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## **Au pair's lives in global context: Sisters or servants?**

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

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Demand for paid domestic labour has increased rapidly in the global North in recent decades at the same time as ideologies of equality make 'servant' employment unpalatable to some families and costs make full-time domestic workers unavailable to most. An au pair can seem a perfect solution to this conundrum: cheaper than a domestic worker and framed within government policies as a form of cultural exchange between equals, au pairs are now looked to by many tens of thousands of families to fulfil their housework, childcare and elder care needs.

This collection examines the experiences of au pairs and the organisation of au pairing in Europe, Australia and the USA. Drawing on contributions from academic researchers and activist groups it shows that au pair schemes are increasingly important as sources of low paid domestic and care labour, attracting au pairs from the global South as well as from neighbouring states. Whilst au pairing is constructed in policy and industry discourses as something other than work – a form of cultural exchange that involves a bit of 'help' in the home in return for room, board and some 'pocket money' – the reality of au pairs' lives demands interrogation. Too often popular imaginings of au pairs, which depict them as middle-class young women having a fun gap year before beginning their 'real' lives, hide the hard physical labour, demeaning treatment, isolation and poverty that they experience. The difference between au pairs and domestic workers, such as nannies and housekeepers, is not always plain to see; au pairing often differs little from other forms of paid domestic employment and there are few safeguards in place to ensure au pairs' rights.

Au pairing has grown alongside other forms of paid domestic work but has been relatively invisible in both official statistics and academic research. This is largely because the au pair is imagined as both privileged and temporary. This collection shows that the reality often proves to be quite different and au pairs are subject to many of the same challenges and privations – low pay, long working hours, lack of privacy and vulnerability to abuse – as other live-in domestic workers. The global-scale trends which have underpinned the movements of workers around the world to carry out domestic tasks have underpinned the growth of au pairing as well and this book examines the consequences this growth.

Through its broad geographical sweep the collection reveals the commonalities and differences of au pairs' experiences around the globe. It is the first collection of its kind, focusing specifically on au pairs and offering an international comparison of both the regulatory construction of au pairing and the everyday lives of au pairs. One thing that emerges through the thirteen chapters that make up the collection is that in all national and historical contexts au pairing is shaped by vagueness in definitions. Au pairs are always located as not quite one thing nor another. They are not students – but they might be on student visas; they are not workers – but their tasks might be construed as work by immigration rules; they are not servants – but they do domestic labour, often in demeaning conditions; and they are not members of the families they live with – but they are meant to

be treated as such and are denied the status of workers because of this. National au pair schemes vary substantially in the way that au pairs are defined but nowhere does their status seem to be clear, lacking contradiction or to be fair. The collection particularly exposes how the discourse of 'cultural exchange' can undermine au pairs' remuneration, extend their working hours and limit their access to rights as workers.

This introduction seeks to untangle some of the contradictions that are revealed through the international comparison made possible by this collection. It begins with a short history of au pairing and a discussion of what au pairs actually are and how they are imagined in different national contexts, but falls short of being able to offer an unambiguous definition because of the ambiguities that surround au pairing. It then locates au pairs within the context of a wider growth in migration for domestic work, tracing how demand for domestic workers around the globe has grown in recent decades and how the phenomenon of au pairing relates to this growth. This context highlights the fact that domestic labour is treated differently from other forms of work within immigration and labour regulation. One of the most important ways in which au pairing is regulated differently from other forms of labour, is through its construction as 'cultural exchange' rather than work, and I highlight how this imagining of au pairing is produced by policy and industry discourse before outlining the organisation of the rest of the book.

### **What are au pairs?**

Au pairing has its roots in European pre-war informal exchanges between households where the daughters of middle-class families in different countries would swap places for a time to improve their language skills and learn about housekeeping before entering the marriage market and setting up their own homes. These informal exchanges had similarities with centuries' old practices of 'lifecycle service' which involved young people living for a period with another family and providing help with household and farming tasks. The idea of mutual exchange between equals and temporary membership of a household and family as a way to learn skills while providing an extra pair of hands, are rooted in these much older practices.

In the post-war years, as the 'servant crisis' hit increasing numbers of households, au pairing grew in a number of European countries and ceased to be based on direct exchanges between households who knew each other or had mutual friends (see Liarou this volume). Concerns about the unregulated movement of young women around Europe and their treatment within the households they were hosted by led, in 1969, to the first international agreement on and definition of au pairing, the 'European Agreement on "au pair" placement', also known as the 'Strasbourg Agreement' (Council of Europe 1969). The text of the agreement describes the practice of au pairing as 'widespread' and as 'an important social problem with legal, moral, cultural and economic implications' (Council of Europe 1969, no pages); the au pair 'problem' is by no means new. The stated object of the Strasbourg agreement was to provide protection for au pairs by defining their age (many had been as young as 14 or 15 years old), length of stay, maximum working hours, right to free time, right to religious observance and rights to time to study.

Whilst not all European countries signed up to the agreement, its tenets provided the basis for most au pair schemes in Europe and elsewhere. The agreement established the idea of au pairing as a form of international movement, usually carried out by women and involving the exchange of childcare and housework labour for room, board, pocket money and the opportunity to learn about a different culture.

There is now substantial variety in the specific ways in which au pairs are defined in different national contexts; they work only 30 hours a week in Norway, and must be enrolled in language classes paid for by their host families, but in the USA can work 45 hours a week and can be native English speakers from the UK for example. In all situations where the au pair role is officially defined it is as a form of cultural exchange rather than work, it involves living with a host family, and is a temporary status available only to migrants.

In some countries (for example, the USA) only families with children living at home may host an au pair, in others, such as the UK and Australia, there are no such restrictions, but there is an expectation that the au pair will carry out housework-related tasks rather than any other form of work. While this expectation is not always adhered to and au pairs may be recruited to provide low paid work in other settings or even to help their hosts in professional roles (see for example Williams and Baláž 2004), au pairs do largely carry out housework and childcare tasks.

Au pairs receive 'pocket money' rather than pay (except in the USA where a 1994 judgement from the Department of Labor determined that au pairs were employees and their remuneration was 'wages' (IRS 2013)) but the amount they are given, its regulation and the other benefits they are meant to have access to vary considerably between national contexts. In some countries (such as the USA) the stipend is tied to legal minimum wage rates, with au pairs receiving the minimum wage minus a deduction for accommodation (but not paying social security taxes and therefore having no rights to employment benefits). In most other countries au pairs are not entitled to minimum wages and earn less, often substantially less, than national minima. In the UK au pairs' receive pocket money that is normally around half the minimum wage, their remuneration is not taxable and host families do not have to pay the National Insurance they would pay for an employee. In Norway, au pairs do not earn minimum wage but pay tax on both their pocket money and an amount which is supposed to represent what their accommodation and food are worth. Their hosts do not pay the taxes that employers normally pay and as a result of this an au pair has only very limited social security rights. In Australia pocket money rates vary substantially and it is agencies rather than government which recommends how much au pairs should be given. It is not clear whether au pairs should be paid minimum wages and whether their pay is taxable (see Berg Chapter 12). In Ireland au pairs earn well below minimum wage, about €100 per week but this amount is not regulated, can vary substantially and can involve au pairs working over 40 hours per week (see Smith Chapter 11).

Sometimes other benefits can be more important than levels of pay and these vary even more than 'pocket money' rates. As mentioned above, in Norway, host families are required to cover the costs of language classes but in many other situations au pairs pay for these themselves and the costs are considerable. Health insurance varies similarly,

representing a burden to au pairs in some countries and a duty of hosts in others. In the USA having access to a car can be an important benefit and in London the equivalent is having the cost of public transport covered by the host family. Most au pair schemes specify that au pairs are provided with their own room and given food but the quantity and quality of these provisions is not defined. The quality of accommodation made available to au pairs can vary immensely from rooms shared with children to whole separate apartments. Food can be an additional expense for au pairs; providing themselves with foods that they like in the quantities they desire as alternatives to those given by the host family which may be unknown, too filling, not filling enough or just served at the wrong time of day can all eat into an au pair's small allowance (Búriková and Miller 2010). For au pairs on very low incomes all of these things matter.

The level of remuneration makes a material difference to au pairs and is an indication of the extent to which they are valued and their labour is respected. The regulation of 'pocket money' rates and other benefits is one of the most important ways in which au pairs' contradictory 'non-worker' position is constructed. Nowhere is there regulatory consistency around au pair's status; in the USA where au pairs have legally been deemed employees for tax reasons, they are still considered 'students' for immigration purposes and in Australia au pairs are considered to be working if they fall foul of immigration rules, but not considered to be workers for the purposes of employment laws that would offer them protection (Berg chapter 12 and Løvdal Chapter 9 for a similar situation in Norway) These contradictions both reflect and reproduce the idea that the tasks au pairs do are not real 'work'.

As au pairing has developed a 'common sense' idea of what it is and is not has come into being. This has allowed au pair agencies in countries that do not have au pair schemes, such as the UK, Ireland and Australia, to recruit and supply thousands of au pairs, despite there being limited official recognition of the role. Yet despite the assumption that an au pair is a person with a particular status, tasks and remuneration, this common imagining neither reflects nor produces a commonality in conditions or regulations between countries. There is also a lack of clarity and commonly contradiction within national regulations. In order to understand both the causes and effects of this ambiguity, au pairing needs to be located within the broader context of paid domestic labour and the undervaluing of gendered reproductive work more generally.

### **Global flows of paid domestic workers and au pairs**

There is no data on the number of au pairs worldwide. Few countries collect reliable data on the numbers of people au pairing; as they are not clearly classified as workers au pairs are not counted in census data on employment and they are often not counted as migrants. In some countries, such as the USA, au pairs all need a visa (see Pérez Chapter 13) and are recorded through the immigration system but in many other situations there are at least some groups of au pairs who are not counted, such as EU nationals in Norway and Denmark (See Stenum Chapter 7 and Stuberrud Chapter 8), or there is no official status of 'au pair' which could be monitored, as is the case in the UK (See Busch Chapter 4) and Australia (see Berg Chapter 12). The relaxed attitude towards au pair migration is at odds with broader anti-immigrant sentiment and policies that predominate in many au pair receiving countries (Cox 2007), and reflects the conceptualisation of au pairs as something other than labour migrants.

Despite this lack of official data there is substantial anecdotal, academic and industry evidence that au pairing has been growing globally in recent years and this growth is part of a broader expansion of migration for domestic work. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that there are at least 53 million domestic workers worldwide (not including au pairs) and the number could be as high as 100 million, 83 percent of whom are women (ILO 2011). Domestic work has long been performed by migrants but these flows are increasingly between countries and continents rather than between more local rural to urban areas.

At a global scale domestic workers are predominantly from Asia, North Africa, South and Central America. They move between countries in the global South and from South to North. There are some distinct patterns of movement between countries which reflect immigration regulations, historical colonial relationships, income inequalities and language commonalities. There are movements of workers between Latin American countries, from Mexico and the Caribbean to the USA and from Latin America to Spain. Moroccan and Tunisian women move to France; Burmese to Thailand; Sri Lankans to the Middle East, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia and recently women from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet States have become important in providing care in private homes in Central and Western Europe (Preston et al 2014).

Au pair migrations are part of these patterns; they reflect historic relationships between states as well as more recent economic and cultural relationships. Language learning has traditionally been particularly important in shaping flows of au pairs and demand for particular languages, as well as language commonalities between countries, are the result of both formal colonization and trading relationships. The role of English as a global language sends thousands of au pairs to the UK and USA each year so that they can improve their skills, but it also supports flows of English-speaking Filipino au pairs to Norway and Denmark, where host families will commonly be able to speak English too.

The flow of migrant domestic workers has been encouraged by labour export policies in countries such as the Philippines and Sri Lanka. The Philippines sends over 150,000 people a year to work as domestic and care workers overseas. The top destinations are in the Middle East (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Kuwait); Asia (Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia) and Italy (POEA 2012) and au pairs are now included in the Philippines labour export system (see Stenum Chapter 7). Labour export is encouraged because migrants send foreign currency as remittances to their families. Women are thought to be more reliable than men in remitting money and, therefore, their migration has been specifically encouraged by the Philippines government.

Receiving countries can also encourage the movement of domestic workers and au pairs around the world through immigration policies which ensure a supply of low-waged and poorly protected workers to do work which is under-valued. Many countries offer specific visas or work permits for domestic workers and these visas may be available even when other categories of 'unskilled' workers are excluded. The conditions of domestic workers' visas often place them in a particularly vulnerable position in the labour market (see Moss Chapter 5) making their labour more affordable to families and their working conditions

more flexible (Anderson 2010; Cox 2012). Visa restrictions such as having to live in the employer's home, being tied to a particular employer and labour rules such as being excluded from minimum wage protections or not being covered by legislation granting holiday pay, sick pay or health and safety protections are common for domestic workers in many countries and for au pairs in almost all. Au pair schemes can be used by national governments to expand the supply of affordable, flexible, poorly-protected domestic and childcare labour without seeming to embrace the exploitation of migrant domestic workers (Stenum 2010).

The poor treatment of au pairs and domestic workers in migration and labour regulations cannot be separated from the low status of the work that they predominantly undertake and its construction as the 'natural' responsibility of women. Reproductive labour – the work of raising children, caring for adults and maintaining homes – is singularly undervalued under capitalism. This work is poorly rewarded when it is done for pay and poorly regarded whether it is paid or unpaid. The status of reproductive labour is inseparable from its gendering; this work is low status because it is associated with women and women are discriminated against and disrespected because they are seen as 'naturally' suited to 'unproductive' and caring work. It is the assumption that domestic labour is 'naturally' women's role and something different from the 'real' paid work of the productive sphere that allows au pairing to be constructed as a form of cultural exchange rather than a form of labour migration, and that allows domestic work to be excluded from labour protections more generally (Cox 2012). Women's work in the home is too often invisible and disregarded, the disguising of au pairs' work as a form of cultural exchange is just one way in which reproductive labour is ignored.

### **Au pairing: cultural exchange between equals or paid domestic work?**

Despite the similarities between au pairs and other migrant domestic workers, there are also differences, the most important being that au pairing is not meant to be a form of work. Au pairing is discursively constructed by government policy and au pair agencies as a form of cultural exchange, yet it is commonly experienced by au pairs and demanded by host families, as a form of paid domestic work. This contradiction suffuses the chapters in this book; it comes out not only in the analysis of policy but also in discussions of motivations for au pairing, the ways au pairs gossip, their evaluation of work and the reasons they leave au pair placements early, amongst all the other themes covered. The framing of au pairing as a form of 'cultural exchange' between equals is important for a number of reasons. This ambiguous characterisation underpins a range of contradictions and misunderstandings about what au pairing involves, it hides the value of au pairs' labour and makes campaigning for labour rights for au pairs, alongside domestic workers, more difficult.

The rhetoric of au pairing as a form of cultural exchange is reflected not only in official definitions of au pairing but also within the 'au pair business'; the world of au pair placement agencies. The International Au Pair Association (IAPA) 'the global trade association for the au pair community' (IAPA 2014a no pages), which co-ordinates au pair agencies worldwide and lobbies governments on au pair-related issues, is part of the World Student Youth and Educational (WYSE) Travel Confederation and it locates au pairing within student travel and volunteering schemes. It has as a stated objective 'to lobby governments

to treat au pair programmes as cultural exchange and not as work programmes so that au pairs and their receiving host families are not subject to employment taxation' (IAPA 2014b). While the IAPA does not by any means oversee the majority of au pair placements, organisations like it and its members (individual agencies and national associations of au pair agencies) are extremely influential in shaping the information which is available to hosts and au pairs, and therefore in shaping the discursive environment within which au pairing takes place.

The fact that the IAPA is able to baldly state that the reason it lobbies for au pairing to be understood as cultural exchange is in order for au pairs and hosts to avoid taxes, gives some indication of how instrumentally the concept of cultural exchange is used within au pairing. In a report prepared for the Norwegian government, Cecile Øien (2009) found that if au pairing in Norway was to achieve its aims of cultural exchange, au pairs would only be able to work for eight hours per week. The fact that au pairs work for many more hours than this even in the most generously regulated schemes and could work for over 70 hours a week in countries without regulations (Busch Chapter 4), suggests that time for cultural exchange, and the practices of cultural exchange are not prioritised within au pairing by regulatory bodies, hosts and often even au pairs themselves.

Yet the imagining of au pairing as a form of cultural exchange has effects. The representation of au pairing as cultural exchange means that different people, with different ambitions, can choose to be au pairs than those entering other forms of domestic work (see for example Bikova Chapter 6 on middle class Filipinas au pairing in Norway and Pérez, Chapter 13 and Geserick Chapter 14 on middle class au pairs in the USA). Au pairs do tend to be well-educated, from middle class backgrounds, young and without dependent children of their own. As the chapters in this collection show they are rarely motivated simply by a desire to earn money, but may well wish to achieve some form of personal development, such as improving their language skills or accomplishing personal growth through independent travel, at the same time as supporting themselves and perhaps saving for the future or sending money home to family. Mirza Aquilar Pérez's discussion (Chapter 13) of the 'cosmopolitan dilemma' faced by Mexican women going as au pairs to the USA, perhaps encapsulates the effects of the portrayal of au pairing as a form of cultural exchange most directly. She shows how Mexican young women are attracted to au pairing through the dream of seeing the world and living in an exciting cosmopolitan city. Their Facebook pages which can be seen by friends and family at home are full of pictures of themselves at iconic tourist sites in New York and other cities. However, many also have an alternative on-line persona with a pseudonym unknown to their families in Mexico but shared with other au pairs in the USA. Through this they discuss the daily grind of au pairing, the disputes with hosts, the children's tantrums and the reality of life doing domestic chores.

The concept of cultural exchange saturates au pairing; in policy, in agency publicity and in au pairs ambitions, but too often it is an ideal that is not realised. Instead the idea that au pairs are students or gap-year travellers is used to deny them rights as workers and to hold down their wages. The chapters that follow show how this happens in detail in different national settings and I explore the implications of it in the Conclusion.

## **Organisation of the book**



The book provides detailed analysis of au pairing in eight different countries (six in Europe plus the USA and Australia) and is organised into four, geographically-themed sections: The UK, the Nordic Countries, the Rest of Europe and the New World. Each of the three first parts combine contributions from academics with those from non-government organisations working with au pairs. Whilst each of the chapters deals with a slightly different topic, a single theme weaves through them as each of the authors examines the implications of au pairing being framed as a 'cultural exchange' rather than a form of work.

**Part 1** provides a detailed treatment of au pairing in the UK and shows the effects of changes in regulation on the lives of au pairs over more than a century. The UK is an important destination for au pairs, estimates suggest there were as many as 90,000 in 2008 (Smith 2008) and numbers could be higher now. We are lucky to have scholarship which traces changes in the practices and regulation of au pairing in the country over the course of a century. It begins with Eleni Liarou's history of au pairing in the UK, showing how the scheme developed from the late nineteenth century and how even in its earliest days there were questions over the welfare of au pairs. Liarou argues that the history of au pairing in the UK shows that its roots are fundamentally socio-economic and it should be understood along with histories of economic migration. She also shows how attempts to formalise au pairing in the twentieth century reflect concerns about women's, particularly foreign women's, sexuality and changing sexual moralities.

Chapter 3 is an anthropological take on the lives of Slovak au pairs in London at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In this chapter Zuzana Sekeráková Búriková shows how au pairs used their informal networks to establish rules and guidance in the absence of official contracts or advice. She argues that gossip between au pairs was an important part of their search for a 'good' host family and one of the only ways for them to gauge the fairness, or not, within which they were being treated. Her ethnographic approach enables her to shed light on how the norms of au pairing are negotiated and understood in everyday life, revealing the mechanisms which can produce exploitative relationships.

Chapter 4 brings the UK picture up to date and discusses what has happened within au pairing since the abolition of the au pair visa in 2008 – a change that left au pairing in the UK undefined and effectively unregulated. It uses the issue of 'work' to consider how au pairing is constructed simultaneously as demanding hard work and yet as something other than a form of employment. This chapter uses findings from analysis of 1000 advertisements for au pairs from the website gumtree.com to provide quantitative data about au pairs pay and working conditions. These data reveal the low pay, long hours and potentially hazardous working conditions that are common in the sector. This is complemented by Chapter 5, from Jenny Moss of the NGO *Kalayaan* who has been working with migrant domestic workers in the UK for many years. This piece discusses attempts to challenge a particular piece of legislation, the family worker exemption, which excludes live-in domestic workers from the right to receive National Minimum Wage. This chapter illustrates the broader context within which au pairing exists and the barriers to their work being recognised because reproductive labour in the home is not properly protected by employment law.

**Part 2** examines the very interesting case of au pairing in the Nordic countries. Au pairing is growing rapidly at present in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland and these countries

have become important destinations for Filipina migrants. Ideologies of 'equality' and 'woman friendliness', backed up with generous state welfare payments to families are actually underpinning the growth of this very unequal phenomenon (Isaksen 2010). In Chapter 6 Mariya Bikova explores the 'care circulations' that take place when Filipino au pairs migrate to Norway. Drawing on findings from a transnational ethnographic study, the chapter challenges established theorisations of south-north migration as a 'care drain' and show the range of motivations au pairs have for migrating and the complex ways in which they can contribute (or not) care to their families. Chapter 7 examines the rhetoric of au pair migration in Denmark as a 'win win' situation for au pairs and their hosts. Helle Stenum explores how a moral economy of 'help' is developed as a specific kind of management of marginalized migrants. She looks at two different regulatory periods in Denmark – Philippines relations. During the first (1998-2010) the Philippines had a ban in place on au pair migration to Europe, which produced au pairs with a particular relationship to both home and destination states. Latterly, au pairing in Europe has been accepted and is integrated into Philippine labour export strategies.

In Chapter 8 Elisabeth Stubberud examines the content of au pair work in Norway and why it is described as 'not much' by the au pairs who carry it out. Stubberud uses the concept of affective boundary work to examine the way that au pairs understand the work they are doing. She argues that au pairs draw boundaries between themselves and the work and between themselves and the host family in an attempt to deal with the contradictions of au pairing. While the au pairs in Stubberud's study dismissed the amount of work that they did, Lene Løvvdal's Chapter 9 reveals that many au pairs in Norway need to be protected from exploitation and have great difficulty in exerting their rights. Løvvdal reports on a project carried out by 'Legal Advice for Women' (JURK) working with a number of other NGOs. The project involved outreach work to au pairs and provided legal aid and legal information to over 100 au pairs. The project focused on the effects of au pairing being considered a form of cultural exchange and the contradictions in the ways that au pairs are defined in Norwegian law – as something like employees for tax purposes, but on student visas and not protected by employment rights - which leaves them open to exploitation.

**Parts 3 and 4** then extend the geographical focus to look at au pairing in other European countries and in the 'New World'. Chapter 10 reflects on the experiences of Latin American au pairs in Marseille, France. This chapter focuses on the ethnicisation of au pair work and the way that national stereotypes affect the selection of au pairs by host families, the selection of a destination country by au pairs and how au pairs construct new ethnic identities in their new setting. Chapter 11, by Aoife Smith, draws on a research project carried out by the Migrant Rights Centre, Ireland (MRCI) and provides us with the first view of au pairing in Ireland, a country which has not traditionally been seen as a destination for migrant domestic workers but now hosts perhaps 10,000 au pairs. MRCI's work with au pairs has exposed the extent of au pairing in Ireland and how the regulatory vacuum surrounding au pairing has created conditions which make au pairs extremely vulnerable to abuse. Smith argues that their project found that au pairs' stories of abuse were almost identical to those of migrant domestic workers who MRCI had been working with for a decade.

Part 4 opens with an analysis of the growth of au pairing in Australia, a location that, like Ireland, has not been studied as an au pair destination. In chapter 12, Laurie Berg shows how a range of temporary visa categories are being used to enable migration for 'au pairs' in ways that had not been predicted but that are being exploited by a new pair industry. Australia has no official au pair scheme and there is a historical aversion to both temporary migration schemes and the use of paid labour in the home. However, demand for this form of childcare has grown considerably and is now being met by people on 'Working Holiday Maker' visas meaning that au pairs are not treated as employees in terms of employment protections but are considered to be workers for immigration purposes, making it very easy for them to become out of status.

Chapters 13 and 14 both offer analyses of the experience of au pairs in the USA. In Chapter 13 Mirza Aguilar Pérez provides a discussion of the Mexican au pairs in the USA and the importance of agencies in mediating the scheme. She shows how the framing of 'cultural exchange' produces a mismatch of expectations between hosts and au pairs. Au pairs face the 'cosmopolitan dilemma' as they seek to become sophisticated global citizens but find themselves tied to routine housework and childcare. Fittingly, in Chapter 14 Christine Geserick examines why au pair placements end early. Examining the experiences of au pairs from Austria and Germany she develops a typology of ways in which 'un-matching' takes place. She shows both how common it is for au pair placements not to last for their expected 12 month period and how often au pairs stay in placements even in the most difficult circumstances. Geserick argues that au pairs will stay, if they feel needed by the family, if they have a strong personal motivation to succeed and if they can redefine the au pair experience to minimise the importance of their relationship with their host family.

In the conclusion to the collection (Chapter 15) I return to the contradictions and ambivalences which shape au pairing and suggest a future route for academic research and policy development. The chapters in this collection all reveal the importance of the discursive construction of au pairing as a form of cultural exchange and the simultaneous discursive denial of it as a form of work. By exploring the effects of the construction of au pairing as something other than work, I show the common cause of au pairs and domestic workers and examine how new international attempts to regulate domestic work, most importantly the 2013 International Labour Organization (ILO) convention 189 on rights for domestic workers, affect au pairs. Highlighting the possibilities and limitations of international regulation offers a means to map an agenda for policy reform and research.

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