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JOB SEARCH, SOCIAL NETWORKS, AND LOCAL LABOR-MARKET DYNAMICS: THE CASE OF PAID HOUSEHOLD WORK IN SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA¹

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Abstract: Drawing on original interview and survey data, this paper examines the local labor-market dynamics for immigrant Mexicana household workers in San Diego, California. The study focuses on paid domestic "job workers" who clean the homes of several different employers each week and who are generally paid "under the table." This paper addresses two questions: (1) What is the social and geographical organization of the local labor market for paid household workers in San Diego? and (2) What are the implications of the local labor-market dynamics for the social relations of domestic workers and the space of the city? The analysis particularly emphasizes the role of job search in defining the terms of employment in paid household work. Because one of the most important ways of finding house-cleaning jobs is through personal referrals, the social networks of workers are also explored. The paper argues that the labor-market dynamics for paid household work contribute to the residential clustering of immigrants, and help create and maintain differences among domestic workers and hierarchical relations between workers and their employers. The findings of this case study have implications for other expanding contingent and informal labor markets.

I need to find two more houses, but the difficult part is transportation. To go from one house to another, even one nearby, takes me one hour by walking or an hour and a half on the bus. Also I iron too much and my fingers are getting deformed because they are hot and then I have to go out in the rain.... What can we do? We can't afford to turn down a job; it is the only thing we have. Even if it is low salary, we work for it. There are people who say that the workers who stand on corners will work for as little as \$25 per day. So the employers look for them because then they can pay whatever they want.

Lupe, age 52, resident alien²

With the first houses I needed an interpreter to get them. With the recent ones, since I am recommended, I just call and make arrangements according to my schedule. My English is broken but I can communicate with them. I tell them what I do and don't do. Sometimes they don't want to pay what I ask... so I tell them that I will just do the job and then they will have to judge from it. The end up paying me what

I originally asked for. I just left one job because I already had 15; [I gave it] to my daughter. When she needs work I pass her some.

Rafina, age 48, resident alien

Employment in domestic service is expanding in many United States cities, particularly among immigrant women (Colen, 1990; Ruiz, 1991; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994a; Repak, 1994). The forces contributing to the growth of the occupation are many: the polarization of income and lifestyles in United States cities; the increased economic pressures on women in poor countries such as Mexico and the Philippines; restrictions on the formal-sector employment of undocumented immigrants in the United States; the growing ranks of employed women; and the failure of men, communities, or the state to relieve employed women of their traditional domestic responsibilities (Enloe, 1989; Gregson and Lowe, 1994; Mattingly, 1996). In San Diego, the occupation is dominated by immigrant women from Mexico, many of whom are not legally eligible for employment in the United States. Despite laws that require employers of household workers to pay Social Security taxes and forbid the employment of undocumented immigrants, most paid household work in San Diego is paid "under the table," and many workers in the occupation are undocumented immigrants (Solórzano-Torres, 1991; Chavez, 1992). Most paid house cleaners in San Diego are "job workers," cleaning several different houses on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Most employers of housekeepers are not the leisured rich, but rather middle-class households with "more time than money" who pay to have their houses cleaned on a weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly basis. Because domestic workers and their employers lack personnel departments, want ads, or even hiring halls to connect them, they rely on a fine web of personal networks that run through the city, linking immigrant Mexicans in search of work with middle-class households willing to pay for housekeeping.

The task of this paper is addressing two interrelated questions. First, what is the social and geographical organization of the labor market for immigrant housekeepers in San Diego? And second, what are the implications of this organization for both the geography of the city and the social relations of immigrant domestic workers? One premise of this paper is that labor markets are social and political, as well as economic, processes (England, 1995; Hanson and Pratt, 1995; Peck, 1996). So in describing the local labor market I focus not only on its spatial and economic aspects, but also on social relations. In particular, I emphasize the importance of job search and informal networks in structuring the occupation and the labor market. Similarly, I appraise the significance of the labor-market structure in terms of broader social and geographical processes, especially the increase in informal service-sector employment and the persistence of racial-ethnic residential segregation. A second premise is that the category "immigrant domestic worker" is itself complex and diverse. While immigrant domestic workers are employed in a low-status occupation and tend to be more marginal than their employers in terms of ethnicity and immigration status, there is also a great deal of diversity among workers. Some workers, like Rafina, earn a substantial income from cleaning houses, while others, like Lupe, continue to struggle to make ends meet. In this paper, I explore how the dynamics of the local labor market shape, and are shaped by, relations between workers and their employers as well as relations among domestic workers themselves.

I begin the paper with a review of the literature about local labor-market dynamics, followed by a discussion of the research. The interviews I draw on here were part of a research project conducted in 1993 and 1994, which included in-depth interviews with 32 immigrant domestic workers and three former domestic workers, 29 employers of domestic workers, and a telephone survey of 500 San Diego households. I then contextualize the research by describing the basic characteristics of the occupation in San Diego in the 1990s. In this section, I describe the size of the labor force, the wages, and the location of residences of workers and employers. I pay particular attention to the long and everchanging commutes of domestic workers, showing that access to jobs is especially problematic. I go on to reveal how the labor market for domestic workers requires ongoing job search, particularly when workers want to improve their wages or working conditions. Through a careful examination of job referral and networks, I argue that the structure of the labor market shapes—and is shaped by—social relations among domestic workers. I close by suggesting some of the lessons that this study may hold for research on other aspects of immigrant settlement and service-sector employment.

LOCAL LABOR MARKETS

Geographers have long been interested in the organization and structure of local labor markets, although the questions asked and methods used to answer them have changed with the times. During the heyday of spatial science, scholars searched for the spatial patterns of labor-market behavior, often calculating the concentration of workers near workplaces (Moses, 1962; Evans, 1973). At the present time, most geographic studies begin from the premise that local labor markets are not purely economic in nature, but are also shaped and regulated by social structures and practices and by political interests and imperatives (Clark, 1983; Massey, 1984; Peck, 1989, 1992, 1996; Hanson and Pratt, 1991, 1995; England, 1993, 1995; Moss, 1995). Peck (1996) has done a commendable job of bringing together research and theory on the role of social and political practices in local labor markets. He reiterates that labor markets are shaped by labor relations, which are primarily the result of power relations. He also argues for more "mid-level," theoretically informed studies of local labor markets, stating that "a strength of local research is its capacity to throw light on the functioning of labor-market processes in different local institutional contexts, and to generate explanations rooted in the scale at which labor markets are lived—the local" (Peck, 1996, pp. 110-112).

Research on gender and employment provides a persuasive example of the importance of social and political factors in labor markets. Gender scholars have shown how social definitions of skill and value are affected by gender ideologies and relations (e.g., Cockburn, 1983; Horrell et al., 1989; Reskin and Roos, 1990) and have revealed the myriad of connections between women's employment and gender divisions of unpaid reproductive work in homes (Hanson and Pratt, 1988, 1995; Gregson and Lowe, 1993; Hanson et al., 1994). In empirical studies of labor sheds and commuting patterns, the effect of gender is unmistakable; women tend to have shorter commutes than men do (e.g., Hanson and Johnston, 1985; Preston et al., 1993). Researchers have offered several explanations for women's shorter commute times, including the lower wages earned by women, women's greater domestic responsibilities, women's greater reliance on public transportation, and their employment in female-dominated occupations that have different locational patterns

than do male-dominated occupations. Yet women are not a uniform category, and aggregate studies of women can mask significant differences among them. Recent studies of women's journey-to-work behavior reveal that women of color tend to have markedly longer commutes than do White women (McLafferty and Preston, 1991, 1992; Preston et al., 1993; Johnston-Anumonwo, 1995).

Local labor-market dynamics are also shaped by changes in the economy and in regulatory structures. Economic restructuring has brought about a number of macro-scale changes in employment in the United States, including the decline of "Fordist" manufacturing and the growth of more flexible systems of manufacturing, as well as the continuing expansion of the service sector (Bluestone and Harrison, 1982; Scott, 1988a). Of particular importance for this paper is the increasing flexibility of employment, a trend that has changed labor-market dynamics and raised new questions for research. For some skilled workers, flexibility has meant an increase in skills and responsibilities. In many cases, however, employers have increased their flexibility by replacing permanent workers with more contingent workers, employed on a temporary or contract basis (Belous, 1989; DuRivage, 1992). The full implications of contingent employment are not yet clear, but one effect has been an increase in the amount of job search. Workers who must juggle several jobs, or who are regularly in search of new work, have markedly different labormarket practices than do workers with one stable employer. Paid household workers exemplify this trend, since they have several employers and engage in ongoing job search (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994b).

A related change in economic structure has been the dramatic expansion of informal or underground employment in wealthy countries like the United States. There is growing evidence that the informal economy, long a component of less developed economies, has expanded in major United States cities in the last two decades (Mattera, 1985; Portes and Sassen-Koob, 1987; Pahl, 1989; Portes et al., 1989; Sassen and Smith, 1992). The replacement of unionized production jobs with small-scale batch production workers, the growth in personal services, and the absence of formal employment opportunities for many contribute to the expansion of informal employment, leading Sassen and Smith (1992) to argue that the expansion of the informal economy is intimately related to processes of economic growth in major cities. Workers employed in the informal economy face a labor market that is largely unregulated by the government, unions, or the policies and practices of large employers. The employment of undocumented workers, who lie outside the purview of most social support programs, only adds to the unregulated nature of informal-sector work. Again, domestic service provides an illuminating case study. In United States cities like San Diego, the domestic service occupation exists with almost no formal regulation. Most workers are immigrants—and many of those are undocumented. In addition, there are no personnel departments, formal training, skill certificates, centralized sites of employment, employer databases, labor laws, or workers' organizations to coordinate employment practices. And to the extent that the occupation is shaped by government regulation, it is immigration (rather than labor) law that most affects employment conditions (Mattingly, 1997).

In the absence of formal mechanisms to regulate the labor market, the social networks of workers can play a central role. Economic sociologists argue that economic behavior is embedded in social relations and networks; ethnic and family connections contribute to trust, control, and cooperation, as well as providing job information and contacts

(Granovetter, 1973, 1985; Coleman, 1988; Light and Bonacich, 1988; Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993; Waldinger, 1995). The role of social networks among immigrant domestic workers has been made evident by Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994a, 1994b). Through her ethnographic research with immigrant families in the San Francisco Bay area she found that networks and social ties among immigrant domestic workers structured the occupation. Workers use their social networks to find jobs, share information about wages and working conditions, and train new workers. She also pointed out the constraints associated with informal networks, particularly for women trying to break into the occupation. A worker's ability to build a stable career in domestic service "hinges not only on the quality of job performance, but more importantly, on the domestic workers' ability to utilize the network resources and, in some cases, to use more vulnerable domestic workers as helpers" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994b, p. 61).

A second important type of social network is comprised of the social ties between workers and their employers. Some evidence suggests that contacts with people in different social groups can facilitate movement out of gender- and race-stereotyped jobs. Hanson and Pratt (1995) reported that women used male employment contacts to gain access to male-dominated jobs. In his classic (1973) article "The strength of weak ties," Granovetter argued that persons with whom one has strong ties (family, friends, or members of the same ethnic group) tend to be more motivated to provide job information, but generally only have information about jobs that are already dominated by members of the group. Those with whom one has weak ties (e.g., employers), on the other hand, are more likely to have access to different (and therefore more valuable) job information. Job seekers in dire need of employment often rely on strong ties with coethnics, resulting in employment that provides for survival but not advancement. Getting new job information, however, often requires making use of weak ties to people with whom one does not share the enforceable trust and common experience of ethnic community. While ties to people in different social groups seem to enable individuals to break down occupational segregation, they can also operate to reinforce social hierarchies in employment. Given the extent to which gender and racial-ethnic relations in society are asymmetrical, there is often a hierarchical dimension to weak ties. The employment references and advice offered by people in higher-status groups (such as those provided to new immigrants by long-term residents) are often informed by stereotyped perceptions of job seekers' skills and aptitudes. Relations between domestic workers and their employers are an example of strong ties.

Although there is ample evidence that networks are important in job search—especially among women and immigrants—the vast majority of research on wages does not incorporate information about social networks. For example, most studies of immigrant wages are based on models measuring the correlation between wages and education, English ability, and job skills (e.g., Chiswick and Miller, 1992; Chapman and Iredale, 1993). Human capital approaches, in particular, argue that the higher wages earned by those immigrants with more skills are due to their greater productivity. In many occupations this may be the case, but in unskilled contingent employment, worker characteristics also need to be analyzed in terms of the job search process. In a theoretical paper, Coleman (1988) took the human capital approach to task on precisely this issue, arguing that social capital, which is embodied in relations among persons, aids in the formation of human capital. Previous studies of domestic workers have suggested that kin and ethnic

networks—social capital—have positive effects on wages because they aid in the job search process.

What are the implications of the growth of flexible and informal employment for spatial and social relations in United States cities? In terms of space, geographers have analyzed and debated one change: the concentration of low-skilled workers in industrial districts where they can take advantage of several employers (Scott, 1988a, 1988b). This pattern, however, seems to be limited to garment, high-technology, and craft workers, and it may not be replicated in the growing labor markets for low-wage, contingent service workers (Christopherson, 1989). Still, there is an increasingly complex mosaic of racialethnic residential segregation that is linked to the changing demand for labor (e.g., essays in Waldinger and Bozorgmehr, 1996). There are some indications that the social networks that regulate labor markets contribute to occupational segregation. Studies have shown that informal networks are more important than formal mechanisms—such as advertisements—in linking women to jobs, particularly when those jobs are low-paying or contingent (Hanson and Pratt, 1991; England, 1995). Since people often pass on job information to others of the same race and sex, reliance on personal networks can reinforce patterns of workplace segregation (Hanson and Pratt, 1995). Given the value of social contacts to informal and contingent work, it seems likely that flexible service employment contributes to—or at least reinforces—residential segregation as well.

METHODOLOGY

Evaluating the local labor-market dynamics of domestic service was a major focus of research I conducted during the 1993–1994 academic year. The study began with a telephone survey of 500 San Diego households, designed to estimate the extent and characteristics of paid household work. The telephone survey was followed by two sets of indepth personal interviews, the first with 29 employers of domestic workers and the second with 32 immigrant domestic workers and three former domestic workers, all of whom were living in the San Diego area. I draw upon data from all three sources here, with the quantitative data from the telephone survey providing a valuable context for the rich qualitative data from the interviews. This research and its discussion exemplify the mixing of methods that is increasingly common among geographic analyses of gender (Mattingly and Falconer Al-Hindi, 1995).

The telephone survey queried respondents about the household workers that they employ and collected basic data about the respondents' households (income, education, employment, family size). The sampling frame for the survey was Haines and Company's (1993) Criss-Cross Directory, a reverse dicrectory that lists San Diego households by telephone number. The sample for the telephone survey was selected using a modified area probability sampling procedure (Fowler, 1984); households in each census tract were sampled proportionate to the tract's population. The overall response rate for those households who answered the phone and had the correct zip code was 49% (500/1014).

The second phase of data collection involved 29 in-depth interviews with women and men who employed paid household workers. Respondents were recruited for the study in several ways. Each telephone survey respondent who employed household help was asked for an in-person interview. I was also a speaker for several professional women's organizations in return for a chance to recruit respondents. In addition, I enlisted the aid

of friends, neighbors, and co-workers, who referred me to several employers of domestic workers. Finally, a few of the respondents passed on names of other San Diego residents who employed household help. The interviews themselves ran between one and three hours, depending largely on the willingness of the participant to talk. The interviews were taped for later transcription and coding. Many of the questions were factual and closed-ended (e.g., When did you hire your current housekeeper?) while others were more open-ended (e.g., What do you think of domestic service as an occupation?)

Given the invisibility of immigrant domestic workers, finding the final group of research subjects posed something of a challenge. I conducted interviews with the aid of Bertha Palenzuela Jottar, a local Mexicana activist and artist who helped with contacting respondents and conducting and translating the interviews. Domestic workers were recruited in several ways, including referrals from key informants, approaching women in public places where domestic workers often congregate (e.g., suburban public parks during the day and bus stops in the early evening), and referrals from the other domestic workers interviewed. As was the case with employer interviews, the employee interviews ran from one to three hours and contained both factual and open-ended questions. Both live-in nannies and live-out housekeepers were interviewed, although the focus of this paper is the 21 live-out "job workers" who clean several houses each week.

Since 1950, domestic service has accounted for less than 10% of all women's employment in the United States (Grossman, 1980). According to the United States census, fewer than 1% of women were so employed in 1990. In recent years, the occupation has expanded once again, although much of the growth is "off the books." In some cities, the growing demand for housekeepers and nannies is met through housekeeping franchises that hire workers on an hourly basis (Moss, 1995). In San Diego, most domestic workers are hired directly by their employers and are generally paid in cash. Contemporary domestic work takes two forms: (1) live-in child care and housekeeping and (2) live-out "job work." Live-in work, currently in demand among high-income dual-career couples, is a common first job for immigrant women. The expansion of live-in work is rich with lessons about labor-market inequality, racial hierarchies among women, and social reproduction (e.g., Wrigley, 1996; England and Stiell, 1997). The focus of this paper, however, is live-out "job workers," who clean several different houses on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. From her interviews with Chicana day workers in Denver, Romero (1992) argued that domestic workers have changed the occupation from waged labor to the contracting of labor services. She showed that the emergence of day work is, in part, the outcome of domestic workers' efforts to exercise more control over the labor process and "eliminate any shadow work or emotional work involving the enhancement of [the employer's] status" (Romero, 1992, p. 143; see also Salzinger, 1991; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994b). Much of the expansion of domestic work in the 1990s has been in job work, making it the dominant form of the occupation today.

IMMIGRANT LATINA DOMESTIC WORKERS IN SAN DIEGO

Located between Los Angeles to the north and Tijuana, Mexico, to the south, San Diego was the sixth largest city in the United States in 1990, with a population of 1,110,500. San Diego's rapid growth and diverse economy (which includes military, tourism, business services, high-technology industry, and property development) have

TABLE 1.—1989 ANNUAL INCOME BY RACE AND HISPANIC ORIGIN CITY OF SAN DIEGO

	Non-Hispanic White	Hispanic	Asian	Black
Median income ^a				
Men	\$31,897	\$19,019	\$25,021	\$22,487
Women	\$24,716	\$16,262	\$18,950	\$20,207
Mean income			• • •	,
All families	\$46,094	\$24,425	\$38,598	\$22,177
Both husband and wife employed	\$57,340	\$37,173	\$49,568	\$42,857

^aYear-round, full-time workers age 15 and over. Source: 1990 Census of Population and Housing

attracted large numbers of both well-salaried white-collar workers and low-wage immigrant workers (Herzog, 1990). The last three decades have seen rapid changes in the city's demographic composition. In 1960, roughly 83% of the residents of the City of San Diego were non-Hispanic White (Anglo), 6% were Black, 6% were of Spanish origin, and 1% were Asian. By 1990, 58.8% of the city's residents were non-Hispanic White, 20.1% were of Hispanic origin, 9.3% were Black, and 12.5% were Asian or Pacific Islander. Much of the growth of the Hispanic population is due to migration from Mexico. Among the city's 1990 Hispanic population, 86% were of Mexican origin or of Mexican descent; 46.4% of these residents were foreign-born.

As in other United States cities, earnings and employment in San Diego contribute to hierarchies of race and gender, with Hispanic women concentrated in the lowest-paying occupations. Table 1 shows the 1989 annual income for men, women, and families in different racial-ethnic groups in San Diego. The table shows that while Hispanic women's income is the lowest of any group (\$16,262 per year), non-Hispanic White men and women have much higher average annual incomes (\$31,897 and \$24,716, respectively) than do any other groups of workers. The table also shows that non-Hispanic White, dual-earner families report the highest income of all family types.

Hierarchies of income correspond to occupational differences. Table 2 shows the contrasting occupational profiles of women in different racial-ethnic groups. Hispanic women are concentrated in low-wage service-sector jobs; 30.9% of Hispanic women in San Diego (employed in the formal sector) are in service occupations (excluding sales and administrative support), almost three times the concentration of non-Hispanic White women (11.7%). Over two-thirds (70.8%) of Hispanic women in service occupations are employed as food service workers and in cleaning occupations in offices, motels, offices, and private homes (compared to only 50.5% of female non-Hispanic White service workers). The aggregate earnings and occupational patterns of non-Hispanic White and Hispanic women provide some clues about the demand for domestic workers and the supply of women seeking employment in the occupation. On the one hand, the high average incomes of two-job, non-Hispanic White households allow many such households to pay housekeepers to alleviate domestic responsibilities. On the other hand, given the limited

TABLE 2.—WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT BY RACE AND HISPANIC ORIGIN, SAN DIEGO, 1990

	Non-Hispanic White	Hispanic	Asian	Black
Number of employed women	156,588	37,137	28,337	17,758
Occupations ^a				
Executive/managerial/professional	39.7	18.6	22.7	29.0
Technicians/sales/administrative support	44.3	38.8	41.5	42.9
Production/operators/other occupations	4.3	11.7	19.6	7.4
Service (total)	11.7	30.9	16.2	20.7
Private household	5.7	17.9	4.6	8.0
Other cleaning	5.4	32.5	16.1	13.4
Food service	39.2	20.4	38.7	15.6
Other service	50.3	29.2	40.6	63.0

^aPercentage of the female labor force (age 15 and above), by racial-ethnic group.

Source: 1990 Census of Population and Housing

TABLE 3.—DOMESTIC WORKERS IN THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

	Telephone survey	Percent	Estimated city
Households	500		406,316ª
Housekeepers			
Privately employed	61	12.2	49,570
Employed through service or agency	2	0.4	1,625
Home health care workers	5	1.0	4,063
Live-in child care	4	0.8	3,250
Total, households with domestic workers	70 ^b	14.0	56,884

^aFrom 1990 United States Census of Population and Housing.

Source: San Diego telephone survey

jobs available to Hispanic women, paid household work can be a relatively desirable job since it offers some degree of independence and flexibility.

The 1990 Census reports that only 1.7% of all working women and 5.6% of employed Hispanic women in San Diego are domestic workers, but my research suggests that the occupation is more common. Table 3 shows a breakdown of the types of domestic workers employed by the telephone-survey respondents and gives the extrapolated estimates for the City of San Diego. The telephone survey of 500 households in San Diego found that 14% of all households responding to the survey employed some form of (indoor) paid household help.⁴ As shown in the table, the vast majority of domestic workers are privately employed live-out job workers. Table 4 shows the gender and racial-ethnic composition of the domestic work force employed by telephone-survey respondents. The

^bNumbers above do not total 70 because two households had two domestic workers apiece.

TABLE 4.—CHARACTERISTICS OF LIVE-OUT HOUSEKEEPERS EMPLOYED BY TELEPHONE SURVEY RESPONDENTS (N = 63)

	Percent
Gender	
Female	88.9
Male	3.2
Couple	7.9
Race/ethnicity	
Anglo	18.0
Asian	1.7
Hispanic	80.3
First language of Hispanic workers	
English	10.2
Spanish	89.8

Source: San Diego telephone survey.

TABLE 5.—WAGES OF LIVE-OUT DOMESTIC WORKERS

	Telephone survey	Employer interviews	Worker interviews
All	\$10.67/hr	\$10.86/hr	n.a.
Latina	\$ 8.87/hr	\$ 9.37/hr	\$8.02/hr

Source: San Diego telephone survey, personal interviews.

majority (80%) of domestic workers are Hispanic, and most (89.8%) employers of Hispanic workers reported that English was not the worker's first language. The telephone survey did not ask the legal status of domestic workers, but 38% of the live-out workers and 82% of the live-in workers interviewed in person were undocumented immigrants. In addition, all of the immigrant domestic workers who were legal residents or citizens at the time of the interview had been undocumented when they first entered the United States (see also Hogeland and Rosen, 1990; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994a).

Table 5, which is based on the telephone survey and the interviews with both employers and workers, shows the average wages for live-out cleaners. The workers interviewed reported receiving an average fee of \$43 per housecleaning, or \$8 per hour. The terms of employment in the occupation vary dramatically among employers. The hourly pay of the Hispanic live-out workers interviewed ranged from \$5 to \$15 per hour, and payment for each cleaning of an individual house ranged from as low as \$20 to as high as \$60. Data from both the telephone survey and the interviews with employers showed than non-Hispanic White domestic workers earn at least \$1.50 more per hour than do Hispanic domestic workers. The hourly wages for domestic service are substantially higher than the minimum hourly wage (\$4.25 in 1994), but the income of workers is variable. Cleaning

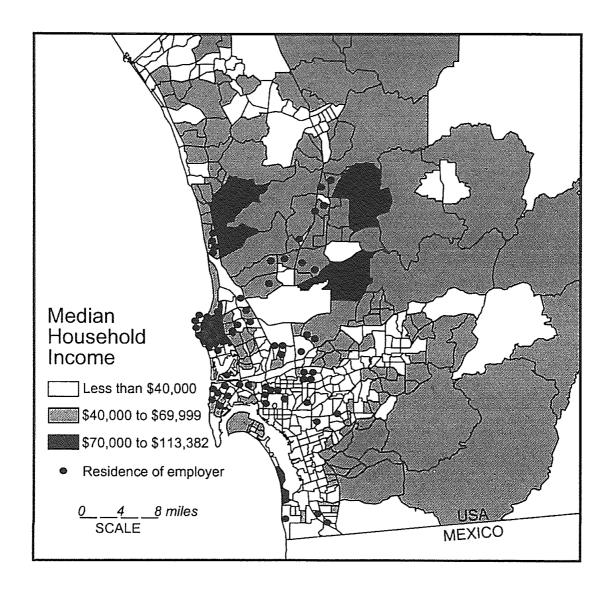


Fig. 1. Residences of employers and 1990 average household income.

appointments are often changed or canceled, and few workers are able to work eight hours a day, five days a week. Nevertheless, cleaning private homes can provide a modest income to workers, and it is a job that offers workers a measure of flexibility, autonomy, and invisibility to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

The geography of the labor market for paid household work differs from that of most other occupations in that workplaces are located in private homes and most workers have several employers. Employers tend to have above-average incomes and therefore live mainly in wealthy neighborhoods. Figure 1 shows the residential location of all of the employers of domestic workers identified in any of the three surveys. Employers are concentrated in wealthier neighborhoods in the northern section of the city, with an especially pronounced concentration in the coastal community of La Jolla. There is also a sprinkling of employers throughout less affluent neighborhoods. The map also shows the average household income (by census tract) reported in the 1990 census, further illustrating the correlation between income and the demand for household help. Almost two-thirds (63%) of the employers contacted through the telephone survey reported an annual household income of over \$60,000, while only 24% of respondents who did not employ help were in the same income group.⁶

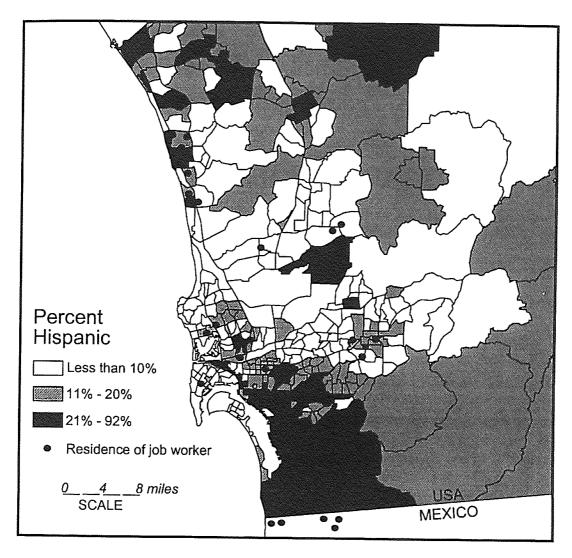


Fig. 2. Residences of live-out domestic workers and 1990 percent Hispanic.

Domestic workers, on the other hand, tend to live in working-class neighborhoods with large numbers of immigrants. Figure 2 shows both the residences of live-out Latina domestic workers and the 1990 distribution of Hispanic residents (the figure includes the residences of Latina live-out workers of employers who were interviewed). Most Latina domestic workers live in three locations: the traditionally Hispanic communities of southern San Diego and adjacent cities, immigrant enclaves in the generally White, middle-and upper-class northern part of the city and county, and south of the border in Tijuana. The five workers who live in Tijuana are all resident aliens of the United States and commute across the border on a regular basis.

This simple mapping of workers and employers' residences reveals some interesting aspects of the local labor market for domestic workers. There are some workers who live in small immigrant clusters in the generally high-income suburbs of North County. As Chavez (1992) has noted, many of the new immigrants settling on the edges of wealthy communities in these areas are employed in private homes and restaurants. Similarly, in her study of suburban immigrant neighborhoods in Long Island, Mahler (1992) found that housekeeping and gardening jobs are attracting immigrants to the suburbs. With the exception of these clusters, however, most domestic workers live in neighborhoods with

large Hispanic populations, which tend to be distant from the main areas of demand. This spatial mismatch between workers and jobs is particularly apparent in the neighborhood of La Jolla, which has the densest agglomeration of employers and few workers. There are, however, many live-in workers in La Jolla who often clean other homes for additional pay. Taken together, Figures 1 and 2 suggest that working in homes in non-Hispanic areas of the city has done little to move the residential locations of workers out of Hispanic neighborhoods. Given the importance of social networks for domestic workers, an issue I discuss in greater detail below, it seems likely that, if anything, living in a Hispanic neighborhood benefits workers' careers, which may contribute to residential segregation and long commutes for domestic workers.

The burden of commuting for the San Diego domestic workers interviewed is difficult to overstate. On average, live-out domestic workers commuted 51 min (one way) to get to their jobs each day. By way of comparison, the average 1990 commute for all San Diego workers was 20.4 min. Four women cleaned one or more houses that required a two-hour commute each way. The commutes of domestic workers were substantially longer than those of the higher-income women who employed them. The women in employer households who I interviewed commuted an average of 15 min to work each day (one way). The long commutes of domestic workers are further lengthened by their limited access to cars; live-out workers reported driving themselves to only 32.9% of all their jobs. Many workers, including all who were undocumented, did not have driver's licenses, and in most worker households with cars, men had primary access to them. Regular access to a vehicle cut job workers' driving time in half: those with a car spent an average of 26 min getting to their jobs, while those without cars traveled an average of 60 min (each way). The long commute times of domestic workers without cars limited their ability to reach more than one house each day, and workers without vehicles are geographically limited in the jobs that they can accept. Consuelo recalled:

I was recommended but the woman couldn't pick me up, so I couldn't take the job. With a car I would be able to work more. Other people clean two houses each day and that is a lot of money daily.

Domestic workers without cars rely on walking, buses, or rides from friends, husbands, other family members, or their employers to get to work, often using different transport modes depending on where the job is located. The most common form of transportation was riding the bus, which accounted for almost half (48.8%) of all commutes reported by domestic workers. Workers who depend on busses had the longest travel time; over two-thirds (69.7%) of all commutes longer than 45 min were made by women riding buses. In sprawling San Diego, buses are often insufficient for people trying to travel to wealthy suburbs, so workers have to get rides from employers or from husbands or other family members. Many of the women said they could not rely on rides from their husbands, who tend to work in unstable and contingent jobs themselves. One half of the husbands of the married live-out workers worked in gardening, a job that requires workers to drive to a different location each day. Whether or not women are able to travel to jobs can also depend on intra-household gender dynamics. Many Mexican immigrants consider driving to be a male responsibility, and in most of the households that I interviewed women relied on their husbands for transportation. In those households where husbands

supported their wives' careers, women were able to hold distant jobs that required coordinating rides with spouses. In households where domestic workers and their husbands were at odds, or where the men were not supportive of the women's jobs, transportation often emerged as a issue of contention. Lydia has lost or left several jobs because she cannot rely on her husband for transportation. She explained the situation:

I don't get houses far away from here since I don't have transportation. I don't like asking for favors, not even from my husband, even when he is just there lying down. I have asked him before to give me a ride and he just says no. I get very angry because it is his responsibility. So in order to avoid getting angry, I just work near here.

Several of the women interviewed talked about the complex arrangements they had worked out, particularly when they were traveling to suburban homes far from bus lines. Rafina works six days a week and does not drive. She must arrange transport to get to the houses she cleans, all of which are more than 10 miles from her home.

My husband takes me every morning to work....Many people can pick me up at the end of the day, like my son or my husband. They pick me up almost every day. Between houses, I have to figure it out myself; usually I take the bus or sometimes my employers drive me. Only Saturdays can I walk from one house's door to another house's door. Saturdays are the only days I have very easy.

This description of the local labor market for domestic workers raises several relevant points that bear repeating. The telephone survey shows that paid household work is more common in San Diego than is reported officially, that job work is the most common local form of domestic work, and that most workers are immigrant Latinas. In terms of the geography of the labor market, domestic workers reported long and ever-changing commutes. This finding provides additional support for large-scale studies that have found women of color to have longer commutes than do White women, particularly when traveling to service jobs in the suburbs (McLafferty and Preston, 1992; Johnston-Anumonwo, 1995). One residential pattern that seems to be emerging is the establishment of new immigrant neighborhoods in pockets of affordable housing in otherwise high-income neighborhoods. But in general, immigrant domestic workers tend to live in lower-rent, predominantly Hispanic neighborhoods, suggesting that the demand for domestic workers in higher-income neighborhoods may reinforce existing patterns of racial-ethnic residential segregation.

JOB SEARCH

In this section, I examine the social organization of the local labor market for domestic workers in San Diego, emphasizing the effects of job search on the earnings and social relations of domestic workers. I begin by detailing the factors that make ongoing job search a necessity. I then show how workers use job search to improve their income and employment conditions, a finding that contributes additional evidence to Hondagneu-Sotelo's (1994b) analysis of the occupation. In the last part of this section, I discuss three factors that affect the ability of a worker to search for new jobs: her legal status, English

	All live-out workers $n = 21$	Undocumented $n = 8$	Resident aliens $n = 13$
Domestic worker always sets pay	33.3	0.0	53.8
Domestic worker sometimes sets pay	19.0	25.0	15.4
Domestic worker always accepts pay offered by employers	47.7	75.0	30.8

Source: Personal interviews with domestic workers.

ability, and access to transportation. I argue that the correlation between these factors and worker earnings is due to their value in finding jobs, rather than in performing the work. A fourth factor affecting job search is workers' social networks, a topic that I discuss in detail in the following section.

Maintaining several employers increases the incidence and importance of job search. All other things being equal, a worker with five employers will have to look for work five times as often as a worker with only one employer. In addition, many housekeeping arrangements are of fairly short duration. The job workers interviewed had held their current cleaning jobs for an average of 4.2 years. This average is inflated by a handful of jobs that have lasted more than 10 years; almost one-third (30.4%) of all jobs held by domestic workers at the time of the interviews had lasted less than 1 year. This flux is caused partially by the absence of formal labor-market regulations that reduce instability, such as vacation time, maternity leave, and unemployment benefits. Another explanation lies in the complex lives of the workers themselves. Domestic workers often transfer jobs to friends or family members when they give birth or take extended visits to Mexico. In addition, employers sometimes fire their housekeepers when they are unhappy with their work or when the employers move, go on long vacations, or decide to cut back on expenses by doing their own housework. In recent years, the growing pool of immigrant women looking for jobs in domestic service has exacerbated the inherent instability of job work (Mattingly, in press). Among the immigrant household workers interviewed, all but one agreed that competition for jobs in San Diego was growing ever fiercer as more women entered the occupation. As Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994a) argued, "In this context, the domestic's job search becomes not a finite precursor to employment, but an ongoing part of the job itself" (p. 53).

While some level of job search is required simply to maintain one's income, it is also the primary way workers can increase their income or improve their working conditions. Before the relationship between job search and "career" advancement in domestic service is demonstrated, two points must be made. First, although I found substantial variation in the wages paid to workers, the variation did not correspond to the type or amount of work performed. Statistical tests showed no significant relationships between wages (earned by workers or paid by employers) and the size of the houses cleaned (measured in number of bedrooms) or the type of work performed (whether their regular work included ironing and laundry, the tasks most despised by workers). Nor did wages vary with workers' cleaning experience (measured in years). In my analyses, I found no evidence of a signif-

icant relationship between either the work performed or worker qualifications and the wages they received.

Second, few workers are able to set their own wages or successfully request raises, even when their workload changes. In the absence of formal labor-market regulation, employers can set wages as they see fit. Although most employers interviewed assured me that they paid the "going rate," none had asked more than two other employers about wages before setting theirs. As Table 6 shows, only a third of the workers interviewed reported that they always set the wages for their work, and none of these workers were undocumented. The inability of undocumented immigrants to set wages is a direct reflection of their overall vulnerability in the labor market, a point I return to below. Even among those with resident alien status, just over half regularly set the pay. In addition to the limited ability of workers to set initial wages, they have even less opportunity to get raises. In those few cases where workers did receive raises, it was almost always the employer who initiated the raise. Only 35% of job workers reported that they had ever received a raise, and most (75%) of these were initiated by employers. In interviews with employers, the reasons offered for giving raises were usually outside the workers' influence. For example, two employers raised wages after learning that neighbors had given their workers raises.

So while there is dramatic variation in wages, it cannot be attributed to the work performed by housekeepers. Most workers are not able to increase their pay for a given job by working harder or by negotiating raises. As a result, when workers want to improve their income or employment conditions, their only option is to replace low-paying or unpleasant employers with altogether different jobs. The interviews provided numerous examples of workers looking for new jobs to improve their earnings and working conditions. All of the live-out domestic workers who had been in the business for more than six months told stories of quitting bad jobs. In some cases, the job had been unpleasant or poorly paid from the start and the worker quit when she finally found enough other houses. In other cases, deteriorating working conditions or arguments with employers led to workers quitting jobs without notice in hopes of finding a better employer. Imelda, who works four days a week for steady employers, recalled one job that ended abruptly:

I used to clean the house of a woman who wanted me to do laundry and ironing and fold the clothes. There were seven loads and she wanted me to do that plus the house, which was like a mansion, and she wanted to pay me \$40 for everything. I asked her for more money but she refused, because she said she knew somebody else who would do it happily for \$5. I just told her to call her [the other woman] instead.

Imelda's story reveals a great deal about the connections between job search and wage setting. First, Imelda was able to refuse the work because she had several other stable employers and felt that she would have little trouble finding another house to clean. Not all domestic workers are in the same position. When women are new to domestic work, or when they have few employers and need money, they will accept houses that pay as little as \$25 per day even though they know that they are being exploited. Second, her employer's assertion that Imelda could easily be replaced (presumably by a recent undocumented immigrant) speaks to the social nature of wage setting. This employer used the

volatile and competitive nature of the domestic service labor market as a threat to pay low wages. Given the limited job opportunities available to undocumented immigrant women, she probably was able to find someone willing to do the job for less than \$40, at least for a little while.

In addition to setting wages, workers struggle to set the hours that they work. All of the immigrant workers I interviewed prefer being paid by the job rather than by the hour. This allows them to vary their workload each visit and, in some cases, to work faster and clean two houses each day. Most employers, on the other hand, prefer to have set hours for their workers, fearing they will not get their money's worth otherwise. Filomena has unsuccessfully tried to find new jobs where she can work shorter hours.

I tell them I charge by the house because if I tell them by the hour they will want me there from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and that is too much time. They ask what time am I going to finish. I tell them that I will start at 8 a.m. and maybe leave at 2 p.m. Then they just say "OK, I will call you later," but they don't call back.

As a job worker acquires additional stable employers, she is in a better position to refuse jobs with low pay or long hours and to pass on undesirable jobs to friends or relatives in need of work. In addition, workers who already have a full calendar of cleaning jobs are in the best position to be choosy and can therefore wait for the best jobs. The benefits of negotiating from a position of economic security are quite significant. Among the domestic workers interviewed, those who regularly cleaned the most houses also received the highest hourly wages. Live-out workers who cleaned five or more houses each month earned an average of \$9.35 an hour, those cleaning three or four houses earned \$7.56 an hour, and those who had only one or two employers earned an average of \$6.75 per hour.

While ongoing job search puts workers in a position to improve their earnings and working conditions, not all workers are similarly situated when it comes to finding new jobs. A worker's legal status, English ability, and access to transportation all influence her ability to find new jobs, and therefore influence her earnings and working conditions. Undocumented workers are less likely to set the wages for their work and are much more vulnerable to employer threats and intimidation. Most undocumented workers fear meeting new employers or venturing into unknown parts of the city, and in interviews they frequently discussed employers who made mention of legal status in negotiations over wages or tasks. Of course the ability of workers to negotiate despite their legal status varies tremendously. Some of the undocumented workers interviewed reported that they lied to their employers about their legal status, some even presenting false papers. But for undocumented workers who are new to the business or who have limited English ability, fear of deportation severely curtails job search and wage negotiation. Luisa, who is a resident alien, told of an employer who threatened to call the INS when Luisa attempted to reduce the number of hours she worked.

Well, one woman wants me to work for eight hours or more, and I told her that I am not happy working so long, so I leave after six hours. So this woman tells me that she has talked to her lawyers and immigration officers. She says that what she pays for the hours is fair.

Interviewer: What does the INS have to do with anything?

Well, I imagine she thought that I was going to have a negative response, or else she thinks that I don't have papers. I told her that I would think about it. I always want them to be happy with my work and I want to be happy with what I receive from them, but I don't like when they want me to work longer because I believe that I work hard enough for them.

The veiled (although in this case unfounded) threats of Luisa's employer show one way that the undocumented status of domestic workers influences their working conditions. Luisa has a green card and so was not intimidated into working more hours by the reference to the INS, but had she been undocumented, her employer's threat may have been more persuasive.

English ability also affects job search. As mentioned earlier, several large-scale studies have found English ability to be correlated with higher wages for immigrants (e.g., Chiswick and Miller, 1992). I found a similar pattern among the workers that I interviewed; those who spoke good or fluent English earned an average of \$10.90 per hour, while those who spoke little or no English earned an average of \$6.95 per hour (p = .05). While neoclassical economic theory suggests that such wage differentials are due to the greater productivity that comes with English fluency, almost none of the domestic workers or employers that I interviewed felt that speaking English influenced housekeeping ability. Both groups agreed that housekeepers do not need to speak or understand more than a few words of English to perform their jobs well. Employers did say, however, that they felt English was much more important for child care workers, since it allowed the workers to communicate with the children and fit more easily into the household. In cleaning work, on the other hand, I found that the chief advantage to speaking English well is that it enhances a worker's ability to find new jobs and set the terms of employment. Whether setting an initial fee, asking for raises, or finding new employers, not speaking English can be a major hindrance for domestic workers. Lourdes, who had been in the United States for only one month at the time of the interview, had a most difficult time negotiating with her employer.

When I went the first day she just gave me the money, \$25. Now she keeps paying the same, and I can't tell her if it should be more or less because I can't speak English.

In sum, English proficiency does not appear to influence worker performance, but it is an important labor-market advantage because it helps in job search and wage negotiation. English-speaking workers are also better able to ask for referrals when they are looking for more work, and they can also explain to employers what they will and will not do for a given amount of money.

In addition to legal status and English ability, access to transportation affects the job search of workers. Because they are restricted in the jobs they can accept, women without cars were less likely to have what they considered to be a full work schedule (keeping in mind that not all women want to work the same number of days each week or need to earn the same amount of money). Only 1 (16.6%) of the 6 women with regular access to a car was looking for more houses, while almost half (46.6%) of the 26 women without a car

HISPANIC, LIVE-OUT HOUSEKEEPERS (IN PERCENTAGE	s)
TABLE 7.—HOW WAS EMPLOYMENT CONTACT MADE	17

	Phone survey $n = 40$	Worker interviews $n = 80^{a}$	Employer interviews $n = 44^{b}$
Personal referral			* ************************************
Employer network	70.0	60.0	68.2
Worker network	10.0	30.0	22.8
Newspaper ad	10.0	5.0	4.5
They already knew each other	2.5	5.0	0.0
Employer approached domestic worker	7.5	0.0	4.5

^aTotal of all houses cleaned by the 21 live-out domestic workers.

wanted more work (p = .05). The disadvantages associated with not driving are reflected in wages. Job workers with cars earned an average of \$8.95 per hour, versus \$7.59 for those without (p = .10) Those with cars were also more likely to be able to set the terms of their employment; 66.7% of those with cars said that they determine the tasks they do when they clean (vs. 38.5% of those without cars; p = 0.10), and 66.7% of workers with cars always set the pay at cleaning jobs (vs. 46.7% of workers without cars). The difference in hourly earnings and workplace authority, combined with the greater likelihood of having as many jobs as they want, suggests that women with vehicles are able to choose among jobs because they can easily travel to so many more homes. Indeed, workers who drove were significantly more likely to have jobs far from their homes; 86.7% of all commutes greater than 20 miles were made by women who drove themselves. Access to a wider pool of jobs allows workers more discretion in selecting employers, enabling them to turn down low-paying jobs.

The unregulated and unstable nature of domestic work means that job search directly shapes labor relations and employment outcomes. Because the only bargaining chip of any value possessed by workers is their ability to leave jobs, those who can afford to lose one job have more opportunity to improve their wages than those who are more desperate. Although this analysis is based on only a small sample of workers and employers, the patterns I found replicate those identified in other case studies of immigrant domestic workers in California (Salzinger, 1991; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994b). These California findings are very different, however, from those reported by Gregson and Lowe (1994) based on their research on domestic workers in Britain. They reported that live-out house-keepers exercised a strong degree of control over wages and working conditions, a situation they attributed to the workers' strong sense of self-worth. The contrast between the authority exercised by the native British workers they interviewed and the immigrant Mexicans I interviewed emphasizes the importance of racial-ethnic hierarchies, as well as the indirect role of national governments. The vast majority of cleaners in their British study had some form of household income (either their own or their male partners') from

^bTotal number of all paid housekeepers employed by respondents in San Diego during the last 10 years. *Sources:* San Diego telephone survey and personal interviews.

government support programs. For these women, the money they earned (usually under the table) cleaning houses was a welcome addition to government support, but not crucial to the daily survival of their household. Immigrant domestic workers in San Diego and their male partners, on the other hand, are more easily exploited than are White, working-class British citizens. They are also more desperate. Among the 17 married, live-out workers interviewed, almost half (47.6%) reported that they earned at least half of their household's total income. When asked whether their families could survive without their income, 35% said that their families could, 29.4% said that they probably could, but with great difficulty, and the remainder (52.9%) reported that their families definitely could not survive on their husbands' income alone. Thus, the weak labor-market position of immigrant domestic workers in San Diego lies not in workers' low self-worth, but rather in the extreme economic and political vulnerability of immigrants in the United States, a vulnerability that has been ensured by government immigration policy (Mattingly, in press).

SOCIAL NETWORKS

Access to transportation, English skills, and a green card all help domestic workers in their ongoing search for work, but none is as important as a worker's informal network. Like Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994a, 1994b), I found that informal networks regulate the domestic service labor market in San Diego. The active role of social networks has relevance for labor-market theory, since it is one avenue through which social relations and hierarchies become embedded in the local labor market.

In the telephone survey and both sets of interviews, respondents were asked how they first contacted their employer or employee. As shown Table 7, all three surveys found that personal referrals were the most important. In some cases, domestic workers found jobs through their own friends and family; other times employers simply recommended their current domestic worker to a friend. Frequently both employer and employee networks come into play, as domestic workers with full schedules refer their friends and family to friends of their employers who are looking for help. The two kinds of referrals, however, are based on very different social relations and play distinct roles in the paid domestic labor market, calling to mind Granovetter's (1973) distinction between strong ties and weak ties. As I detail below, references among domestic workers and their family members provide entry into the occupation, while references from employers are necessary to build a stable career as a domestic worker.

Strong Ties: Immigrant Networks

Although the networks of domestic workers account for less than a third of all reported job contacts, they have a vital place in the labor market for household workers, especially as the means by which new immigrants are brought into the occupation. When women begin domestic service the most difficult part can be finding their first few employers (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994b). In interviews I found that job workers used their own networks to find work in three ways: (1) through subcontracting arrangements, (2) by job referrals from other domestic workers, and (3) through male family members employed as gardeners. All three are examples of what Granovetter (1973) called "strong ties," and

just as he pointed out, they are contacts that are easy for some immigrant women to access, particularly if they live in ethnic enclaves. They do not, however, always lead to the most valuable employment information.

Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994b) found that "many new immigrant women first find themselves subcontracting their services to other more experienced and well-established immigrant women who have steady customers for domestic work. This provides an important apprenticeship and springboard to independent contracting" (p. 56). Subcontracting was also a fairly common practice among the women I interviewed. Almost half (47.6%) reported bringing an adult female relative to work with them at some time. Half of the time they said the other woman was there to help so that they could finish the job more quickly. The remaining half said they were training new domestic workers, usually recent arrivals from Mexico. Subcontracting plays an important role in the paid domestic labor market, allowing new workers to make a small income and learn the "how-tos" of cleaning in the United States, while allowing better-established domestic workers to lighten their own workload. Subcontracting is one way that reliance on "strong ties" contributes to hierarchies among workers. While it can be informative and help new immigrants, it sometimes pays so little as to be exploitative.

Another way that workers use their own networks to find jobs is through referrals from female friends and relatives with full cleaning schedules. In the quotation at the beginning of the paper, Rafina told of passing on a job to her daughter. Among the job workers interviewed, 43% have found at least one of their current jobs this way, and 28.6% have given jobs to other domestic workers. In addition, a quarter of the domestic workers interviewed have had a female friend or relative fill in for them while they took a trip to Mexico or had a child. A few domestic workers found permanent jobs this way when the person they were replacing decided not to return to work or the employer recommended them to a friend.

A third category of domestic worker contacts are job leads from male family members, particularly those employed as gardeners. Among the household workers I interviewed, fewer found jobs through men than through other female domestic workers. Only 28.6% of job workers found one or more of their current jobs through men, and in all cases the men were husbands or other family members. For the women whose husbands worked as gardeners, however, male contacts were extremely important. Four of the seven (57.1%) live-out workers married to gardeners had found at least one of their jobs with an employer of their husband.

So while the networks of domestic workers account for less than a third of all job contacts reported in the surveys, they are crucial in introducing new workers into the occupation. In some cases women's own personal contacts can be an ongoing source of job leads, particularly when the contacts are with other housekeepers or gardeners. Job references among immigrant workers also create an overlap between immigrants' employment and social lives, tightening connections among immigrant women (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994a, 1994b). As the case of subcontracting reminds us, relations among immigrant domestic workers can also be hierarchical. Like subcontracting, jobs acquired from other domestic workers are crucial for new immigrant workers, and they also contribute to hierarchies within the paid housekeeping labor market. The jobs passed on from one domestic worker to another frequently are low paying or are with troublesome employers, as workers try to keep the best jobs for themselves. Just as the reliance on

networks can channel new immigrants into the occupation, it can also present barriers to potential domestic workers who do not have family in the local area. I found that domestic workers with female relatives in San Diego were twice as likely to have found a job through another domestic worker. The personal contacts of domestic workers, however, are not always beneficial for new immigrants. For women without contacts, the need for referrals can be a barrier to entering the occupation. The importance of social networks has implications for scholars investigating the diversity of women's experiences, particularly those interested in opening up social categories like "immigrant domestic worker." While there are many factors that contribute to differences in women's experiences, the organization of the labor market can define which differences have material consequences. In the local labor market for paid household workers in San Diego, access to social networks can translate into a significant employment advantage, and it can magnify new immigrants' dependence on better-established immigrants.

Weak Ties: Employer Networks

Although domestic workers usually use their own networks to break into domestic service, referrals among employers are the most common means of connecting workers and employers. Workers looking for additional jobs often tell their current employers, who then refer them to other cleaning jobs. Interviews with household workers confirmed that tapping into a network of employers is the key to establishing a career in domestic work; those workers with the most stable employment and highest wages had employers who regularly referred them to other jobs. Unfortunately, employer referrals are a crucial part of the paid domestic labor market over which workers have no control. One cannot, through hard work or careful planning, stimulate the demand for a housekeeper among one's employers' friends. Nor can one know how willing or able to provide job leads an employer will be. As one domestic worker pointed out:

You need the women to get you jobs with their friends, but sometimes they don't have friends, or their friends don't need help, and then you cannot get another job.

Recall Lupe and Rafina, the two domestic workers whose words opened this paper. Both are resident aliens, both speak limited (but sufficient) English, both have been in the United States for over 15 years, both are married to gardeners, both have large families, and neither has access to a car. Yet Rafina earns more than twice the monthly pay of Lupe, primarily because she cleans two houses most days. It has taken her many years to find a group of employers who will let her do the cleaning in only four hours, but her efforts have paid off. In 1991, she put a down payment on a home from her housekeeping earnings. Lupe, on the other hand, is required to work eight hours at each of her jobs and is still searching for additional work. One significant difference between the two is the referrals they have received from their employers. Rafina has two employers (a mother and a daughter) who have taken an active interest in her business, regularly finding more jobs for her and her husband. Lupe, on the other hand, works three days a week for the same employer, who has never referred her to other employers.

For domestic workers, finding an employer who will refer them to other jobs is an advantage in many ways. First, domestic workers who had found at least half of their jobs

through employer references were significantly more likely to report that they felt they had as many housecleaning jobs as they wanted than were those who found a smaller portion of their jobs that way (69% vs. 29%; p = .05). This translates into higher monthly earnings for those with more employer references, who earned an average of \$791 each month, almost twice the average of \$370 earned by those with fewer references. The hourly pay earned by the two groups does not vary significantly, however.

Most employers I interviewed prefer to hire workers who are employed by people that they know. One reason for this is the desire for reliable information about potential workers. When asked what qualities were most important in a domestic worker, respondents mentioned trust more often than any other. Linda, who has employed someone to clean her house once a week for nine years, echoed the sentiments of many employers when she said:

Honesty and dependability were very important when I hired her because she has a key to the house.

References are one way or guaranteeing a trustworthy worker, and employers feel that workers who have worked for their friends have shown themselves to be trustworthy, whereas workers referred by other workers have not. Workers too are well aware that the trust of an employer is necessary for a good working relationship, and many commented that employer references bring a level of employer trust that does not accompany jobs found through their own networks. During her interview, Rafina recalled once passing on a job with an unfriendly employer to a friend.

Later my friend came to me and asked "how could I have worked for her?" She said that the employer was testing her by leaving out money and jewelry. I said that the employer never did that to me, because I was recommended for the job from another employer. But since I was recommending my friend this time, that was different.

The dependence of domestic workers on employer referrals, and the level of trust that accompanies them, are two ways that labor markets organized on social networks come to embody power asymmetries between workers and employers. Because domestic workers depend on their employers' good will and networks to find new jobs, they are often indebted to those employers. This is not to deny the real benefits that come to domestic workers through employer referrals. Indeed, receiving new job leads is one of the few tangible benefits workers reap from employers' involvement in their lives.

To summarize, personal referrals are the primary way domestic workers find employment in San Diego. Because they are so important in job search, and therefore in determining earnings and working conditions, the role of social networks is further amplified. "Strong ties" among workers and coethnics are crucial for introducing new workers into the labor market, but it is the "weak ties" between workers and employers that allow domestic workers to maintain a full schedule of employers. The effects of network dependence are not egalitarian. Reliance on personal networks can make entry into the occupation difficult for those who do not have contacts in the occupation, and it often enhances the earnings and authority of better-established workers. At the same time, reliance on employer references reproduces and reinforces power relations between workers and

employers. Reliance on employer references can increase the dependence of workers on individual employers and heighten the inherent asymmetry of the occupation. Although one employer may account for only a small portion of a worker's earnings, the potential of that employer as a reference magnifies her authority. In addition, an employer reference confers trust on a worker, often resulting in better workplace relations.

CONCLUSION

In San Diego there is a thriving market for domestic workers, in which the majority of employers are middle- or upper-class, non-Hispanic White households and the majority of workers are immigrant women from Mexico. Most of the jobs are paid "under the table," and the occupation exists largely without any government regulation or systematic organizations of either employers or workers. Both legal and undocumented immigrants work in the occupation, although the former dominate live-out housekeeping. Most live-out domestic workers clean several houses each week, and many juggle a dozen or more employers. As a result, job search is a constant part of the occupation. Workers who are able to establish several regular customers can earn relatively high wages at the job, but their situation is always precarious and their days are long and arduous.

The inherent instability of paid household work makes ongoing job search a part of the occupation, which affects the social and spatial relations of domestic workers. The need for constant job search lends value to those worker characteristics that aid in job search, especially English ability, legal status, and access to transportation. And because finding better jobs is one of the few means workers have to improve their income and working conditions, those workers who already have ample jobs are in the best position to improve their jobs. In short, only those workers who are in a position to be able to refuse low-paying jobs can hold out for prime wages, hours, and working conditions. Other workers must accept the jobs as they are offered, knowing that it is unlikely that the terms of the job will improve with time. Moreover, the need for ongoing job search makes social networks, both among workers and between workers and employers, central to increasing, or even maintaining, workers' incomes. Thus, the structure of the labor market directly contributes to the formation and maintenance of hierarchies and differences among domestic workers.

The labor-market dynamics of paid household work are also shaped by, and further contribute to, the social distance between workers and their employers. In most cases, employers tend to have significantly more resources, options, and power than the women that they employ in their homes. This power asymmetry is apparent in the daily negotiations of the occupation; the interviews showed that workers had little power in negotiating the terms of their employment and few opportunities to improve wages and working conditions once employed. Because references from employers are the most important mechanism connecting workers and employers, workers are dependent on their employers to refer them to new jobs, a dependence that contributes to the authority of employers over workers. The instability of the occupation, the need for ongoing job search, and the reliance on informal networks all served to reproduce the social asymmetry between workers and employers.

The organization of the local labor market also has implications for the space of the city. Unlike flexible employment in manufacturing, which tends to produce residential

concentrations around employer concentrations, flexibly employed personal service workers are rarely able to live in the same high-income neighborhoods where they find work. As a result, working in the occupation requires long and ever-changing commutes, often on public transportation. Furthermore, the importance of social networks among workers suggests that there may be additional benefits for workers who live in neighborhoods with similarly employed co-ethnics. The dynamics of the local labor market for paid household workers appears to contribute to the spatial concentration of immigrants and plays a role in the establishment and growth of new suburban immigrant enclaves.

In examining the organization of a local labor market and the social and spatial implications of that organization, this study offers insights that are likely to hold true for other contingent, unregulated, and spatially fragmented labor markets. Gardeners, day laborers, and many "consultants" and temporary employees also move among many employers and constantly search for new work. The evidence so far suggests that the absence of labor-market regulation, in the form of either labor laws or internal labor markets, increases workers' dependence on informal networks and therefore heightens the role of gender and racial-ethnic hierarchies in the labor market. The presence of such contingent, externalized labor markets alters the home-work relationship that human geographers have long argued shapes urban form. Furthermore, the spatial and social organization of the local labor market has implications for the economic and social position of those employed in it.

NOTES

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²Like all names used in this article, Lupe and Rafina are pseudonyms. A resident alien is an immigrant who is not a citizen, but is legally eligible for employment. Resident aliens possess United States government—issued "green cards" that distinguish them from undocumented or "illegal" immigrants who are not legally eligible for employment.

³This statement came from an employer of domestic workers whom I interviewed for this project.

The sample for the telephone survey was biased in two contradictory ways. First, as in most telephone surveys, the sample contained a disproportionate number of White, middle-class, college-educated people, the very group most likely to employ household help. This bias may inflate the number of people with paid help. It is likely to be counterbalanced, however, by a second bias. I found that refusal rates were significantly higher in high-income neighborhoods than elsewhere. Given that most employers are in violation of employment and often immigration laws when they employ immigrant domestic workers, those employing help had an interest in not responding to the survey. Thus the pattern of refusal rates suggests that self-selection also may have deflated the number of households with help in the sample.

⁵Average hourly wages for Latina job workers were reported to be slightly higher in both the telephone survey (\$8.87 per hour) and in-person interviews with employers (\$9.39 per hour). The primary reason for the difference between employer and worker reporting of wages is the number of hours per housecleaning each group reported.

⁶In both the telephone survey and in-person interviews, 73% of the working-age women with household workers were employed. This percentage is not significantly different from that of telephone-survey respondents who did not employ help (72%).

⁷This practice is not reflected in Table 7 because of the tendency among both domestic workers and employers to emphasize the role of their own networks and to downplay the importance of others. Toward the end of the interview process, I became aware of the interconnection between the two networks and probed for more accurate information, confirming that both sets of networks are frequently used. The prevalence of using both networks goes a long way in explaining the discrepancy in the reported frequency of employer and domestic worker networks in finding jobs.

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