already vulnerable to other forms of abuse, such as bad treatment, sexual harassment and humiliation (CONAPRED 2012: 6).

For Ariza and de Oliveira (2007), a legislative change for more gender equality according to motherhood depends on changing character of ideology of the traditional family structure. In the case of domestic workers, the legal absence of the care topic does not help to facilitate the care taking of their own children (Ariza/de Oliveira 2007 in Saldaña Tejada 2014: 260).

In the study of Ceballos López, she states that male domestic workers have a better possibility to formalize the domestic work, like having social security, and their working hours are more respected than those of their female coworkers (Ceballos López 2014: 339).

One active member of the organization CACEH actively promotes labor rights with her coworkers, and she informs her employers from the beginning that she is active in this organization. She also explains what CACEH does and establishes herself and her role as a politically active domestic worker. Some of her coworkers are afraid and do not want to know their rights and fight for them. She does not understand this position because she feels these rights are for every domestic worker, and understanding and asserting these rights usually improves their

---

<sup>66</sup> More closely discussed in section 7.1.2 on social background, generativity and migration.

work situations (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015). Still, employers react differently to this topic. Some are interested and ask for more information or inform themselves more about it. Others reject the information and inform workers from the beginning, because they think it can cause trouble. Some employers promise to fulfill the rights, but they do not stick to this promise and don't care about it (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015). For employers, informed workers can be a disadvantage, as they demand more, like social security, established working hours and a minimum wage.

The interview partners that are not active in CACEH did not know any institution or place where they can ask for help in case they have issues at their work (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015; INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015; INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015). This makes it clear that this information about the workers' organization has not spread to all domestic workers.

To find out more about what domestic workers think about their government and how the government can help improve working conditions, this section summarizes the statements made by the interview partners about this topic.

Lorena is not sure if the government could change anything about the situation of domestic workers, but if the government did have any influence, it would be difficult to realize it, because even when the laws exist, it does not necessarily mean that they are implemented in reality. In the end, the working situation depends on the employer, because the government does not come to the house and check in on the employer or employee. She thinks laws cannot protect the workers from employers that treat them badly (INR01: Lorena, 09.02.2015). She is aware that bad treatment continues because of the ignorance of the worker and because he/she does not know where to ask for help. When the workers are informed, the situation changes considerably.

Ana argues that the government does not help domestic workers, because it focuses on workers in companies and factories rather than workers in households. Domestic workers are excluded from political activities, and they don't count on major support from the government like other workers or employees (INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015). In particular, if conflict arises between an employer and worker, she would like to have more support from the government. The court does not support labor rights, but is more concerned about the employers and therefore

does not take workers into consideration. In this case, the government could support the workers more (INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015).

Only one interview partner demands more security from the government. According to her, bad things are happening in Mexico<sup>67</sup>, and she thinks that the government could solve this by having security patrol to protect against crimes. She also demands more help from the government to develop infrastructure (INR06: Catalina, 27.02.2015). Catalina thinks there needs to be specific assistance and support for domestic workers. Although there are governmental programs to help certain social groups, she sees social preferences in them and does not receive the help she would need. Hence, she is missing the support of the government, because she was forced, like many other domestic workers, to migrate to the city to find a job and take economic care of her family.

### **Summary**

The interview partners questioned in this research are in different legal situations. Some experience the fulfillment of basic legal rights in all aspects, others do not. Domestic work is not considered as work. The difficulty of implementing basic labor rights lies in the perception of the domestic work. It is necessary to both implement concrete labor rights for domestic workers, and to inform the workers in this sector about their rights. The violation of labor rights and their prosecution also need to be considered, because impunity is frequently taking place and, therefore, Mexicans do not trust in their government or legal system. The workers see themselves as invisible in front of the government.

## **7.2. Summary**

In this section, it has been realized that the devaluation of domestic work, usually done by women, results in little payment. This leads to poverty, which is difficult to get out of. The demand for labor rights is basic, as it assures better working conditions. Domestic work is closely connected to the concept of “cultura de servidumbre”, which describes the working relationship between employers and workers in the colonial time period. The suppression of the workers is necessary,

---

<sup>67</sup> She is referring to crimes such as kidnapping and murders.

so they “serve” their employers. This is still present in the way some employers treat their workers, but the workers I interviewed also talked about positive experience they had with their employers, who treat them well. Furthermore, the tasks of domestic workers have been discussed. Some tasks, like care taking of elderly, can be more exhausting than cleaning and cooking. Finally, the reasons why people enter domestic work have been discussed: in most cases, the search for income and no better alternative option. To find a workplace, agencies or the family network of employers and workers are used.

## 8. Conclusions

In white, mainstream feminism, domestic work, was considered as a sign for patriarchal suppression. In their discussions, the categories of class and race were merely noticed. Women of color, who performed paid domestic work in the households of privileged white families, did not agree with this political movement. In response, women of color protested against the dominant discussions about domestic work as a male oppression form. They wanted to gain focus on the living realities of women of color, which differed significantly from privileged, white housewives. This fight for recognition and emphasis on the special living realities of paid domestic workers continues even today.

The economic crisis since 1980s led to changes in the Mexican labor market. Many rural people had to leave their homes, due to a lack of work opportunities and expropriation processes. Many women migrated, and are still migrating, to Mexico City to find a job so that they can receive an income that supports the family. Women, who are often not well educated, have a chance to find work as domestic workers in the households of middle class and upper class homes. Domestic work is one opportunity for female migrants from rural areas and local women in Mexico City to earn money.

This migration and work process is influenced by many factors, e.g. generativity and the legal work situation. The family network simplifies the movement of domestic workers from rural areas to urban centers. The migration of mothers from rural areas results in a change of the concept of traditional gender roles, as the woman becomes the main provider for the family. This can lead to a more powerful position when it comes to making decisions about the use of money. Furthermore, the traditional role of “mother” changes with their physical absences, and a family member – usually female – inherits their role of raising the children. The sociological aspect of migration and its impact on family structures should be closely examined. Are there any options for women to stay in their local communities? (Juárez Sánchez/Ramírez Valverde 2007). And how does the absence of the migrated mother affect the mother-child relationship? (Parreñas 2008).

Knowing labor rights and laws can lead to better work conditions and, therefore, tends to result in less discrimination in the workplace. Regarding domestic workers' legal situation, basic labor laws are needed in Mexico in order to provide domestic workers with a legitimate foundation that they can rely on when it comes to working conditions. Current civil society movements and global institutions, like the ILO, are focusing on regulating this work relation in order to implement basic labor rights for domestic workers in Mexico. In further research, the role of employers and employment agencies should be considered. These perspectives, connected to ILO Convention 189 and its practical implementation, will give new insights about the legal situation. In particular, the role of employment agencies and how they impact work conditions should be researched.

A young domestic worker with the will to study is more likely to attend school in addition to working, because she has an income to pay for school. Two of my interview partners highlight this trend, as they can combine working in a household and attending university (INR05: Ximena, 22.02.2015; INR04: Ana, 18.02.2015). This research shows that older domestic workers did not have this opportunity, due to their social backgrounds, as their parents did not support the formal education of women (INR02: Regina, 11.02.2015). Furthermore, their families sometimes needed an income, so the young women had to look for a job (INR03: Camila, 17.02.2015). The situation – education, in particular – has improved considerably in recent decades. More children have access to basic education, especially girls. Education and information are the basic assets for a self-determined life. Through new technology, such as the internet and smartphones, spreading and obtaining information is becoming easier. Organizing widespread workplaces, such as those of domestic workers, can be easily done with this resource, and the opportunity to do so – particularly among vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations – should be researched and implemented in a way that allows domestic workers to simultaneously understand their rights, voice their concerns and become a driving force for change.

This research supports the statistics that almost half of domestic workers do not have access to the health system (INEGI 2012: 11). Having social security provides them with access to healthcare in case of illness. This is crucial in order to carry out physical tasks. Social security also allows the workers to receive benefits and pension when they retire. Due to informality in the work relations be-

tween domestic workers and employers, domestic workers usually lose their incomes the moment they stop working. Without a written work contract, it is even more difficult to demand basic labor rights, such as those offered by regulation in the formal labor market. The informality and the inferior positions of domestic workers in society and in their workplaces place the workers at a higher risk of discrimination and violence. When women experience violence in their families, live-in domestic work is an option to flee this situation. It can provide economic independence to allow the worker to live a life as she imagines. The way employers treat their workers varies. Domestic workers are at a high risk of physical and psychological abuse, because their work takes place in a private space and there are no regulations. Informality can also present an option for workers, as the entrance to a new workplace is fast and lacks bureaucratic barriers. In the most cases, it is a disadvantaged position of domestic workers in the Mexican society. This occurs in institutional and societal contexts that tend to keep them in this position in favor of the employers and the economic system.

To fight for better work conditions is a task for each worker, employer, institution and society as a whole. If the job conditions were good, for example, providing adequate income, a fixed work schedule, social security and a respectful treatment by the employers, the domestic workers would have more chances to have the life they wish for because their basic needs are covered. Furthermore, higher self-esteem leads to better work conditions, because the workers are more confident in speaking up to their employers, voicing their concerns and enforcing their rights. The fight and organization of many domestic workers worldwide and in Mexico is leading to a constant improvement of the situation.

Society also has to cherish domestic work and encourage a respectful attitude towards this work sector. Recognizing housework as dignified work is essential to improving the labor situation of domestic workers. This responsibility involves not only the workers who need to identify themselves with their jobs, but also with the families that employ domestic workers who need to see them as workers with rights and obligations. Until nowadays domestic work does not receive the recognition and value that it actually has, as you can see from the interviews. Also power relations between employer and worker are not sufficiently reflected by the involved parties. But new movements like CACEH and an organi-



zation of employers, called “hogar justo hogar” who demand to fulfill domestic workers basic rights are emerging.<sup>68</sup>

Another aspect that leaves a considerable gap in research concerning domestic workers is the role of security (Wondratschke 2005). Security plays a crucial role in the lives of domestic worker – not only in their houses and their lives, but also public insecurity, which has effects on the people and their attitudes towards each other.

As we see, all the categories that relate to this profession (education, violence, generativity, health, income, legal situation, migration, social background and work) are closely interlinked. The situation of each domestic worker is complex, but there are some parallels to be found. This research shows that these women experience options and discrimination connected to their work situation. Discrimination and opportunities need to be made visible in order to analyze complex living realities where different categories influence each other. The intersectionality theory is a suitable tool for it. Originally, it was used to make the triad of categories race, gender and class visible. However, this research only focused on a few select categories, and it is difficult to show a complex situation of a very heterogeneous group like domestic workers. A higher number of narrative interviews can lead to new insights about the living and working realities of domestic workers. It would be also interesting to see how the new labor union in Mexico will influence the social perception of domestic workers and the (hopefully) changing jurisdiction.

---

<sup>68</sup> Hogar justo Hogar: Home fair home <http://hogarjustohogar.mx/> [Accessed: 26.03.2016]

# Bibliography

- Alfarache Lorenzo, Ángela G. (2009): Frauen, Migration und feminizide Gewalt in Mexico. In: Tui-der, Elisabeth; Wienold Hanns; Bewernitz, Torsten (edt.):Dollares und Träume. Migrati-on, Arbeit und Geschlecht in Mexiko im 21. Jahrhundert. Münster: Verlag Westfälisches Dampfboot, 103-115.
- Arias, Patricia (1995): La migración femenina en dos modelos de desarrollo: 1940-1970 y 1980-1992. In: Relaciones de género y transformaciones agrarias: Estudios sobre el campo Mexicano. Mexico City: González Montes.
- Bartra, Armando; Otero, Gerardo (2005): Indian Peasant Movements in Mexico: The Struggle for Land, Autonomy and Democracy. In: Moyo, Sam; Yeros, Paris (Edt.): Reclaiming the Land. The Resurgence of Rural Movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America. London, New York: Zed Books; Cape Town: David Philip: 383-410.
- Bautista, Marcelina (2006): Las condiciones de las empleadas del hogar en México. In: López, Mercedes et. Al., Recosntruyendo paradigmas del poder syndical, Mexico, UAM-X.
- Bock, Gisela; Duden, Barbara (1977): Arbeit aus Liebe – Liebe als Arbeit. Zur Entstehung der Hausarbeit im Kapitalismus. In: Gruppe Berliner Dozentinnen (Edt.): Frauen und Wissen-schaft. Beiträge zur Berliner Sommeruniversität für Frauen, Juli 1976, Berlin: Courage: 118-199.
- Brah, Avtar; Phoenix, Ann (2004): Ain't I a Woman? Revisiting Intersectionality. In: Journal of International Women's Studies 5 (3): 75-86.
- Braun, Virginia; Clarke, Victoria (2006): Using thematic analysis in psychology. In: Qualitative Research in Psychology. 3. 77 – 101.
- Camus, Manuela; Eugenia de la O, María (2014): El encanto de la colonialidad tapatía: notas sobre la cultura de la servidumbre. In: Durin, Séverine; de la O, María Eugenia; Bastos Santiago (Edt.): Trabajadoras en la sombra. Dimensiones del servicio doméstico latinoamericano. México, D.F.:Centro de Inverstigaciones y Esudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 145-172.
- CDHFD – Comisión de Derechos Humanos del Distrito Federal (2007): Informe especial sobre los derechos de las comunidadaes indígenas residentes en la ciudad de México, 2006-2007, Mexico.
- Ceballos López, María Elí (2014): "El trabajo de hombre" en lo doméstico: la inclusión del género masculino en el servicio doméstico. In: Durin, Séverine; de la O, María Eugenia; Bastos Santiago (Edt.): Trabajadoras en la sombra. Dimensiones del servicio doméstico latinoamericano. México, D.F.:Centro de Inverstigaciones y Esudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 319-344.
- Chaney, Elsa M.; Garcia Castro, Mary (eds) (1989): Muchachas No More. Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean. Philadelphia: Temple.
- Charmaz, Kathy C. (2011a): Den Standpunkt verändern: Methoden der konstruktivistischen Grounded Theory. In: Mey, Günther/ Mruck, Katja (edt.): Grounded Theory Reader. Wies-baden: VS Verlag, 181-205.

- Charmaz, Kathy C. (2011b): Grounded Theory konstruieren. Kathy C. Charmaz im Gespräch mit Antony J. Puddephatt. In: Mey, Günther/ Mruck, Katja (edt.): Grounded Theory Reader. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 89-107.
- Charmaz, Kathy C. (2014) [1939]: Constructing grounded theory. London [u.a.]: Sage Publ.
- Choo, Hae Yeon; Ferree, Myra Marx (2010): Practicing Intersectionality in Sociological Research. A Critical Analysis of Inclusions, Interactions, and Institutions in the Study of Inequality. In: Sociological Theory 28 (2), 129-149.
- Church Terrel, Mary (1904): The Progress of Colored Women. In: Voice of the Negro 1 (7): 292.
- Colen, Shellee; Sanjek, Roger (1990): At Work in Homes: Orientations. In Sanjek, Roger and Colen, Shellee (edt.): At Work in Homes: Household Workers in World Perspective. Washington D.C., American Ethnological Society Monograph Series, 1-13.
- Consejo Nacional para Prevenir la Discriminación (CONAPRED) (2008): El Trato Social Hacia las Mujeres Indígenas Que Ejercen Trabajo Doméstico en Zonas Urbanas. Mexico: Colección Estudios 2008.
- Consejo Nacional para Prevenir la Discriminación (CONAPRED) (2011): Encuesta Nacional sobre Discriminación en México. ENADIS 2010. Resultados sobre trabajadoras domésticas. Mexico.
- Consejo Nacional para Prevenir la Discriminación (CONAPRED) (2012): Derechos iguales para las trabajadoras del hogar en Mexico.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé W. (2010): Die Intersektion von "Rasse" und Geschlecht demarginalisieren: Eine Schwarze feministische Kritik am Antidiskriminierungsrecht, der feministischen Theorie und der antirassistischen Politik. In: Lutz, Helma/Vivar, Maria Teresa Herrera and Supik, Linda (edt.): Fokus Intersektionalität. Bewegungen und Verortungen eines vielschichtigen Konzeptes. Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 33-54.
- Crenshaw, Kimberly (1991) [1989]: Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics. In: Bartlett, Katharine T./Kennedy, Roseanne (edt.): Feminist Legal Theory. Readings in Law and Gender. Boulder: Westview Press, 57-80.
- Dannecker, Petra; Vossemer, Christiane (2014): Qualitative Interviews in der Entwicklungsforschung. Typen und Herausforderungen. In: Dannecker, Petra; Englert, Birgit (edt.): Qualitative Methoden in der Entwicklungsforschung. Wien: Mandelbaum Verlag. 153-175.
- Davis, Angela (1982): Rassismus und Sexismus. Schwarze Frauen und Klassenkampf in den USA. Berlin: Elefant Press.
- Davis, Kathy (2010): Intersektionalität als „Buzzword“: Eine wissenschaftssoziologische Perspektive auf die Frage: „Was macht eine feministische Theorie erfolgreich?“ In: Lutz, Helma/Vivar, Maria Teresa Herrera and Supik, Linda (edt.), Fokus Intersektionalität. Bewegungen und Verortungen eines vielschichtigen Konzeptes. Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 55-68.
- Degele, Nina; Winker, Gabriele (2011): Intersectionality as multi-level analysis: Dealing with social inequality. In: European Journal of Women's Studies 18 (1) 51-66.
- Doucette, Erika; Schönpflug Karin (Sommersemester 2014): Gender, Economics and Postcolonial Critique, University Vienna.
- Durin, Séverine; Eugenia de la O, María; Bastos Santiago (2014): Trabajadoras en la sombra. Dimensiones del servicio doméstico latinoamericano. In: Durin, Séverine; de la O, María Eugenia; Bastos Santiago (Edt.): Trabajadoras en la sombra. Dimensiones del servicio

- doméstico latinoamericano. México, D.F.:Centro de Inverstigaciones y Esudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 23-38.
- Durin, Séverine (2008): Entre luces y sombras. Miradas sobre los indígenas en el área metropolitana de Monterrey. México, CIESAS-CDI.
- Eichelberger, Brenda (1977): Voices of Black Feminism. In: *Quest: A Feminist Quarterly* 7: 16-28.
- Englander, Karen; Yáñez, Carmen; and Barney, Xochitl (2012): Doing Science within a Culture of Machismo and Marianismo. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 13(3), 65-85.
- Eugenia de la O (2014): Presentación. In: Durin, Séverine; de la O, María Eugenia; Bastos Santiago (Edt.): *Trabajadoras en la sombra. Dimensiones del servicio doméstico latinoamericano*. México, D.F.:Centro de Inverstigaciones y Esudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 41-48.
- Gather, Claudia; Geissler, Birgit; Rerrich, Maria S. (Edt.) (2002): Eine Einleitung. In: *Weltmarkt Privathaushalt: bezahlte Haushaltsarbeit im globalen Wandel*. Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot. 7-15.
- Goldsmith, Mary (1981): Trabajo doméstico asalariado y desarrollo capitalista.
- Goldsmith, Mary (1990): El servicio doméstico y la migración femenina. In: Ramírez, Elia; Dávila, Hilda (edt.): *Trabajo femenino y crisis en México. Tendencias y transformaciones actuales*. México: UAM, 257-275.
- Goldsmith, Mary (1998): De sirvientas a trabajadoras. La cara cambiante del servicio doméstico en la ciudad de México. *Debate Feminista*, Year 9, volume 17, México, 85-95.
- Gualotuña, Marcela; Tuider, Elisabeth (2009): Mutterschaft auf Distanz. Migrationsbewegungen und die Veränderung familiärer Beziehungs- und Geschlechterkonstellationen. In: Tuider, Elisabeth; Wienold Hanns; Bewernitz, Torsten (edt.): *Dollares und Träume. Migration, Arbeit und Geschlecht in Mexiko im 21. Jahrhundert*. Münster: Verlag Westfälisches Dampfboot, 231-246.
- Guevara Bermúdez, José Antonio (2013): El Convenio 189 sobre los derechos de las personas trabajadoras del hogar. In: *El Codidiano*, 183, julio-agosto, 2013, 89-101. Distrito Federal: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana Unidad Azcapotzalco.
- Han, Petrus (2003): *Frauen und Migration. Strukturelle Bedingungen, Fakten und soziale Folgen der Frauenmigration*. Stuttgart.
- Heimeshoff, Lisa-Marie; Schwenken, Helen (2011): Domestic Work: A Significant Sector. In: Schenken, Helen; Heimeshoff, Lisa-Marie (edt.): *Domestic Workers Count: Global Data on an Often Invisible Sector*. Kassel: Kassel university press GmbH. 5-15. <http://www.uni-kassel.de/upress/online/frei/978-3-86219-050-8.volltext.frei.pdf> [Accessed: 26.08.2015].
- Hill Collins, Patricia (2000): *Black Feminist Thought. Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge.
- Hill Collins, Patricia (2001): Like one of the Family: race, ethnicity and the paradox of US national identity. In: *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24 (1). 3-28.
- Hitzler, Ronald; Eberle, Thomas S. (2007): Phänomenologische Lebensweltanalyse. In: Uwe, Flick/ von Kardorff, Ernst/ Steinke, Ines (edt.): *Qualitative Forschung. Ein Handbuch*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 109-118.
- Hochschild, Arlie Russel (2003): *The Commercialization of Intimate Life: Notes from Home and Work*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette; Avila, Ernestine (1997): I'm Here, But I'm There: The Meanings of Latina Transnational Motherhood. In: *Gender and Society*, II/5, 548-571.
- Hoyos Carrero, María Paula (2013): Trabajo Doméstico: Entre lo Público y lo Privado. In: Aguilar; García; Hernández (u.a.) (edt.): *De "criadas" y "sirvientas" a mujeres trabajadoras con derechos. Relatos periodísticos del Trabajo Doméstico en América Central y México*. San José (Costa Rica): Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES). 5-14.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía INEGI (2012): *Perfil sociodemográfico de los trabajadores domésticos remunerados en Mexico 2010*.
- Jelin, Elisabeth (1977): Migration and Labor Force Participation of Latin American Women: the Domestic Servants in the Cities. In: *Signs*. Vol. 3, num. 1, 129-141.
- King, Deborah (1988): Multiple Jeopardy. Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology. In: *Chicago Journals* (14) 1: 42-72.
- Kirchhoff, Maren (2011): North America. In: Schenken, Helen; Heimeshoff, Lisa-Marie (edt.): *Domestic Workers Count: Global Data on an Often Invisible Sector*. Kassel: Kassel university press GmbH. 63-75. <http://www.uni-kassel.de/upress/online/frei/978-3-86219-050-8.volltext.frei.pdf> [Zugriff 26.08.2015].
- Klapeer, Christine M. (2014): Intersektionalität statt ein verlegenes et cetera, Methodologische Impulse zum Umgang mit der Verwobenheit von ungleichheitsgenerierenden Kategorien. In: Dannecker, Petra; Englert, Birgit (edt.): *Qualitative Methoden in der Entwicklungsforschung*. Wien: Mandelbaum Verlag. 55-74.
- Kuenz, Claudia (2012): *Intersektionen in der bezahlten Hausarbeit: Badanti auf der Suche nach Arbeit in Südtirol*. Thesis, University of Vienna.
- Lamas, Marta (2006): *Feminismo. Transmisiones y retransmisiones*. Mexico: Taurus.
- Lau Jaivén, Ana (2006): El feminismo mexicano: balance y perspectivas. In: Lebon, Natalie/Maier, Elizabeth (Edt.): *De lo privado a lo público. 30 años de lucha ciudadana de las mujeres en América Latina*. México: siglo XXI/UNIFEM/LASA, 181-194.
- Lutz, Helma (2007): Die 24-Stunden-Polin. Eine intersektionelle Analyse transnationaler Dienstleistungen. In: Klinger, Cornelia; Knapp, Gudrun-Axeli; Sauer, Birgit (edt.) *Achsen der Ungleichheit. Zum Verhältnis von Klasse, Geschlecht und Ethnizität*. Frankfurt a. M.: Campus 210-234.
- Lutz, Helma (2008): *Vom Weltmarkt in den Privathaushalt – Die neuen Dienstmädchen im Zeitalter der Globalisierung*. Opladen: Verlag Barbara Budrich.
- Lutz, Helma; Palenga-Möllnbeck, Ewa (2012): Care Workers, Care Drain, and Care Chains: Reflections on Care, Migration, and Citizenship. In: *Social Politics* 2012 (19) 1. Oxford University Press. 15-37. <http://sp.oxfordjournals.org/content/19/1/15.full> [Zugriff: 10.10.2015]
- Massey, Douglas S. (2000): Einwanderungspolitik für ein neues Jahrhundert. In: Husa, Karl/Parnreiter, Christof/ Stacher, Irene (Hg.): *Internationale Migration. Die globale Herausforderung des 21. Jahrhunderts?* Frankfurt a.M.: Brandes & Apsel, 53-76.
- Mayring, Philipp (2010) [1990]: „Aufbereitungsverfahren“. In: Mayring, Philipp. *Einführung in die qualitative Sozialforschung: eine Anleitung zu qualitativem Denken*. München: Psychologie-Verl.-Union, 60-76.
- McCall, Leslie (2005): The Complexity of Intersectionality. *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 2005, vol. 30, no. 3, 2005 Chicago: University of Chicago, 1771-1800.

- Mignolo, Walter (2012) [2006]: Epistemischer Ungehorsam. Rhetorik der Moderne, Logik der Kolonialität und Grammatik der Dekolonialität. Aus dem Spanischen übersetzt und eingeleitet von Jens Kastner und Tom Waibel. Wien: Turia + Kant.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade (1984): Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse. In: *Boundary 2* 12 (3), 333-358.
- Morales, Marco Vinicio (2014): Nije nocha karirili: yo trabajo en casa. Reproducción material y trayectorias laborales de mujeres rarámuri dedicadas al empleo doméstico en la ciudad de Chihuahua. In: Durin, Séverine; de la O, María Eugenia; Bastos Santiago (Edt.): *Trabajadoras en la sombra. Dimensiones del servicio doméstico latinoamericano*. México, D.F.: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 83-110.
- Moreno Ruiz, María José (2012): Paid domestic work, gender and socioeconomic inequalities in developing countries. Cases from Mexico-City and Rabat. Dissertation, University of Essex.
- Naciones Unidas (2006): Estudio a fondo de todas las formas de violencia contra la mujer. Informe del Secretario General. A/61/122/Add.1, 6 de julio de 2006.
- Narayan, Kirin (1993): How Native Is a "Native" Anthropologist? In: *American Anthropologist* 95 (3): 671-686.
- Olivera, Mercedes (2001) "Mujeres indígenas de México", *Mujeres indígenas*, seminario de GIMTRAP, México.
- Parella, Sónia (2008): An Approach to the Transnational practices of Latina Migrants in Spain and its Impact on Transnational Homes. Talk at 1st ISA Forum of Sociology, Barcelona, 5.-8. September 2008, 1-25.
- Parnreiter, Christof (2000): Theorien und Forschungsansätze zu Migration. In: Husa, Karl/Parnreiter, Christof/ Stacher, Irene (Hg.): *Internationale Migration. Die globale Herausforderung des 21. Jahrhunderts?* Frankfurt a.M.: Brandes & Apsel, 25-52.
- Parreñas, Rhacel Salazar (2001): Mothering from a Distance. Emotions, Gender and Intergenerational Relations in Filipino Transnational Families. In: *Feministische Studien*, Heft 27, 361-389.
- Parreñas, Rhacel Salazar (2008): *The force of domesticity. Filipina Migrants and globalization*. New York University Press, New York and London.
- Purkarthofer, Petra (2013): 40 Jahre feministische Bewegungen in Mexiko. In: Tuider, Elisabeth/ Burchhardt, Hans-Jürgen/ Öhlschläger, Rainer (edt.): *Frauen (und) Macht in Lateinamerika*. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 115-128.
- Riegel, Christine (2010): Intersektionalität als transdisziplinäres Projekt. Methodologische Perspektiven für die Jugendforschung. In: Riegel, Christine/Scherr, Albert/Stauber, Barbara (edt.): *Transdisziplinäre Jugendforschung. Grundlagen und Forschungskonzepte*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 65-89.
- Rubí, Mauricio (2010): La ley no cuida a mujeres trabajadoras. *El Economista*. 23.07.2010 <http://eleconomista.com.mx/sociedad/2010/07/23/ley-no-cuida-mujeres-trabajadoras> [Accessed: 6.10.2015]
- Russel, Bernard H. (2006): *Research Methods in Anthropology*. 4th ed. Qualitative and quantitative approaches. Oxford: Alta Mira Press.
- Saldaña Tejeda, Abril (2013): Racismo, proximidad y mestizaje: el caso de las mujeres en el servicio doméstico en México. In: *TRAYECTORIAS AÑO 15, NÚM. 37 JULIO-DICIEMBRE 2013*.

- Sánchez Ambriz, Mary Carmen (2013): Mujeres sin Rostro. In: Aguilar; García; Hernández (u.a.) (edt.): De "criadas" y "sirvientas" a mujeres trabajadoras con derechos. Relatos periodísticos del Trabajo Doméstico en América Central y México. San José (Costa Rica): Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES). 91-102.
- Sassen, Saskia (2002): Global Cities and Survival Circuits. In: Ehrenreich, Barbara; Russel Hochschild, Arlie (edt.): Global Woman. Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy. New York: Holt Paperbacks, 254-274.
- Sauer, Birgit; Wöhl, Stefanie (2008): Governing intersectionality. Ein kritischer Ansatz zur Analyse von Diversitätspolitik. In: Klinger, Cornelia and Axeli-Knapp, Gudrun (edt.): Überkreuzungen. Fremdheit, Ungleichheit, Differenz. Forum Frauen und Geschlechterforschung Volume 23. Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 249-273.
- Schirmer, Alexandra; Tienken Tanja (2009): Von der Unsichtbarkeit der Migrantinnen zur „Feminisierung“ der Migration. Ein kritischer Blick auf die Wahrnehmung von Frauen als selbstständige Akteurinnen im Migrationsprozess in Mexiko. In: Tuidier, Elisabeth; Wienold Hanns; Bewernitz, Torsten (edt.): Dolares und Träume. Migration, Arbeit und Geschlecht in Mexiko im 21. Jahrhundert. Münster: Verlag Westfälisches Dampfboot, 201-214.
- Schulz, Ulrike (2014): Über Daten nachdenken. Grounded Theory Studien in entwicklungsbezogener Forschung. In: Dannecker, Petra; Englert, Birgit (edt.): Qualitative Methoden in der Entwicklungsforschung. Wien: Mandelbaum Verlag. 75-93.
- Smith, Carol A. (1995): Race-Class-Gender Ideology in Guatemala: Modern and Anti-Modern Forms. In: Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. 37, No. 4. (Oct., 1995), pp. 723-749.
- Stefoni, Carolina (2009): „Migración, género y servicio doméstico. Mujeres peruanas en Chile“. In: Valenzuela, María; Mora, Claudia (edt.): Trabajo doméstico: un largo camino hacia el trabajo decente, Chile, Organización Internacional del Trabajo, 191-232.
- Tarrés, María Luisa (2007): Discurso y acción política feminista (1970-2000). In: Lamas, Marta (edt.): Miradas feministas sobre las mexicanas del siglo XX. México: fondo de cultura económica, 113-148.
- Walgenbach, Katharina (2007): Gender als interdependente Kategorie. In: Walgenbach, Katharina/Dietze, Gabriele/Hornscheid, Antje/Palm, Kerstin (edt.): Gender als interdependente Kategorie. Neue Perspektiven auf Intersektionalität, Diversität und Heterogenität. Opladen: Barbara Budrich, 23-64.
- Walgenbach, Katharina (2011): Intersektionalität als Analyseparadigma kultureller und sozialer Ungleichheit. In: Bilstein, Johannes/Ecarius, Jutta/Keiner, Edwin (edt.): Kulturelle Differenzen und Globalisierung. Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 113-130.
- Wondratschke Claudia (2005): Seguridad Ciudadana y medios de comunicación en la ciudad de México. Ciudad de México: Centro de Competencia en Comunicación para América Latina.
- Yuval-Davis, Nira (2006): Intersectionality and Feminist Politics. In: European Journal of Womens's Studies 13 (3): 193-209.

### **Internet sources:**

- ADITAL (2010): Buscará OIT mejorar condiciones para trabajadoras del hogar. [http://www6.rel-uita.org/mujer/trabajadoras\\_del\\_hogar/oit\\_buscara\\_mejorar\\_condiciones.htm](http://www6.rel-uita.org/mujer/trabajadoras_del_hogar/oit_buscara_mejorar_condiciones.htm) [Accessed: 17.02.2015]

- Bautista, Marcelina (2010): Spotlight interview with Marcelina Bautista (CONACTRAHO, Mexico). [www.ituc-csi.org/spotlight-interview-with-marcelina.html](http://www.ituc-csi.org/spotlight-interview-with-marcelina.html) [Accessed: 30.09.2015]
- BBC Mundo (2006): Hay condiciones de esclavitud. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/specials/2006/trabajadoras\\_hogar/newsid\\_5027000/5027812.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/specials/2006/trabajadoras_hogar/newsid_5027000/5027812.stm) [Accessed: 25.09.2015]
- Benz, Rainer (n.d.): Mestizo, Definition, History & Culture. <http://study.com/academy/lesson/mestizo-definition-history-culture.html> [Accessed: 22.09.2015]
- CACEH (2015): Homepage of Centro de Apoyo y Capacitación de Empleadas del Hogar. <http://www.caceh.org.mx/page1/index.html> [Accessed: 03.10.2015]
- Caritas Internationalis (2009): Needed and Exploited - the Invisible Suffering of Migrant Domestic Workers. [www.caritas.org/activities/women\\_migration/needed\\_and\\_exploited\\_the\\_invisible\\_suffering\\_of\\_migrant\\_domestic\\_workers.html](http://www.caritas.org/activities/women_migration/needed_and_exploited_the_invisible_suffering_of_migrant_domestic_workers.html) [Accessed: 27.04.2010]
- Central Intelligence Agency (2015): The World Factbook - Mexiko. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mx.html> [Accessed: 22.09.2015]
- Collins Dictionary (n.d.): American Indian. [http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/american-indian#american-indian\\_1](http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/american-indian#american-indian_1) [Accessed: 22.09.2015]
- Comisión Nacional de los salarios mínimos (2015): salarios mínimos 2015. [http://www.conasami.gob.mx/pdf/tabla\\_salarios\\_minimos/2015/01\\_01\\_2015.pdf](http://www.conasami.gob.mx/pdf/tabla_salarios_minimos/2015/01_01_2015.pdf) [Accessed: 06.10.2015]
- D'Souza, Asha (2010): Moving towards Decent work for Domestic workers: An Overview of the ILO's work. ILO Bureau for Gender Equality. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@gender/documents/publication/wcms\\_142905.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@gender/documents/publication/wcms_142905.pdf) [Accessed: 26.09.2015]
- Degele, Nina; Winker, Gabriele (2007): Intersektionalität als Mehrebenenanalyse. [www.portal-intersektionalitaet.de](http://www.portal-intersektionalitaet.de) [Accessed: 25.09.2015]
- Díaz-Prieto; Kuhner, G. (2007): "Globalización y migración femenina. Experiencias en México". CEPI WORKING PAPER No. 12. [http://interamericanos.itam.mx/working\\_papers/12KUHNER.pdf](http://interamericanos.itam.mx/working_papers/12KUHNER.pdf) [Accessed: 26.09.2015]
- Hernández Navarro, Luis (2014): Zu ihren Diensten? Enteignung der Landbevölkerung zugunsten von Energiekonzernen. In: Poonal – Pool de Nuevas Agencias de América Latina. Poonal Nr. 1101, Juni 2014. <http://www.npla.de/de/poonal/4758-zu-ihren-diensten-enteignung-der-landbevoelkerung-zugunsten-von-energiekonzernen> [Accessed: 31.10.2015]
- Huesca Reynoso, Luis (2004): Is the middle class vanishing in Mexico? An application of polarization by subgroups between 1984 and 2000. Universidad Autonoma Barcelona. [http://www.ciad.mx/archivos/desarrollo/huescas/MPRA\\_paper\\_14390.pdf](http://www.ciad.mx/archivos/desarrollo/huescas/MPRA_paper_14390.pdf) [Accessed: 31.10.2015]
- Human Rights Watch (HRW) (2013): Claiming Rights. Domestic Workers' Movements and Global Advances for Labor Reform. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/10/27/claiming-rights/domestic-workers-movements-and-global-advances-labor-reform> [Accessed: 08.10.2015]



- Iglesias, Gerardo (2010): En dialogo con Marcelina Bautista: Invisible work, belittled workers. [www6.rel-uita.org/mujer/trabajadoras\\_del\\_hogar/con\\_marcelina\\_bautista-eng.htm](http://www6.rel-uita.org/mujer/trabajadoras_del_hogar/con_marcelina_bautista-eng.htm) [Accessed 15.02.2015]
- INEGI (2014): Encuesta Nacional de la Dinámica Demográfica ENADID 2014, 9.7.2015. (p. 5). [http://www.inegi.org.mx/est/contenidos/proyectos/encuestas/hogares/especiales/enadid/enadid2014/doc/resultados\\_enadid14.pdf](http://www.inegi.org.mx/est/contenidos/proyectos/encuestas/hogares/especiales/enadid/enadid2014/doc/resultados_enadid14.pdf) [Accessed: 28.08.2015]
- INMUJERES (2012): Más de cinco millones de madres viven solas con sus hijos/as. <http://www.inmujeres.gob.mx/index.php/sala-de-prensa/inicio-noticias/557-mas-de-cinco-millones-de-madres-viven-solas-con-sus-hijas> [Accessed: 10.10.2015]
- International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) (2015 a): LATIN AMERICA: News & Updates December 2014 – January 2015. [http://www.idwfed.org/en/resources/latin-america-news-updates-december-2014-january-2015/@@display-file/attachment\\_1](http://www.idwfed.org/en/resources/latin-america-news-updates-december-2014-january-2015/@@display-file/attachment_1) [Accessed: 26.08.2015]
- International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) (2015 b): Trabajadoras del hogar hacen historia se crea el primer sindicato en mexico. <http://www.idwfed.org/es/relatos/trabajadoras-del-hogar-hacen-historia-se-crea-el-primer-sindicato-en-mexico> [Accessed: 03.10.2015]
- International Labour Organization (ILO) (2010): Report IV (1) Decent work for domestic workers. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed\\_norm/@relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_104700.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_104700.pdf) [Accessed: 27.08.2015]
- International Labour Organization (ILO) (2011): C189 – Domestic Workers Convention. [http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C189](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C189) [Accessed: 01.09.2015]
- Juárez Sánchez, José Pedro; Ramírez Valverde, Benito (2007): El Turismo rural como complemento al desarrollo territorial rural en zonas indígenas de México. <http://www.ub.edu/geocrit/sn/sn-236.htm> [Accessed: 06.11.2015]
- Latinobarometro (2013): Grado de satisfacción con el funcionamiento de la democracia. <http://www.latinobarometro.org/latOnline.jsp> [Accessed: 06.10.2015]
- Mendoza, Eunice (2009): Machismo Literature Review. Draft of Working Paper #2009-12. <https://www.rit.edu/cla/criminaljustice/sites/rit.edu.cla.criminaljustice/files/docs/WorkingPapers/2009/2009-12.pdf> [Accessed: 07.10.2015]
- Moreno Ramirez, Ileana (nd): Los derechos fundamentales de las trabajadoras del hogar y sus garantías en México. [https://www.scjn.gob.mx/transparencia/lists/becarios/attachments/150/becarios\\_150.pdf](https://www.scjn.gob.mx/transparencia/lists/becarios/attachments/150/becarios_150.pdf) [Accessed: 05.10.2015]
- Organización Editorial Mexicana (2009): Iniciarán trabajadoras del hogar proceso de certificación. <http://www.oem.com.mx/elmexicano/notas/n1105904.htm> [Accessed: 08.10.2015]
- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2015): Purchasing power parities. <http://www.oecd.org/std/prices-ppp/purchasingpowerparities-frequentlyaskedquestionsfaqs.htm> [Accessed: 24.09.2015]
- Ortemberg & Asociados (2015): Hijos menores de padres separados: Alimentos, Tenencias, Visitas. [http://www.abogadodefamilia.com.ar/hijos\\_menores\\_padres\\_separados.htm](http://www.abogadodefamilia.com.ar/hijos_menores_padres_separados.htm) [Accessed: 10.0.2015]

Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (2015): Información General Sobre México, Datos Basicos. <http://sre.gob.mx/otros/informacion-general-sobre-mexico> [Accessed: 27.08.2015]

Sedesol (2015): estancias infantiles para apoyar a madres trabajadoras. [http://www.sedesol.gob.mx/es/SEDESOL/Programa\\_estancias\\_infantiles](http://www.sedesol.gob.mx/es/SEDESOL/Programa_estancias_infantiles) [Accessed: 10.10.2015]

UNAM (2012) - Universidad Nacional Autonoma de México: Plan educativo nacional. [http://www.planeducativonacional.unam.mx/CAP\\_00/Text/00\\_05a.html](http://www.planeducativonacional.unam.mx/CAP_00/Text/00_05a.html) [Accessed: 10.10.2015]

UNDP: Human Development Report (2014): Mexico Page 2. [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr\\_theme/country-notes/MEX.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/MEX.pdf) [Accessed: 31.08.2015]

UNICEF Mexico (2015): Educacion. <http://www.unicef.org/mexico/spanish/educacion.html> [Accessed: 10.10.2015]

## **Interviews:**

Interview number 01: Lorena, 09.02.2015, Coffee shop, 59 min.

Interview number 02: Regina, 11.02.2015, Park, 01:47 min.

Interview number 03: Camila, 17.02.2015, Flat, 35 min.

Interview number 04: Ana, 18.02.2015, Employers flat, 01:06 min.

Interview number 05: Ximena, 22.02.2015, Park, 01:12 min.

Interview number 06: Catalina, 27.02.2015, Employers flat, 34 min.

Expert interview Baustista Marcelina: 26.02.2015, office CACEH, 50 min.

Expert interview Goldsmith Mary: 02.03.2015, office in UAM – Xochimilco, 25 min.

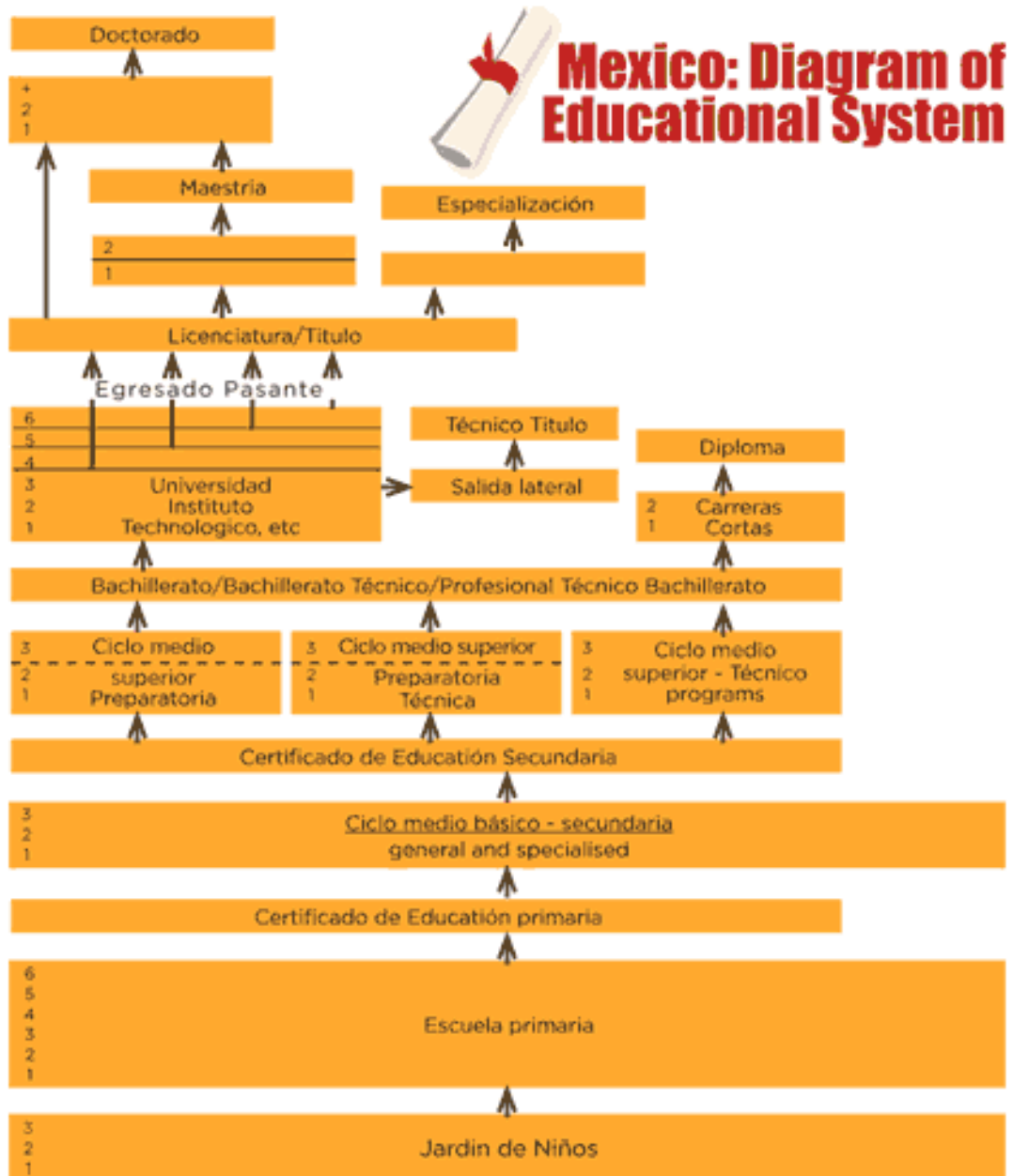
# Appendix

## List of abbreviations

CACEH	Centro de Apoyo y Capacitación para Empleadas del Hogar – Center of Support and Training of Domestic Workers
CONAPRED	Consejo Nacional Para Prevenir la Discriminación – National Council to Prevent Discrimination
CONLACTRAHO	Confederación Latinoamericana y del Caribe de las Trabajadoras del Hogar – Latinamerican and Caribbean Confederation of Domestic Workers
ENADIS	Encuesta Nacional sobre Discriminación en México – National Survey about discrimination in Mexico
ENOE	Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo – National Survey of Occupation and Employment
GDI	Gender Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GNI	Gross National Income
IDWF	International Domestic Workers Federation
ILO	International Labor Organisation
INEGI	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía – National Institute of Statistics and Geography
LFT	Ley Federal del Trabajo- Federal Work Law
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement

PRD	Partido de la Revolución Democrática – Party of democratic revolution
SINACTRAHO	Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores y Trabajadoras del Hogar – National Domestic Workers Union
UAM	Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana – Autonomous Metropolitan University
UN	United Nations
UNAM	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México – National Autonomous University of Mexico
USA	United States of America

# Mexican School System



Source: Australian Government, Australian Education International <http://www.aei.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>  
World Education Services

## Interview questions in Spanish

### 1. Me puedes describir tu vida desde la infancia hasta ahora?

#### Datos personales:

De donde vienes? Cuando viniste a DF?

Cuantos años tienes?

Tienes hijos/pareja?

Desde cuando eres empleada del hogar?

Que hiciste antes de ese trabajo?

Porque dejaste el trabajo anterior?

Como conseguiste ese trabajo?

### 2. Me puedes describir tu vida ahora?

#### La situación personal y laboral de ahora

#### Me puedes describir un día "normal"?

#### Cual son tus experiencias de ser empleada del hogar?

#### Me puedes describir un conflicto y como lo solucionas en el trabajo?

Te has encontrado en una situación cuando te sentiste discriminada?

Cuales son tus deberes asociado del trabajo?

Desde cuando estas con la familia actual?

Cuantas personas viven en la casa?

Como es tu situación económica?

Puedes comprar y hacer lo que quieres con tu pago?

Es difícil encontrar trabajo?

Te gusta tu trabajo?

Cuantas horas trabajas al día?

Cuanto tiempo necesitas para llegar al trabajo de tu casa?

Cuantos días tienes libre? Lo puedes pedir?

Trabajas en días festivos?

Como son tus condiciones de seguridad social?

Que pasa si te lastimas/enfermas?

Quien paga los costos conctados con la enfermedad?

Tienes seguro social?

Hasta cuantos años tienes que trabajar? Vas a tener una pensión?

Se cambio la situación de empleadas del hogar?

Como es tu relación con los empleadores?

La empleadora tiene un trabajo remunerado?

Tus empleadores te pagan semanal o mensual?

Quien te dice que tienes que hacer?

Como quieres que te dicen?

Quien cuida tus hijos/dependntes mientras estas trabajando?

Conoces tus derechos laborales?

Como gastas tu dinero?

Quien mas tiene beneficio de tu pago?

Hay otros ingresos?

Eres parte de una organizacion que trabaja con o para empleadas del hogar?

Que dirias a tu hija/ sobrina si dice que quiere ser empleada del hogar?

**3. Como seria tu vida perfecta?**

**Que son tus deseos privados o laborales para el futuro?**

**Crees que organizaciones pueden cambiar la situacion laboral?**

**Que preguntarias o demandas del gobierno para cambiar la situacion?**

**Que preguntarias a tus empleadores para cambiar tu situacion laboral?**

**Que necesitas para tener una vida decente? Un trabajo decente?**

**Hay algo que te gustaria que cambie en tu vida?**

**4. Porque participas en este entrevista?**

## Questions for the expert interviews

### **Marcelina Bautista:**

- Cual son los retos mas graves que tiene CACEH?
- Me puedes, decir que características tienen las compañeras que son parte de caceh?
- Como se veia la situacion perfecta para caceh?
- Crees que, cuando induzcan las leyes que se cambia la situacion de las compañeras?
- Como es la cooperacion o colaboracion con los empleadores con ustedes?
- Que pinta tiene el gobierno en la situacion de las compañeras?
- Que condiciones politicas, economicas y sociales deben que, o sea son necesarios para que ustedes van a lograr el sindicato?
- Como te imaginas el futuro?

### **Mary Goldsmith:**

- When and why did you start to do research about domestic work in Mexico?
- I wanted to know if you have seen any changes of the situation of domestic workers since you started?
- So which structural circumstances do you see provoke this current situation of domestic workers?
- You are connected to CACEH, what role do you think does CACEH plays in the situation of domestic workers nowadays?

- So you think it's very important that it's like a non-governmental organization, I mean that it's not part of the government?
- You wrote a text about the sindicato of domestic workers that there has been one in the past. What conditions in economic, political and social meaning do you think are crucial so that there is a sindicato again?
- In your opinion, what are the biggest struggles, right now or domestic workers?
- What role plays the employers in this?
- How do you imagine now the future of domestic workers in Mexico? Do you have an imagination?
- What kind of contribution academics, we give to this fight of domestic workers?



## English Abstract

In the first part of this paper, a description of Mexico is found. Background information about its population, economy and migration processes in Mexico is given to realize the context in which the research took place. It is followed by the methodological reflections how the data have been collected and evaluated. In this part a more detailed description about literature review, the participating observation and the interviews is given, on what the research is based. Afterwards, the development of the concept of domestic work appears. It discusses the feminist perspective of domestic work and considers the critique from black feminist movements on the mainstream debates. In the course of these discussions, the issues connected to domestic work are illustrated. To gain a closer look on domestic work in Mexico, some data are edited and the political organization of these workers is discussed.

To analyze the living realities of domestic workers in Mexico City, the theory of intersectionality has been used. Through the interdependence of elaborated categories, the work situation and lives of domestic workers has been viewed. According to how each category is involved with each other, the situation can be very different. This paper points out, how the categories elaborated influence each other and lead to a determined living reality of this work group. The combination of all the categories mentioned in the main part of applied theory leads to a dynamic picture of the domestic workers in Mexico City. In most cases it is a disadvantaged position of domestic workers in the Mexican society. This is involved in institutional and societal context that tend to keep them in this position in favor of the employers and the economic system. The current civil society movements and global institutions like ILO are focusing to regulate this work relation in order to implement basic labor rights for domestic workers in Mexico.

## German Abstract

Diese Arbeit beschreibt die Lebens- und Arbeitsrealitäten von Haushaltsarbeiterinnen in Mexico Stadt aus einer intersektionellen Perspektive. Zu Beginn wird der Kontext, in dem diese Arbeit eingebettet ist dargestellt. Die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung und die Migrationsprozesse die sich daraus ergeben werden beschreiben. Danach wird die Datensammlung und –auswertung behandelt, da die Studie auf narrativen Interviews mit Haushaltsarbeiterinnen, Expertinneninterviews, teilnehmender Beobachtung und Literaturlauswertung basiert. Die theoretische Basis bildet die intersektionale Theorie, welche zur Analyse von komplexen Ungleichheitsverhältnissen verwendet wird. Die ursprünglichen Kategorien *Race*, *Klasse* und *Gender*, deren Wechselbeziehung zu Ungleichheitsverhältnissen führt wurde in dieser Arbeit in zehn Kategorien (Alter, Bildung, Gewalterfahrung, Generativität, Gesundheit, Einkommen, rechtliche Situation, Migration, sozialer Hintergrund und Arbeit) geteilt, die die ursprünglichen drei beinhalten.

Um die aktuelle Situation von Haushaltsarbeiterinnen in Mexiko einschätzen zu können ist die Entwicklung des Konzepts der Hausarbeit beschrieben. Feministische akademische Bewegungen, die Hausarbeit als patriarchale Unterdrückung anprangerten, haben lange Zeit die Kategorien Klasse und *Race* in dieser Diskussion nicht mit einbezogen. Das wurde massiv von *Women of color* kritisiert, die auf ihre spezielle Lebensrealitäten aufmerksam machten.

Die heutige Lebensrealität von Haushaltsarbeiterinnen in Mexiko Stadt zeigt sich beeinflusst von der Independenz von verschiedenen Kategorien. So kann das Bildungsniveau Einfluss auf das Bewusstsein von arbeitsrechtlichen Möglichkeiten haben. Auch das Alter kann beeinflussen ob die Haushaltsarbeiterin von ihren Arbeitgebern unterstützt wird um weiterführend in die Schule oder die Universität zu gehen. Durch die Kombination der erarbeiteten Kategorien kann ein dynamisches Bild der Situation der Haushaltsarbeiterinnen gezeigt werden. Die Lebenssituation dieser Arbeiterinnen ist beeinflusst von institutionellen und gesellschaftlichen Entwicklungen, die die Handlungsmöglichkeiten bestimmen.