

Domestic service and prostitution: Empirical and theoretical connections

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Abstract

Various activities are systematically imposed on women in both paid and unpaid forms, generally involving care for others, sexual activity, or a combination of both. These activities have typically been studied separately, but these analytical divisions are increasingly being questioned. This article contributes to this debate by exploring empirical and theoretical connections two of the most prominent of these activities, prostitution and domestic service. Through a survey of the empirical literature on migration for domestic service, the article identifies four themes that suggest why some migrant women move between domestic service and prostitution: pre-existing structural constraints, migration conditions, working conditions, and migration policies. Subsequently, drawing on the work of French materialist feminists Colette Guillaumin and Paola Tabet and political theorist Carole Pateman, it sketches the outline of a theoretical account of the relationship between these two activities.

Keywords

Domestic service, domestic work, feminist theory, migration, prostitution, sex work

Introduction

Multiple activities are generally imposed on women, in both paid and unpaid forms, involving care for others and sexual activity. These activities have often been studied separately: there is a vast literature on prostitution, and smaller but sizable literatures on domestic service, nannying, and so on. Increasingly, however, scholars are questioning the analytical divisions between these activities, calling for their analysis as part of, for example, ‘work considered female’ (Falquet, 2009: 78).¹ This scholarly shift takes place

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in the context of increasing women's migration from poorer to richer regions to engage in paid forms of these activities. This movement makes more visible the intersection of gender with dimensions of global economic inequality, histories of imperialism and slavery, and sexualised racism (e.g. Crawford, 2018; Marchetti, 2014). Consequently, this topic is of major importance for feminism. Here, I address the connection between two of the most prominent forms of work considered female: prostitution and domestic service.

Researchers studying these two activities from a historical perspective have long recognised a relationship between them (e.g. Moujoud and Pourette, 2005; Tinsman, 1992). The connection between sexual coercion or prostitution and domestic labour has existed for millennia within the institutions of slavery and historical forms of domestic service (e.g. Glenn, 2010; Graunke, 2002), but in this article I focus on the contemporary context, in which common structural conditions push some women to engage in these activities after migration. Consequently, some women move between these activities, although many women confronted with this same set of structural conditions engage in only one (or indeed neither), and may resist their conflation (e.g. Parreñas, 2011: 19). Nonetheless, I propose that the fact that movement between prostitution and domestic service exists in at least some situations is significant, and that investigating this movement reveals important aspects of work considered as female.

The debate within feminism over the understanding of prostitution/sex work forms a backdrop to this discussion. While a range of discourses can be identified within this debate (Wolkowitz, 2006), it can broadly be divided into two camps: those using the term 'sex work', who understand paid sexual activity as a form of labour (e.g. Bernstein, 2007; Kempadoo and Doezema, 1998) and those using the term 'prostitution', who understand paid sexual activity as a form of violence against women, and/or as a symptom of structural sex inequality (e.g. Barry, 1995; Coy et al., 2019, but see also Tyler, 2021). The arguments of this latter group, often known as 'abolitionists', are frequently underpinned by radical feminist thought. While this article does not directly address the question of whether prostitution and domestic service should be understood as labour, the arguments are directed towards this latter group. Consequently, the term 'prostitution' is used, except when discussing the work of other authors, where the author's preferred term is used.²

Whether researchers recognise a link between prostitution and domestic service relates to their stance on this question: almost all those who have recognised the existence of a connection between prostitution and domestic service broadly take the 'sex work' position in this debate. This includes one detailed account of women's movement between sex and domestic work in the United Arab Emirates (UAE; Mahdavi, 2013) and two studies focusing on prostitution but which also discuss women's movement from domestic work to prostitution (Lévy and Lieber, 2008; Moujoud, 2005), focusing, respectively, on Northern Chinese and North African women in Paris. The specific nature and degree of movement between these two activities varies; for example, a study on Latin American women in Spain found that while some women moved between domestic service and prostitution, the majority decided on their path before leaving their home countries (Oso Casas, 2006). Certain points are consistent throughout these studies: they all find that prostitution and domestic service are not mutually exclusive in that women may perform both successively or simultaneously to generate enough income to support

themselves and their dependents. Furthermore, they find that women sometimes prefer prostitution to domestic service because of the extremely poor conditions prevailing in domestic service. Finally, Mahdavi (2013) finds that male employers may sexually use domestic servants in exchange for money or another form of compensation.

Other researchers recognise a link between the two industries. For example, in a study of migrant domestic workers in five European cities, Bridget Anderson mentions that, for undocumented women arriving in Europe with no contacts, the only accessible income-generating activities are domestic and sex work (Anderson, 2000: 31). Laura Agustín expands on this observation, grouping sex work, domestic work, and caring work 'because they are the ones Europeans are willing to pay migrants to do in large numbers' (Agustín, 2007: 74–75).

Within the abolitionist literature on prostitution, this recognition is considerably more unusual. Instead, abolitionist writers either do not mention domestic service or seek to differentiate it from prostitution.³ For example, Sheila Jeffreys (2009: 12, 18–19) argues that domestic labour differs fundamentally from prostitution because it 'can be done by men and is not necessarily based on women's biology and oppression'. She argues that domestic labour is not inherently exploitative even though it can be performed under exploitative conditions, and that domestic and caring labour is socially necessary while prostitution is not.

However, abolitionist writers make related arguments when writing about marriage, most prominently when discussing 'mail-order brides'. Demand for mail-order brides is commonly analysed as combining men's demand for sexual access to women and for domestic services (e.g. Constable, 2003). Kaye Quek (2018), for example, theorises this phenomenon as 'prostitution "plus"': a form of sex trafficking in which women are additionally required to domestically service men. A second example is found in a report by the Philippine Women Centre of B.C. (2000). The authors understand trafficking broadly, including 'domestic workers, mail-order brides, prostitutes and other Filipino women who are forced to emigrate as part of globalization' (p. 1). They note connections between these activities and sex tourism in the Philippines and call for more research on these links.

The tendency in abolitionist writing to address domestic work only within mail-order marriage mirrors a broader asymmetry in the treatment of domestic and sexual activities in radical feminist thought. While both activities are discussed within marriage, outside of marriage only prostitution is discussed, and paid domestic service is excluded from analysis. This is to some extent understandable as radical feminism focuses on the oppression of women via sexuality (MacKinnon, 1989), so it is arguably logical to exclude an activity generally understood to be a form of work. It is also understandable from a strategic perspective: given that radical feminists/abolitionists seek to abolish prostitution, which they understand as violence, they oppose the idea that prostitution is a form of work 'like any other'. Consequently, they seek to differentiate prostitution from activities associated with work, including domestic service, and they resist the conflation of trafficking for domestic labour with sex trafficking.

Despite the coherence of the exclusion of paid domestic service from radical feminist/abolitionist analysis on theoretical and strategic levels, it is nonetheless an unjustifiable

gap: a theory claiming to understand women's oppression, but which does not account for a very common activity performed largely by working-class and/or racialised women, is at best inadequate. Notably, the failure of many 'second wave' feminists to take paid domestic service into account was heavily criticised by racialised and working-class feminists (e.g. hooks, 1984: 1-2). Some scholars, too, have argued that this oversight is symptomatic of white- and middle-class-dominated feminism ignoring class and race differences among women (Lautier, 2002).

This article responds to this gap in radical feminist/abolitionist thought. It does so in two parts: empirical and theoretical. The empirical section aims to demonstrate that, although only a small number of studies directly address the movement of women between domestic service and prostitution, there is sufficient evidence in the literature on migration for domestic service to suggest that movement between these two activities is possible, and may even be facilitated in certain cases.

There are also hints in this literature that the relationship between prostitution and domestic service is more than simply empirical, that is, it is not a coincidence that these two activities are empirically connected: the empirical link exists due to a conceptual, or analytical, relationship. Heidi Tinsman states this clearly:

Scholars' recognition of the fluid boundaries between paid housework and sexual services and/or violence sustain [the] assertion that what is bought and sold in the domestic marketplace is not simply alienated labor but the right to control the whole person. This places sexual domination at the center of the labor contract . . . the basic conditions of the domestic worker's contract [are such that] women sell sexuality as part of their labor. (Tinsman, 1992: 51)

In the second part of this article, I focus on this 'theoretical' connection, showing that it is possible to theorise the relationship between prostitution and domestic service in a way consistent with radical feminism. Hence, I draw on radical and materialist feminist analyses of prostitution and domestic service to sketch the beginnings of a way to theorise the link between the two.

Empirical links between prostitution and domestic service

Anecdotal accounts of women trafficked abroad believing they would work as domestic servants, before discovering they are to be prostituted, are common. Otherwise, direct deception may be absent, but the conditions under which women migrate and work as domestic servants can favour entry into prostitution, as illustrated in the following anecdote:

I arrived in Almería through a friend's mediation. I began to work as a domestic, I was badly paid and mistreated. Sundays I came to the edge of the sea and cried. One Sunday a Moroccan man saw me crying, I explained my situation . . . he took me to his house. I was a virgin, he promised he was going to marry me . . . he got me a residence card . . . He found me work in a restaurant and let me stay in his studio, he told me I had to pay rent. I began to sleep with some clients from the restaurant. (Agustín, 2007: 42–43)

Here, I address four reasons why movement between domestic service and prostitution may occur. While I have disaggregated these factors for analytical purposes, it should be kept in mind that in practice they are closely imbricated. Given the anecdotal nature of evidence available, the analysis is not intended to be systematic but instead to indicate some factors that may facilitate women moving between these two activities. Finally, these factors alone do not cause women to enter prostitution; the existence of thriving sex industries and male demand in destination countries is a prerequisite to women's entry into it.

Structural constraints

Feminist accounts of international political economy offer insight into the structural conditions driving migration for domestic service (e.g. Enloe, 1989). This literature demonstrates how global political-economic factors such as globalisation, distorted development, and international debt politics interact with domestic and international patriarchies to produce a group of women – often racialised and from the global South – that can be mobilised into highly gendered activities like prostitution and domestic service for the wealthy, in their own or in other countries. In these analyses, patriarchy is understood as a structural condition along with global economic and political factors (Duriesmith and Meger, 2020). Perhaps most relevant for the purposes of this article is Pettman's (1996, 2008) work on the international political economy of sex, which highlights various forms of gendered and sexualised international exchanges, focusing on migration across borders for 'work identified as women's work' (p. 144) including domestic work, sex work, and mail-order brides.

The sociological and anthropological literature on migration for domestic work offers a finer-grained exploration of this phenomenon, though sometimes at the expense of analysis of local and international patriarchal structures. This literature focuses on the unequal global economic conditions creating the economic conditions in countries of origin that manifest in the decisions of individual women to migrate. It argues that the main driver of migration is poverty, with women often remitting a large proportion of their earnings to immediate or extended family in their home countries (e.g. Crawford, 2018). While many migrant domestic servants were poor in their home countries, high costs associated with agencies and travel from some countries mean that some migrant women are more likely to be middle-class; economic conditions in sending countries such as the Philippines are such that salaries for middle-class professions may be insufficient to support a family (Parreñas, 2001: 63–64).

In some cases, the pressure to remain abroad originates not just from poverty but from the desire to improve social standing (e.g. Gamburd, 2000). Laura Oso Casas found that, in response to the pressure to fund relatives' aspirations for social mobility, Latin American prostituted women in Spain sometimes referred to family members as 'mackerels' (a slang term usually used to refer to pimps), and this pressure was a primary reason why some continued to engage in more precarious forms of prostitution after paying their debts (2006). In some cases, migration is inexpensive – such as the case of Ukrainians working in Austria, who could take a bus (Haidinger, 2008). Nonetheless, it appears that economic need is inevitably an important factor in women's decisions to migrate.

There are some indications in the sociological–anthropological literature on migration for domestic service that economic concerns are not women's sole motivation for migration. Rhacel Parreñas' 2001 study of Filipina domestic servants in Rome and Los Angeles found that every respondent was only partially driven by economic motives. For many, migration constituted a strategy to escape the high workloads of family life. Other common motivations included escape from domestic violence or infidelity, or because their husband had left and they could no longer afford to raise their children. A total of 14 of the 20 legally married women in Parreñas' (2001) Rome sample cited at least one of these motivations (p. 66). Other researchers have also noted escaping male violence or forced marriage as a motivation for migration (e.g. Anderson, 2000: 29–30; Lan, 2006: 135, 147–48; Moujoud, 2005: 202), albeit briefly. Mirjana Morokvasič (1986) has theorised this phenomenon of women's migration in response to sex-based oppression in home countries as a structural aspect of migration specific to women, potentially as important as economic factors.

No matter what the original motivation(s) for migration, they create pressure on migrant women to remain overseas. When work in domestic service is no longer tenable, due to, for example, abuse, overwork, or non-payment, prostitution may appear a better option: as an Ethiopian woman in Dubai said, 'If we don't have rights as maids or prostitutes, then we might as well be prostitutes so we can make more money' (Mahdavi, 2013: 438).

Migration conditions

Various factors related to the conditions of women's migration may facilitate movement between domestic service and prostitution. I will briefly discuss two: the reliance on agencies/recruiters and the prevalence of debt (bondage). Women frequently obtain positions as domestic servants through agencies or recruiters, who may range from a single individual to large criminal organisations. Migrants are often highly dependent on agents, 'who may be the only access she has to employment, her only contact in the receiving country, and the person who arranges her travel document and keeps her passport' (Anderson, 2000: 32). Agencies are ineffectively regulated in many countries and frequently charge exorbitant fees, provide misleading information, and agents may be physically, psychologically, and sexually abusive (Constable, 2007; Human Rights Watch, 2006).

Women commonly go into considerable debt to agents/recruiters (Agustín, 2007: 27–28; Oso Casas, 2006), and debt bondage is not uncommon. For example, a Hong Kong study of 22 domestic servants from the Philippines and Indonesia found that 18 reported experiences fitting the international definition of debt bondage, including the use of deception and coercion to convince them to sign false loan documents (Lee and Petersen, 2006).

This dependence on agents/recruiters may facilitate the movement of women between domestic service and prostitution, as agents may have complete power over them and there may be no guarantee of a job in domestic service rather than prostitution at the end of the journey (e.g. Human Rights Watch, 2006: 79–80). Women under pressure to repay debt may also be more likely to find that prostitution allows them to earn more money quickly (e.g. Oso Casas, 2006), particularly if working conditions in domestic service force them to leave.

Working conditions

Domestic servants frequently experience appalling working conditions, which are surprisingly consistent across different regions (Altman and Pannell, 2012; Jureidini and Moukarbel, 2004). Severe physical, psychological and sexual abuse, food deprivation, and forced confinement are common. Non- or under-payment of wages, excessive working hours with few or no days off, and backbreaking workloads are widespread. Basic job security protections such as contracts are often absent and living conditions inadequate. Employers may confiscate passports and/or work permits and restrict workers' ability to communicate (e.g. Anderson, 2000; Bhuyan et al., 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2006; Jinnah, 2020; Nisrane et al., 2020).

Clearly, under these conditions, domestic servants might want to leave their situation. However, migration policies in many countries make alternative sources of income difficult to access. Consequently, prostitution may be one of few options available, particularly to women with irregular migration status.

Migration policies

Women's migration for domestic service is facilitated in some countries by state legislation, though even in these countries many domestic servants are undocumented. This legislation puts domestic servants at specific risk of abuse. Women who enter countries irregularly are restricted to work on the illegal market, where prostitution may be the only, or the most prominent, alternative.

In some countries, official programmes bring domestic servants into the country. Canada's Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP) was a key example of such a policy. The LCP allowed caregivers to become eligible for permanent residency after 2 years of living and working in a single employing household. This policy is notable because, until 2014, it required that workers reside in their employers' homes.⁴ Studies of domestic work from Canada and elsewhere have consistently found that live-in servants are at higher risk of all forms of exploitation and abuse than live-out servants (Anderson, 2000; Brickner and Straehle, 2010), and the LCP was opposed by Filipina domestic servants in Canada for this reason (Pinay, 2012). Similar patterns of exploitation and abuse have been found in Hong Kong (Constable, 2007), Singapore (Parreñas et al., 2020), and Taiwan (Lan, 2006) where, like Canada, government programmes bring domestic servants into the country and live-in work predominates.

A second form of state policy rendering domestic servants vulnerable to exploitation ties migration status to an individual employer. This means domestic servants have less recourse to leave abusive situations as they risk becoming undocumented. This form of policy currently exists in the United Kingdom for certain wealthy families; activists succeeded in removing this policy in 1998, but it was reinstated in 2012 (Anderson, 2015). A similar policy exists in Singapore (Parreñas et al., 2020). Another example is the *kafala* (sponsorship) system in place in several Arab Gulf and neighbouring states. This system binds workers to a single *kafeel* (sponsor), and has been widely identified as linked to high rates of abuse of domestic servants (Jureidini and Moukarbel, 2004; Mahdavi, 2013).

Such migration laws make domestic servants vulnerable through a dual process of enforcing forms of domestic service that are particularly conducive to abuse, and rendering other forms of documented work inaccessible by tying residency status to domestic service. Particularly in abusive circumstances, then, domestic servants may find prostitution a less bad option. While other forms of undocumented work may be available, such as sweatshop, hotel, or restaurant work in Thailand (Robinson, 2006: 56), prostitution may be the most readily accessible or the most advantageous (Lévy and Lieber, 2008; Mahdavi, 2013; Oso Casas, 2006). In the Thai case, prostitution was typically the only industry that allowed women to earn enough to send some money home (Robinson, 2006: 56), and in the case of Latin American women in Spain it allowed women to attain their financial objectives more quickly (Oso Casas, 2006).

The combination of pre-existing structural constraints, unfavourable migration conditions, deplorable working conditions, and migration policies causing women to move from domestic work to prostitution is exemplified in the case of Northern Chinese women in Paris (Lévy and Lieber, 2008). The Chinese community in Paris is dominated by migrants from the province of Zhejiang in eastern China. These 'Wenzhou' Chinese control most of the economic activity in the Parisian Chinese 'ethnic niche', and mostly migrate through networks of family and friends extending between Zhejiang and Paris. Contrastingly, Northern Chinese migrants usually migrate individually due to poverty driven by the effects of Chinese political reform and economic opening. Women are more affected by this poverty and constitute the majority of migrants, often incurring substantial debt to finance their migration. Their primary motivation is generally to provide for a child who remains in China; additionally, they have often experienced a stigmatising familial event such as a divorce that has worsened their economic situation.

Upon arrival in Paris, Northern Chinese migrants must rely on Wenzhou networks, as they do not speak French. Wenzhou Chinese are relatively hostile towards Northern arrivals and generally offer them work only as live-in nannies or servants. Working conditions in domestic service are poor, and workers are required to be available 24 hours a day, with few days off, for a very low salary and in deplorable living conditions. Some of these women subsequently become prostitutes. These women were not prostituted in China and did not envisage being so in Paris, but the difficulty of supporting themselves financially and the terrible working conditions they experienced as domestic servants pushed them to enter prostitution to make money more quickly. In their view, working conditions were equally precarious as in domestic work but prostitution allowed them more freedom.

Theoretical connections between prostitution and domestic service

This article has so far focused on the 'empirical' connection between prostitution and domestic service: women may move between them because structural conditions largely limit their options to these two activities. However, there are indications that the empirical connection points to a conceptual connection.

Tinsman, quoted above, calls attention to the 'sexual domination at the center of the [domestic] labor contract'. Here, I sketch a preliminary theory of this phenomenon.

I begin with the work of French materialist feminists Colette Guillaumin (1995) and Paola Tabet, (2004, 2012), to theorise the relation between domestic work and prostitution. I then use the work of Carole Pateman (1988) to answer a question left open by this theorisation.

With the aim of developing good theory, which ‘cuts through’ complexity rather than ‘embrace[ing]’ it (Healy, 2017: 119), this discussion deliberately ignores the fact that those who engage in domestic service and prostitution are not all women. It also ignores the fact that women are very often those who are most directly abusive and exploitative of domestic workers and sometimes pimp out others in prostitution. The reason for this choice is partly that the abuse of women by women within domestic service has been extensively addressed in the literature (e.g. Lan, 2006; Rollins, 1985), while an analysis of this phenomenon in terms of sex inequality has been largely neglected. In terms of prostitution, while women may sometimes be pimps, men constitute the overwhelming majority of clients. Both domestic service and prostitution, then, can be understood as patriarchal institutions, even though race, class, and nation are also relevant.

Unlike radical feminism, a notable feature of French materialist feminism is its consideration of both sexual activity and domestic work. Key theorist Colette Guillaumin (1995) argues that women are appropriated by men, and that this appropriation includes not just labour power but their entire person: their minds and their bodies, which are used sexually by men and from which labour power emerges. For Guillaumin, this appropriation is both individual, principally within the institution of marriage, and collective, in the appropriation of the class of women by the class of men. It is this collective appropriation that ensures that, for example, the majority of care work is undertaken by women; even unmarried women, lesbians, and nuns are not exempt (Juteau and Laurin, 1989). Prostitution, Guillaumin argues, is a form of collective appropriation of women.

Guillaumin does not discuss paid domestic service, but Elsa Galerand and Martin Gallié (2014) have argued that domestic work displays the characteristics of appropriation according to Guillaumin’s definition. They argue that the live-in requirement of Canada’s LCP (see above) places the entire person of the domestic servant at the unlimited disposition of the employer: as these women must live in their ‘workplace’, they cannot escape employers’ demands. This, they argue, creates a relationship akin to slavery, similar to Guillaumin’s analysis of marriage. Furthermore, I have argued that employers’ sexual abuse of domestic workers may be understood in terms of this same appropriation of domestic workers’ entire person. Domestic servants (particularly live-in) are often claimed to be ‘part of the family’. Like other family members, particularly wives but also children, they are thus subject to appropriation by male household heads (Delphy and Leonard, 1992). This appropriation involves not only labour, but is also sexual (Weiss, 2017). Thus, prostitution and domestic service can both be understood as forms of appropriation of women.

This argument can be extended using materialist feminist Paola Tabet’s (2004, 2012) concept of ‘sexual-economic exchange’. This concept designates the entirety of sexual relations involving an economic transaction. These relations range from marriage at one extreme, in which women provide to men the ‘conjugal amalgam’ (including sexual access, childbirth, child-rearing, domestic service), in exchange for material support. At the opposite end of the spectrum is prostitution, in which sexual services are sold for a

well-defined price.⁵ Tabet thus demonstrates that Guillaumin's notion of private and collective forms of appropriation are not so much contradictory as continuous (see also Juteau and Laurin, 1989). Once a sexual component to domestic service has been recognised (Weiss, 2017), we can argue that domestic servants provide to men a group of services more limited than that provided by wives, but more extensive than that provided in prostitution. Domestic service can therefore be located on Tabet's continuum of sexual-economic exchange.

This analysis leaves open the question of the potential equivalence of prostitution and domestic service. Are these two activities, both consisting of a subset of the activities expected of women in marriage, theoretically equivalent? And if not, what is their relationship?

One way to address this question uses the work of Carole Pateman (1988). Pateman argues that the notion that labour power can be separated from the person of the labourer is a 'political fiction'. This is true in the case of paid work performed by men in the public sphere, as in the case of sexual services in prostitution. However, in the case of prostitution the fiction is even more specious: while for paid labour performed by men in the public sphere, employers are primarily interested in commodities produced or services performed by workers, in prostitution male buyers are inherently interested in the body of the prostituted woman. Thus, the sexual services provided by women in prostitution are inseparable from her body and her person in a qualitatively different way to the case of workers and labour power.

I read Pateman as arguing that the political fiction that labour power can be separated from the worker's person is inaccurate for *any* worker, but that prostitution stretches this fiction to breaking point. That is, when applied to paid work performed by men in the public sphere, this political fiction is a somewhat reasonable approximation to reality, but in the case of prostitution it breaks down. This notion can be represented as a continuum between paid work in the public sphere at one extreme and prostitution at the other, based on the degree of validity of the political fiction that labour power can be separated from the person, keeping in mind that the political fiction is *always* a fiction, no matter what activity it is applied to.⁶ I suggest that domestic service is situated at an intermediate point on this continuum.

Pateman discusses domestic service in its unpaid form by wives within marriage. She argues that this activity is not work, because work is defined according to what men do in the public sphere, which differs in important ways from what women do within marriage. I suggest that paid domestic service is *more* like work in the public sphere than prostitution is. On one hand, employers of domestic servants have an intrinsic interest in the products of servants' labour (clean houses, cooked food, and so on). On the other, as demonstrated by the sexual abuse of domestic servants, employers appropriate not only servants' labour power, but their whole body and person. This argument arises repetitively in the literature on domestic service: numerous authors note that employers look not only for good workers but for workers with particular characteristics, such as a certain physical appearance, ethnicity, or the display of particular deferential behaviour (Anderson, 2000: 108; Bakan and Stasiulis, 1995; Graunke, 2002: 153; Rollins, 1985: 156). Employers of domestic servants are not seeking to hire abstract labour power, but an entire person. As employers' interest in domestic servants is less exclusively limited

to their body than in prostitution, domestic service can be seen as an intermediate form of access to workers' bodies and personhood situated on a continuum between public sphere paid work and prostitution. This continuum can therefore be used to differentiate between prostitution and domestic service.

Both domestic service and prostitution exist in different forms, which affects the specific nature and degree of appropriation involved. For example, Anderson (2000) argues that live-in domestic service is not simply *worse* than live-out, but that live-in servants are *distinctly* worse off and more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Does this imply that the nature of appropriation of a weekly house-cleaner is different to that of a live-in servant? With respect to prostitution, Tabet (2004) draws on ethnographic evidence to show that differences in the material organisation of prostitution can constitute 'breaks' in the continuum of sexual-economic exchange which leave women distinctly better or worse-off: for example, whether a woman is controlled by a pimp or exercises independently, as the latter allows her control over her income and greater freedom (see also O'Connell Davidson, 1998). This notion of 'breaks in the continuum' can be applied to both domestic service and prostitution: while certain factors make a qualitative difference in the degree to and way in which appropriation is exercised, different situations can nonetheless be understood as fundamentally related.

Conclusion

This article has presented empirical and theoretical arguments to suggest that prostitution and domestic service are connected, aiming to advance understanding of work considered as female. First, a small number of empirical studies have shown that women may move between these two activities in certain contexts; furthermore, several themes within the literature on migration for domestic service suggest why movement between the two activities may be possible or even facilitated. In sum, structural constraints arising from global economic equality and patriarchy combine with migration conditions, working conditions, and restrictive migration policies to drastically limit migrant women's options, which may make domestic service and prostitution the only, or the most easily accessible, remunerated activities available. The exact nature of the empirical link between prostitution and domestic service is an area in need of further research.

Second, I presented a preliminary sketch of a possible avenue to theoretically relate prostitution and domestic service. First, I suggest the utility of French materialist feminists Colette Guillaumin's notion of appropriation and Paola Tabet's continuum of sexual-economic exchange to relate domestic service to prostitution. This theory leaves open, however, a question over the potential equivalence between domestic and sexual service, and their relationship to one another. I answered this question using Carole Pateman's analysis of property in the person, which allows domestic and sexual service to be understood as related along a continuum.

This preliminary exploration requires further development in at least two areas. First, the argument needs to be developed in more detail to address the increasing recognition of the embodiment of all forms of paid work. Second, the second half of the article draws on feminist work developed without consideration of the globalisation of neoliberal capitalism. Given that this is the context in which migrant women may

move between domestic service and prostitution, a robust exploration of the ways in which these contemporary circumstances require the adaptation or reconsideration of this feminist theory is required. Further research could also usefully investigate links between more diverse forms of work considered to be female. This may contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which the many different activities commonly performed by women, paid or unpaid, are systematically imposed on women in a context of increasing and globalised sexual, racial, and economic inequality.

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Notes

1. It should be noted that work considered female is not always undertaken by women.
2. No equivalent debate over terminology exists in the literature on paid domestic activity (commonly referred to as 'domestic work/labour'), but consistent with the theoretical position questioning the status of these activities as work, I use the term 'domestic service' throughout.
3. There are some exceptions to this rule (e.g. Kappeler, 1990; MacKinnon, 2020).
4. Despite the removal of the live-in requirement in 2014, a 2018 study found continued high levels of exploitation (Bhuyan et al., 2018).
5. Increasingly, researchers are arguing that elements of emotional or affective labour exist in some forms of prostitution (e.g. Bernstein, 2007). It remains the case, however, that prostitution involves a more limited set of services than either marriage or domestic service.
6. This may be understood as related to the argument that all forms of work are embodied.

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