

PART ONE

THE JOB TODAY

Suburban homes are increasingly replacing inner-city factories as the places of economic incorporation for new immigrants. While leafy streets and suburban homes are easier on the eyes than poorly lit sweatshops, it takes a lot of sweat to produce and maintain carefully groomed lawns, homes, and children. Chapters 1 and 2 discuss reasons for the expansion in these kinds of jobs and examine work life for Latina immigrant women who toil in America's new growth industry, paid domestic work. In the United States and elsewhere, the "new economy" not only runs on high-tech information services but also depends on the reorganization of how cleaning and care work are performed.

New World Domestic Order

Contemplating a day in Los Angeles without the labor of Latino immigrants taxes the imagination, for an array of consumer products and services would disappear (poof!) or become prohibitively expensive. Think about it. When you arrive at many a Southern California hotel or restaurant, you are likely to be first greeted by a Latino car valet. The janitors, cooks, busboys, painters, carpet cleaners, and landscape workers who keep the office buildings, restaurants, and malls running are also likely to be Mexican or Central American immigrants, as are many of those who work behind the scenes in dry cleaners, convalescent homes, hospitals, resorts, and apartment complexes. Both figuratively and literally, the work performed by Latino and Latina immigrants gives Los Angeles much of its famed gloss. Along the boulevards, at car washes promising “100% hand wash” for prices as low as \$4.99, teams of Latino workers furiously scrub, wipe, and polish automobiles. Supermarket shelves boast bags of “prewashed” mesclun or baby greens (sometimes labeled “Euro salad”), thanks to the efforts of the Latino immigrants who wash and package the greens. (In addition, nail parlors adorn almost every corner mini-mall, offering the promise of emphasized femininity for \$10 or \$12, thanks largely to the work of Korean immigrant women.) Only twenty years ago, these relatively inexpensive consumer services and products were not nearly as widely available as they are today. The Los Angeles economy, landscape, and lifestyle have been transformed in ways that rely on low-wage, Latino immigrant labor.

The proliferation of such labor-intensive services, coupled with inflated real estate values and booming mutual funds portfolios, has given many people the illusion of affluence and socioeconomic mobility. When Angelenos, accustomed to employing a full-time nanny/housekeeper for about \$150 or \$200 a week, move to Seattle or Durham, they are startled to discover how “the cost of living that way”

quickly escalates. Only then do they realize the extent to which their affluent lifestyle and smoothly running household depended on one Latina immigrant woman.

This book focuses on the Mexican and Central American immigrant women who work as nanny/housekeepers and housecleaners in Los Angeles, as well as the women who employ them. Who could have foreseen that at the dawn of the twenty-first century, paid domestic work would be a growth occupation? Only a few decades ago, observers confidently predicted that this occupation would soon become obsolete, replaced by labor-saving household devices such as automatic dishwashers, disposable diapers, and microwave ovens, and by consumer goods and services purchased outside of the home, such as fast food and dry cleaning.¹ Instead, paid domestic work has expanded. Why?

THE GROWTH OF DOMESTIC WORK

The increased employment of women, especially of married women with children, is usually what comes to mind when people explain the proliferation of private nannies, housekeepers, and housecleaners. As women have gone off to work, men have not picked up the slack at home. Grandmothers are also working, or no longer live nearby; and given the relative scarcity of child care centers in the United States, especially those that will accept infants and toddlers not yet toilet trained, working families of sufficient means often choose to pay someone to come in to take care of their homes and their children.

Even when conveniently located day care centers are available, many middle-class Americans are deeply prejudiced against them, perceiving them as offering cold, institutional, second-class child care.² For various reasons, middle-class families headed by two working parents prefer the convenience, flexibility, and privilege of having someone care for their children in their home. With this arrangement, parents don't have to dread their harried early-morning preparations before rushing to day care, the children don't seem to catch as many illnesses, and parents aren't likely to be fined by the care provider when they work late or get stuck in traffic. As the educational sociologist Julia Wrigley has shown in research con-

ducted in New York City and Los Angeles, with a private caregiver in the home, parents feel they gain control and flexibility, while their children receive more attention.³ Wrigley also makes clear that when they hire a Caribbean or Latina woman as their private employee, in either a live-in or live-out arrangement, they typically gain something else: an employee who does two jobs for the price of one, both looking after the children as a nanny and undertaking daily housekeeping duties. I use the term “nanny/housekeeper” to refer to the individual performing this dual job.

Meanwhile, more people are working and they are working longer hours. Even individuals without young children feel overwhelmed by the much-bemoaned “time squeeze,” which makes it more difficult to find time for both daily domestic duties and leisure. At workplaces around the nation, women and men alike are pressured by new technology, their own desires for consumer goods, national anxieties over global competition, and exhortations from employers and co-workers to work overtime.⁴ As free time shrinks, people who can afford it seek relief by paying a housecleaner to attend to domestic grit and grime once every week or two. Increasing numbers of Americans thus purchase from nanny/housekeepers and housecleaners the work once performed by wives and mothers.

Of course, not everyone brings equal resources to bear on these problems. In fact, growing income inequality has contributed significantly to the expansion of paid domestic work. The mid-twentieth-century trend in the United States toward less income inequality, as many researchers and commentators have remarked, was short-lived. In the years immediately after World War II, a strong economy (based on an increasing number of well-paying unionized jobs in factories), together with growing mass consumption and federal investment in education, housing, and public welfare, allowed many Americans to join an expanding middle class. This upward trend halted in the early 1970s, when deindustrialization, the oil crisis, national inflation, the end of the Vietnam War, and shifts in global trade began to restructure the U.S. economy. Gaps in the occupational structure widened. The college educated began to enjoy greater opportunities in the professions and in corporate and high-technology sectors, while poorly educated workers found their manufacturing jobs downgraded—if they found them at all, as many

were shipped overseas. During the 1980s and 1990s, income polarization in the United States intensified, setting the stage for further expansion of paid domestic work.

Specific location is important to this analysis, for the income distribution in some cities is more inequitable than in others, and greater inequality, as an important study directed by UCLA sociologist Ruth Milkman has shown, tends to generate greater concentrations of paid domestic work. When the researchers compared cities around the nation, the Los Angeles–Long Beach metropolitan area emerged as the nation's leader in these jobs (measured by the proportion of all employed women in paid domestic work), followed by Miami-Hialeah, Houston, and New York City.⁵

Los Angeles' dubious distinction is not hard to explain. All of the top-ranked cities in paid domestic work have large concentrations of Latina or Caribbean immigrant women, and Los Angeles remains the number-one destination for Mexicans, Salvadorans, and Guatemalans coming to the United States, most of whom join the ranks of the working poor. Moreover, Los Angeles is a city where capital concentrates. It is a dynamic economic center for Pacific Rim trade and finance—what Saskia Sassen, a leading theorist of globalization, immigration, and transnational capital mobility, refers to as a “global city.” Global cities serve as regional “command posts” that aid in integrating the new expansive global economy. Though Los Angeles lacks the financial power of New York or London, it has a large, diversified economy, supported both by manufacturing and by the capital-intensive entertainment industry. The upshot? Los Angeles is home to many people with highly paid jobs. As Southern California businesses bounced back from the recession of the early 1990s, many already handsomely paid individuals suddenly found themselves flush with unanticipated dividends, bonuses, and stock options.⁶ And as Sassen reminds us, globalization's high-end jobs breed low-paying jobs.⁷

Many people employed in business and finance, and in the high-tech and the entertainment sectors, are high-salaried lawyers, bankers, accountants, marketing specialists, consultants, agents, and entrepreneurs. The way they live their lives, requiring many services and consuming many products, generates other high-end occupations linked to gentrification (creating jobs for real estate agents, therapists, personal trainers, designers, celebrity chefs, etc.), all of which

in turn rely on various kinds of daily servicing that low-wage workers provide. For the masses of affluent professionals and corporate managers in Los Angeles, relying on Latino immigrant workers has become almost a social obligation. After relocating from the Midwest to Southern California, a new neighbor, the homemaker wife of an engineer, expressed her embarrassment at not hiring a gardener. It's easy to see why she felt abashed. In New York, the quintessential service occupation is dog walking; in Los Angeles' suburban landscape, gardeners and domestic workers proliferate. And in fact, as Roger Waldinger's analysis of census data shows, twice as many gardeners and domestic workers were working in Los Angeles in 1990 as in 1980.⁸ Mexicans, Salvadorans, and Guatemalans perform these bottom-rung, low-wage jobs; and by 1990 those three groups, numbering about 2 million, made up more than half of the adults who had immigrated to Los Angeles since 1965.⁹ Hundreds of thousands of Mexican, Salvadoran, and Guatemalan women sought employment in Los Angeles during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s,¹⁰ often without papers but in search of better futures for themselves and for their families. For many of them, the best job opportunity was in paid domestic work.

Mexican women have always lived in Los Angeles—indeed, Los Angeles *was* Mexico until 1848—but their rates of migration to the United States were momentarily dampened by the Bracero Program, a government-operated temporary contract labor program that recruited Mexican men to work in western agriculture between 1942 and 1964. During the Bracero Program, nearly 5 million contracts were authorized. Beginning in the 1970s, family reunification legislation allowed many former bracero workers to legally bring their wives and families from Mexico. Immigration accelerated, and by 1990 there were 7 million Mexican immigrants in the United States, concentrated most highly in Southern California. Structural changes in the economies of both Mexico and the United States also significantly affected this dynamic. Mexico's economic crisis of the 1980s propelled many married women with small children into the labor force, and with the maturation of transnational informational social networks—and especially the development of exclusive women's networks—it wasn't long before many Mexican women learned about U.S. employers eager to hire them in factories, in hotels, and in private homes.¹¹

Unlike Mexicans, Central Americans have relatively new roots in Los Angeles. The Salvadoran civil war (1979–92) and the even longer-running conflicts in Guatemala (military campaigns supported by U.S. government aid) drove hundreds of thousands of Central Americans to the United States during the 1980s. Almost overnight, Los Angeles became a second capital city for both Salvadorans and Guatemalans. Estimates of this population, many of whose members cannot speak English and remain undocumented (and hence officially undercounted), vary wildly. The 1990 census counted 159,000 Guatemalans and 302,000 Salvadorans in the Los Angeles region, but community leaders believe that by 1994, the number of Salvadorans in Los Angeles alone had reached 500,000.¹² Central Americans came to the United States fleeing war, political persecution, and deteriorating economic conditions; and though the political violence had diminished by the mid-1990s, few were making plans to permanently return to their old homes.¹³ There have been numerous careful case studies of Central American communities in the United States; among their most stunning findings is that wherever Central American women have gone in the United States, including San Francisco, Long Island, Washington, D.C., Houston, and Los Angeles, they predominate in private domestic jobs.¹⁴

The growing concentration of Central American and Mexican immigrant women in Los Angeles and their entry into domestic service came on the heels of local African American women's exodus from domestic work. The supply of new immigrant workers has helped fuel a demand that, as noted above, was already growing. That is, the increasing number of Latina immigrants searching for work in California, particularly in Los Angeles, has pushed down wages and made modestly priced domestic services more widely available. This process is not lost on the women who do the work. Today, Latina domestic workers routinely complain to one another that newly arrived women from Mexico and Central America are undercutting the rates for cleaning and child care.

As a result, demand is no longer confined to elite enclaves but instead spans a wider range of class and geography in Southern California. While most employers of paid domestic workers in Los Angeles are white, college-educated, middle-class or upper-middle-class suburban residents with some connection to the professions or

the business world, employers now also include apartment dwellers with modest incomes, single mothers, college students, and elderly people living on fixed incomes.¹⁵ They live in tiny bungalows and condominiums, not just sprawling houses. They include immigrant entrepreneurs and even immigrant workers. In contemporary Los Angeles, factory workers living in the Latino working-class neighborhoods can and do hire Latino gardeners to mow their lawns, and a few also sometimes hire in-home nanny/housekeepers as well. In fact, some Latina nanny/housekeepers pay other Latina immigrants—usually much older or much younger, newly arrived women—to do in-home child care, cooking, and cleaning, while they themselves go off to care for the children and homes of the more wealthy.

DOMESTIC WORK VERSUS EMPLOYMENT

Paid domestic work is distinctive not in being the worst job of all but in being regarded as something other than employment. Its peculiar status is revealed in many occupational practices, as later chapters will show, and in off-the-cuff statements made by both employers and employees. "Maria was with me for eight years," a retired teacher told me, "and then she left and got a real job." Similarly, many women who do this work remain reluctant to embrace it *as* work because of the stigma associated with it. This is especially true of women who previously held higher social status. One Mexican woman, formerly a secretary in a Mexican embassy, referred to her five-day-a-week nanny/housekeeper job as her "hobby."

As the sociologist Mary Romero and others who have studied paid domestic work have noted, this occupation is often not recognized as employment because it takes place in a private home.¹⁶ Unlike factories or offices, the home serves as the site of family and leisure activities, seen as by their nature antithetical to work. Moreover, the tasks that domestic workers do—cleaning, cooking, and caring for children—are associated with women's "natural" expressions of love for their families. Although Catharine E. Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe in the late nineteenth century, like feminist

scholars more recently, sought to valorize these domestic activities (in both their paid and unpaid forms) as “real work,” these efforts past and present have had little effect in the larger culture.¹⁷ Housecleaning is typically only visible when it is not performed. The work of wives and mothers is not seen as real work; and when it becomes paid, it is accorded even less regard and respect.

Another important factor that prevents paid domestic work from being recognized as real work is its personal, idiosyncratic nature, especially when it involves the daily care of children or the elderly. Drawing on her examination of elder care workers, the public policy analyst Deborah Stone argues that caring work is inherently relational, involving not only routine bodily care, such as bathing and feeding, but also attachment, affiliation, intimate knowledge, patience, and even favoritism. Talking and listening, Stones shows, are instrumental to effective care. Her observation certainly applies to private child care work, as parents want someone who will really “care about” and show preference for their children; yet such personal engagement remains antithetical to how we think about much employment, which, as Stone reminds us, we tend to view on the model of manufacturing.¹⁸ Standardization, and frameworks of efficiency and productivity that rely on simplistic notions of labor inputs and product outputs, simply is irrelevant to paid domestic work, especially when the job encompasses taking care of children as well as cleaning. Since we are accustomed to defining employment as that which does *not* involve emotions and demonstrations of affective preference, the work of nannies and baby-sitters never quite gains legitimacy.

In part because of the idiosyncratic and emotional nature of caring work, and in part because of the contradictory nature of American culture, employers are equally reluctant to view themselves as employers. This, I believe, has very serious consequences for the occupation. When well-meaning employers, who wish to voice their gratitude, say, “She’s not just an employee, she’s like one of the family,” they are in effect absolving themselves of their responsibilities—not for any nefarious reason but because they themselves are confused by domestic work arrangements. Even as they enjoy the attendant privilege and status, many Americans remain profoundly ambivalent about positioning themselves as employers of domestic workers. These arrangements, after all, are often likened to master-servant

relations drawn out of premodern feudalism and slavery, making for a certain amount of tension with the strong U.S. rhetoric of democracy and egalitarianism.¹⁹ Consequently, some employers feel embarrassed, uncomfortable, even guilty.

Maternalism, once so widely observed among female employers of private domestic workers, is now largely absent from the occupation; its remnants can be found primarily among older homemakers. When employers give used clothing and household items to their employees, or offer them unsolicited advice, help, or guidance, they may be acting, many observers have noted, manipulatively.²⁰ Such gestures encourage the domestic employees to work harder and longer, and simultaneously allow employers to experience personal recognition and validation of themselves as kind, superior, and altruistic. Maternalism is thus an important mechanism of employer power.

Today, however, a new sterility prevails in employer-employee relations in paid domestic work. For various reasons—including the pace of life that harries women with both career and family responsibilities, as well as their general discomfort with domestic servitude—most employers do not act maternally toward their domestic workers. In fact, many of them go to great lengths to minimize personal interactions with their nanny/housekeeper and housecleaners. At the same time, the Latina immigrants who work for them—especially the women who look after their employers' children—crave personal contact. They *want* social recognition and appreciation for who they are and what they do, but they don't often get it from their employers. In chapter 7, I argue that while maternalism serves as a mechanism of power that reinscribes some of the more distressing aspects of racial and class inequality between and among women, the distant employer-employee relations prevalent today do more to exacerbate inequality by denying domestic workers even modest forms of social recognition, dignity, and emotional sustenance. As we will see, personalism, achieved by exchanging private confidences and by recognizing domestic workers as individuals with their own concerns outside of their jobs, partially addresses the problem of social annihilation experienced by Latina domestic workers, offering a tenuous, discursive amelioration of these glaring inequalities.

Ironically, many employers are enormously appreciative of what

their Latina domestic workers do for them, but they are more likely to declare these feelings to others than to the women who actually do the work. In informal conversation, they often gush enthusiastically about Latina nanny/housekeepers who care for homes and children, expressing a deep appreciation (or a rationalization?) that one almost never hears from someone speaking about his or her spouse. You might hear someone say, "I don't know what I would do without her," "She's perfect!" or "She's far better with the kids than I am!"; but such sentiments are rarely communicated directly to the employees.

The employers I interviewed did not dwell too much on their status as employers of nanny/housekeepers or housecleaners. They usually identified first and foremost with their occupations and families, with their positions as accountants or teachers, wives or mothers. Like the privilege of whiteness in U.S. society, the privilege of employing a domestic worker is barely noticed by those who have it. While they obviously did not deny that they pay someone to clean their home and care for their children, they tended to approach these arrangements not as employers, with a particular set of obligations and responsibilities, but as consumers.

For their part, the women who do the work are well aware of the low status and stigma attached to paid domestic work. None of the Latina immigrants I interviewed had aspired to the job, none want their daughters to do it, and the younger ones hope to leave the occupation altogether in a few years. They do take pride in their work, and they are extremely proud of what their earnings enable them to accomplish for their families. Yet they are not proud to be domestic workers, and this self-distancing from their occupational status makes it more difficult to see paid domestic work as a real job.

Moreover, scarcely anyone, employer or employee, knows that labor regulations govern paid domestic work. Lawyers that I interviewed told me that even adjudicators and judges in the California Labor Commissioner's Office, where one might go to settle wage disputes, had expressed surprise when informed that labor laws protected housecleaners or nanny/housekeepers working in private homes. This problem of paid domestic work not being accepted as employment is compounded by the subordination by race and immigrant status of the women who do the job.

GLOBALIZATION, IMMIGRATION, AND THE RACIALIZATION OF PAID DOMESTIC WORK

Particular regional formations have historically characterized the racialization of paid domestic work in the United States. Relationships between domestic employees and employers have always been imbued with racial meanings: white "masters and mistresses" have been cast as pure and superior, and "maids and servants," drawn from specific racial-ethnic groups (varying by region), have been cast as dirty and socially inferior. The occupational racialization we see now in Los Angeles or New York City continues this American legacy, but it also draws to a much greater extent on globalization and immigration.

In the United States today, immigrant women from a few non-European nations are established as paid domestic workers. These women—who hail primarily from Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean and who are perceived as "nonwhite" in Anglo-American contexts—hold various legal statuses. Some are legal permanent residents or naturalized U.S. citizens, many as beneficiaries of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act's amnesty-legalization program.²¹ Central American women, most of whom entered the United States after the 1982 cutoff date for amnesty, did not qualify for legalization, so in the 1990s they generally either remained undocumented or held a series of temporary work permits, granted to delay their return to war-ravaged countries.²² Domestic workers who are working without papers clearly face extra burdens and risks: criminalization of employment, denial of social entitlements, and status as outlaws anywhere in the nation. If they complain about their jobs, they may be threatened with deportation.²³ Undocumented immigrant workers, however, are not the only vulnerable ones. In the 1990s, even legal permanent residents and naturalized citizens saw their rights and privileges diminish, as campaigns against illegal immigration metastasized into more generalized xenophobic attacks on all immigrants, including those here with legal authorization. Immigration status has clearly become an important axis of inequality, one interwoven with relations of race, class, and gender, and it facilitates the exploitation of immigrant domestic workers.

Yet race and immigration are interacting in an important new way, which Latina immigrant domestic workers exemplify: their position

as “foreigners” and “immigrants” allows employers, and the society at large, to perceive them as outsiders and thereby overlook the contemporary racialization of the occupation. Immigration does not trump race but, combined with the dominant ideology of a “color-blind” society, manages to shroud it.²⁴

With few exceptions, domestic work has always been reserved for poor women, for immigrant women, and for women of color; but over the last century, paid domestic workers have become more homogenous, reflecting the subordinations of both race and nationality/immigration status. In the late nineteenth century, this occupation was the most likely source of employment for U.S.-born women. In 1870, according to the historian David M. Katzman, two-thirds of all nonagricultural female wage earners worked as domestics in private homes. The proportion steadily declined to a little over one-third by 1900, and to one-fifth by 1930. Alternative employment opportunities for women expanded in the mid- and late twentieth century, so by 1990, fewer than 1 percent of employed American women were engaged in domestic work.²⁵ Census figures, of course, are notoriously unreliable in documenting this increasingly undocumented, “under-the-table” occupation, but the trend is clear: paid domestic work has gone from being *either* an immigrant woman’s job *or* a minority woman’s job to one that is now filled by women who, as Latina and Caribbean immigrants, embody subordinate status both racially and as immigrants.²⁶

Regional racializations of the occupation were already deeply marked in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as the occupation recruited women from subordinate racial-ethnic groups. In northeastern and midwestern cities of the late nineteenth century, single young Irish, German, and Scandinavian immigrants and women who had migrated from the country to the city typically worked as live-in “domestic help,” often leaving the occupation when they married.²⁷ During this period, the Irish were the main target of xenophobic vilification. With the onset of World War I, European immigration declined and job opportunities in manufacturing opened up for whites, and black migration from the South enabled white employers to recruit black women for domestic jobs in the Northeast. Black women had always predominated as a servant caste in the South, whether in slavery or after, and by 1920 they

constituted the single largest group in paid domestic work in both the South and the Northeast.²⁸ Unlike European immigrant women, black women experienced neither individual nor intergenerational mobility out of the occupation, but they succeeded in transforming the occupation from one characterized by live-in arrangements, with no separation between work and social life, to live-out “day work”—a transformation aided by urbanization, new interurban transportation systems, and smaller urban residences.²⁹

In the Southwest and the West of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the occupation was filled with Mexican American and Mexican immigrant women, as well as Asian, African American, and Native American women and, briefly, Asian men. Asian immigrant men were among the first recruits for domestic work in the West.³⁰ California exceptionalism—its Anglo-American conquest from Mexico in 1848, its ensuing rapid development and overnight influx of Anglo settlers and miners, and its scarcity of women—initially created many domestic jobs in the northern part of the territory for Chinese “houseboys,” laundrymen, and cooks, and later for Japanese men, followed by Japanese immigrant women and their U.S.-born daughters, the *nisei*, who remained in domestic work until World War II.³¹ Asian American women’s experiences, as Berkeley sociologist Evelyn Nakano Glenn has demonstrated, provide an intermediate case of intergenerational mobility out of domestic work between that of black and Chicana women who found themselves, generation after generation, stuck in the occupational ghetto of domestic work and that of European immigrant women of the early twentieth century who quickly moved up the mobility ladder.³²

For Mexican American women and their daughters, domestic work became a dead-end job. From the 1880s until World War II, it provided the largest source of nonagricultural employment for Mexican and Chicana women throughout the Southwest. During this period, domestic vocational training schools, teaching manuals, and Americanization efforts deliberately channeled them into domestic jobs.³³ Continuing well into the 1970s throughout the Southwest, and up to the present in particular regions, U.S.-born Mexican American women have worked as domestics. Over that time, the job has changed. Much as black women helped transform the domestic occupation from live-in to live-out work in the early twentieth century,

Chicanas in the Southwest increasingly preferred contractual housecleaning work—what Romero has called “job work”—to live-in or daily live-out domestic work.³⁴

While black women dominated the occupation throughout the nation during the 1950s and 1960s, there is strong evidence that many left it during the late 1960s. The 1970 census marked the first time that domestic work did not account for the largest segment of employed black women; and the proportion of black women in domestic work continued to drop dramatically in the 1970s and 1980s, falling from 16.4 percent in 1972 to 7.4 percent in 1980, then to 3.5 percent by the end of the 1980s.³⁵ By opening up public-sector jobs to black women, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 made it possible for them to leave private domestic service. Consequently, both African American and Mexican American women moved into jobs from which they had been previously barred, as secretaries, sales clerks, and public-sector employees, and into the expanding number of relatively low-paid service jobs in convalescent homes, hospitals, cafeterias, and hotels.³⁶

These occupational adjustments and opportunities did not go unnoticed. In a 1973 *Los Angeles Times* article, a manager with thirty years of experience in domestic employment agencies reported, “Our Mexican girls are nice, but the blacks are hostile.” Speaking very candidly about her contrasting perceptions of Latina immigrant and African American women domestic workers, she said of black women, “you can feel their anger. They would rather work at Grant’s for \$1.65 an hour than do housework. To them it denotes a lowering of self.”³⁷ By the 1970s black women in the occupation were growing older, and their daughters were refusing to take jobs imbued with servitude and racial subordination. Domestic work, with its historical legacy in slavery, was roundly rejected. Not only expanding job opportunities but also the black power movement, with its emphasis on self-determination and pride, dissuaded younger generations of African American women from entering domestic work.

It was at this moment that newspaper reports, census data, and anecdotal accounts first register the occupation’s demographic shift toward Latina immigrants, a change especially pronounced in areas with high levels of Latino immigration. In Los Angeles, for example, the percentage of African American women working as domestics