Analyzing the inscribed body: An investigation of how the uniform inscribes the body of Zulu-speaking Domestics Workers in Queensburgh, Durban

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DECLARATION

I declare that *Analyzing the inscribed body: An investigation of how the uniform inscribes the body of Zulu-speaking Domestics Workers in Queensburgh, Durban* is my original work and that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other institution. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged by means of complete references

Nadene Harisunker

Signed: …………….. November 2010

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Maggie and Brian...

...without which none of my years of study would have been possible. Thank you for your love, support and encouragement through it all

ABSTRACT

Domestic workers are commonplace in South African society, with most middle to upper-class homes employing a domestic worker. Recently the area of domestic work in South Africa has gained much needed attention with regard to legal issues. Many domestic workers in the past and even currently, are exposed to exploitation and abuse in many forms. The main concern of this dissertation, however, is the woman that does the domestic work. Women have always been concerned with their bodies – the form and shape, dieting, clothes worn, amongst many other things. Although many may not think so, this concern has not escaped domestic workers. This group of women are extremely concerned with their dress and how their clothes and bodies are perceived by the public. This study addresses this issue paying close attention to the woman behind the uniform. Domestic workers often travel daily to get to their place of work. Commuting to work holds a sense of occasion for them, where, since they do not have much in the way of social lives, they dress up to travel to work. This dressing up is two-fold. Firstly the domestic workers in this study dressed up to impress others (especially other domestic workers) and improve their self-esteem. Secondly, their dress is linked to their past and their future aspirations, many of these women have aspired to become professionals in certain fields, but their goals had become unachievable due to their unfortunate circumstances. These issues are explored and discussed in the dissertation below, situated within the context of the domestic workers lives in South Africa, both during and after work.

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Introduction: The body in Anthropology

Domestic work

A domestic worker is "an employee who performs domestic work in the home of his or her employer and includes – (a) a gardener; (b) a person employed by a household as driver of a motor vehicle; and (c) a person who takes care of children, the aged, the sick, the frail or the disabled, but does not include a farm worker" (Ramutloa, 2008: 1). The definitions of domestic work and domestic worker are ambiguous and have changed several times over the years. A universal concept, domestic work is a global phenomenon with roots in the earliest period of human history. Domestic work in South Africa in its modern sense has its history with the Dutch traders arriving in South Africa in 1652.

Background to research

Due to colonialism, more Zulu-speaking people within Kwa-Zulu Natal were being forced off their land. The small plots of land that they were allocated was used for subsistence farming. Additionally, they were forced to pay heavy taxes for their land. Due to this, men migrated to urban areas to find jobs in order to support their families. Initially, young men tended to go into domestic service, which involved gardening, taking care of employers children, cooking and other indoor household chores, working mostly for White employers.

Naidoo (1986) provides a detailed historical contextualization of domestic work and how it became a predominantly Black institution within South Africa. Prior to Dutch infiltration in 1770, Xhosa and Zulu people within South Africa lived off their land. When the Dutch settlers arrived in South Africa, they began employing Black women as domestic and agricultural

workers who were paid in kind. “Thus in this eighteenth century pattern, the development of a permanent class of wage labourers „emerged'” (Naidoo, 1986: 13).

From the beginning, the relationship between Dutch and Xhosa was tense and this eventually led to a bloody war between them. Settlers arriving in the Eastern Cape in 1820, brought with them European domestic workers. Due to a shortage of employment opportunities in Britain, the Europeans came to South Africa as servants. “The people coming from Britain were used to the idea of servants being constrained by a lack of education, lack of alternative occupational opportunities and by class-based definitions that were current at the time” (Naidoo, 1986: 15). Therefore, conditions for domestic workers were oppressive and harsh.

A decrease in the influx of domestic workers from Britain led to a racial transformation of domestic work within South Africa, from a predominantly European institution to a South African Black institution. Wars and famine forced more African people into domestic work, and the individual land tenure and taxation laws further exacerbated this movement. Both the Land Act and missionaries and traders led Black men to seek paid employment (Naidoo, 1986[1]). The Native Land Acts (1913 and 1936) prevented the Black population from purchasing or owning land. “This separation of blacks from the means of production constituted a form of economic compulsion forcing them into cheap labour for the white owners” (Cock, 1980: 5).

Legislation controlled and prompted the flow of Black women into urban areas to search for employment. Apartheid legislation is another factor that has led to the creation of domestic work. The main aim of apartheid, to separate people of colour from the White population, led to the dispersion of Black people which affected them socially and economically. Members of the Black population were ostracized from most spheres of South African life and therefore had limited opportunities which eventually led to their impoverishment. “South Africa's political, economic and social dynamics under the apartheid regime had created a market for cheap domestic labour. When faced with the situation of finding employment, black African women go out and sell the only skill they possess” (Khan, 2008: 11). Lack of opportunities and education

[1] Naidoo's work was based on the extremely popular book on domestic work by Cock (1980) whose research is often used as a point of reference in all research on domestic work. She highlights the plight of domestic workers during apartheid.

prevent members of the Black population from securing employment – which in itself was regulated by the apartheid government making it difficult for both Black men and women to rise above unskilled employment. Faced with poverty and fighting for their survival, Black women were forced to enter paid employment (Khan, 2008).
"Poverty and massive disorganization of African family life in contemporary South Africa lie behind the increase in the employment of Black women generally in recent years" (Cock, 1980: 7). Over the last three decades, there has been an increase in women's participation in paid employment, but in the case of Black women, employment has predominantly been confined to „women's work' (Cock, 1980).

There are more than one million domestic workers currently in South Africa (Ramutloa,2008). Following the rise of democracy, increasing attention is being paid to legislation that governs this sector. However, this study pays less attention to the legal aspects of domestic work and instead focuses on African women and the work that they do.

Outline of the research problem

This study focused on the „African Black'[2] domestic worker's body as being inscribed or written upon by the clothes that she wears (Welton, 1999). This research centres on domestic workers in South Africa and relies on ethnographic data from interviews carried out between October 2009 and January 2010.

My interest in this topic arose when I noticed the „dressing routine' used by a known domestic worker. She arrived at work, at approximately 7:30am, after an hour or so journey from her home, an area near Marianhill (south of Durban). Her hair and make-up was always immaculately done, she wore jewellery, high heels, a dressy top and either jeans or a smart skirt and carried a „Gucci' bag. On arriving at work, she changed into her uniform before commencing work and once work was complete, she changed back into the clothes that she had come to work in, and reapplied makeup.

[2] It should be noted that within the South African context, 'African' and 'Black' are contested terms, hence the use of the inverted commas.

This research goes beyond the obvious - that a domestic worker would need to change into an older pair of clothes before working so as not to dirty her own clothes. An investigation is made into the reasons why the domestic worker „dresses up' to travel to work and back home, that is to say, the reasons behind why she does not wear the uniform to travel. The study explores specifically how the body of the domestic worker comes to be inscribed through the use of the uniform and the domestic work that is associated with it. The study uses the uniform as a heuristic device[3] (Bensman and Vidich, 1960) and looks at how, by wearing the uniform, a domestic worker becomes a „domestic worker' through various scripts inscribed on the body (Brush, 1998). This research thus centres on the body as a site of inscription (Dudrick, 2005). The body is seen as fluid and dynamic (Lindenmeyer, 1999) and ascribing to Butler (1995) I accept the view that the body is seen as a site or canvas that is inscribed by language, discourse and culture.

This study views the domestic worker's uniform as a signifier. The study aims to explore the domestic worker's experience of her body when wearing the uniform and of the body being signified and inscribed with meaning through particular cultural and social processes. The study also seeks to ascertain what significance may be attributed to the uniform, by the domestic worker. The premise is that a woman may experience herself as being more „visible' or „conspicuous' to others as a domestic worker whilst wearing the uniform (Pratt and Rafaeli, 1997). This inscription was also probed within the context of being given meaning by others that see her in the uniform, since the domestic workers experience of her own body within the uniform was intertwined with other people's perceptions of her.

Key questions

Against the background of these issues, the main areas that have been covered and questions that have been posed during the research are:

[3] According to Bensman and Vidich a heuristic mechanism is used to reach conclusions about a phenomenon or a system through the understanding of another phenomenon or system. Similarly, the domestic workers opinion of her uniform and form of employment is investigated to understand her perceptions of her body.

How do women feel about having to wear uniforms as domestic workers?

There are some types of employment with uniforms that are spontaneously associated with a profession. For example, doctors in hospitals wear white coats, nurses in hospitals are always in uniform and municipal workers like Durban Solid Wastes employees wear their uniforms for work. Within this study, the notion of the domestic worker's uniform, and the types of uniform are explored against the experiences of the respondents in these uniforms. Experience of the domestic worker, in this context, refers to an awareness of herself as a domestic worker in a typical outfit and how it affects and impacts on her body and self image. I began from the hypothesis that women working as domestic workers' do not like to be seen in public wearing their uniforms as it associates them with domestic work and although domestic work is categorized as a form of employment, it is now widely viewed by African women as a lowly type of employment.

Both culturally and economically, domestic work within South Africa has a low status. Within households, menial domestic tasks were often allocated to the young, or elderly. Women who are considered to be socially inferior to men are responsible for household chores. Women's historic position of maintaining the household and providing care for their children may be to blame for the low value attributed to domestic work. To this extent, domestic work has derived an inferior status from work allocated to the socially inferior. Therefore, domestic workers' experiences of their bodies when in uniform were explored, these experiences were influenced by the lives they have led, and went on to influence how they dress and express themselves.

How, and to what extent, does the uniform inscribe the body of the domestic worker and shape her experience of herself?

Inscribing on the body in this context refers to how the uniform of the domestic worker shapes and constructs the domestic worker's experience of her body. The uniform of the domestic worker is intrinsically linked with that of domestic work. Therefore, the uniform acts on the body of the domestic worker in some way, and shapes her experience of herself when in uniform. People are socially moulded to attribute meaning and feeling to the type of clothes they wear. A

modern phenomenon, the emotional investment in clothing leads people to experience themselves in either superior or inferior ways than others when comparing their clothes to others.

Does the domestic worker experience herself any differently when she wears her uniform as compared to when she wears her own clothes?

The notion that the domestic worker experiences her body in different ways when she is wearing different clothes was probed. The uniform is associated with domestic work, a „low paid' low status category of work. While the domestic worker, when wearing her own clothes, does not have to be categorized in this way. Domestic workers may hold their form of employment in high esteem and therefore may not mind wearing their uniform. But given the many domestic workers who are not seen travelling in public with their uniform, it is more likely that domestic workers are held in higher esteem (by other domestic workers) when dressed like their fellow commuters.

How is the domestic worker and „madams' (or employers') relationship negotiated through the use of the uniform?

Domestic workers share one of the most intimate and yet alienated relationships with their employers, who are in most cases women. In any other context, the domestic worker and her employer are simply two women, separated by race and socio-economic class. But once the domestic worker puts on the uniform, she is perceived differently, the uniform therefore serves to create an additional barrier between employer and employee. The genesis of paid domestic work dates back to early colonial times, when young male boys, or „houseboys' worked for White employers. This gradually led to Black females seeking employment as domestic workers, working for all race groups in South Africa.

How has domestic work as a job transformed or spurred on the respondents aspirations for herself, and for her family?

Domestic workers may have attended school, and perhaps a tertiary institution. Yet they have become domestic workers. The history of their entry into domestic work is investigated against the background of their aspirations and goals they had nurtured as children. Many have families

and children who they now support and furthermore the domestic workers may have aspirations for their children to succeed.

Preliminary Literature Study

My interest in the area of domestic workers and dress provoked further reading, but a review of the literature reveals that there is not much documented in the area of domestic workers and body construction. The literature reveals instead issues such as **history, gender**, **exploitation and inferiority** (Cock, 1981; Naidoo, 1986; Gordon, 1985). These issues will contextualize domestic work against the South African socio-political milieu. Cock (1980), in her book on domestic workers, claimed that laws existing during the colonial and apartheid periods were essentially exploitative. Previously, in South African history, women were not allowed to leave the homestead. Therefore men migrated to urban areas and „chose' to do housework (Martens, 2002).

According to Bishop and Woolman (2007), domestic workers are similar to servants, since their working conditions are no better than those of servants. Their article describes servitude in domestic and farm labour, and explores the conditions of employment in terms of South Africa's constitution. While laws have been created to protect domestic workers there is no guarantee that they are in effect within private homes, which are the workplace of domestic workers. Laws on minimum wage and hours of work have helped improve conditions at work to an extent, although these positive changes are slow to take effect. Creation of these laws is insufficient as the government still has to find a way to ensure that these laws are executed.

The treatment of a person is often linked to their social status and the freedom of choice they have. Most domestic workers are poor and desperately need work therefore they are forced to work under harsh conditions to ensure their families survival. "Persons in conditions of servitude occupy a social station that does not allow them to alter the conditions of their existence: their station makes it appear that they work „voluntarily' for those above them" (Bishop and Woolman, 2007: 597). Domestic workers, especially those that live-in, are forced to work extreme long hours with no time off to see friends or family. Domestic workers are also sometimes given low quality or leftover food and spoken to in condescending tones (Gordon, 1985).

In an article on domestic workers in South Africa, Gaitskell et al (1983) found that they either have to commute daily to work and back home, or leave their families and live in their employer's property. According to Grant (1997: 62) "black women find themselves in a position where they are forced to do underpaid, undervalued „women's work', and thereafter to return home to do exactly that „women's work' again." This links to my study because many domestic workers are compelled through historically and politically entrenched circumstances, to commute to and from work, and often have to go home and take care of their families.
Naidoo's (1986) thesis on domestic workers highlights the exploitation of domestic workers by giving them a voice to speak out, and uses class analysis and Marxism to understand this exploitation. Domestic work involves the trading of labour for pay but it is difficult to put a value to physical labour where there is no definable output and this is often the reason behind domestic workers underpay and exploitation.

Legal structures and political systems that control the access and distribution of power and resources are behind the unequal relationship between employer and domestic worker. Domestic workers are forced to work for a pittance, abused and oppressed because they have no other alternative. Within South Africa, there are "various measures of racial discrimination which maintain the blacks in a subordinate position and this is legitimized by a racist ideology" (Naidoo, 1986: 21). His view is that White colonizers created racial oppression through class domination. Various legislations such as the Land Act (1913) and Bantu Laws Amendment Act (1965) trapped domestic workers in their employment despite the „liberating' aspects of these laws. With little or no education or legal rights, Black women were restricted to few unskilled types of employment.

According to the Bantu Labour Act No.67 (1964), African women could only work within a certain area and have to be registered, this put them at the mercy and under the power of their employer. If their employer fired them, they would be homeless and unable to support their families. Employers used their power to exploit the domestic worker, knowing that she would be unable to refuse (Madywabe, 2004). Wages are low, and domestic workers often do not receive annual increases or bonuses. Due to the competitive nature of domestic work, these low wages

remain uncontested, because the abundance of cheap labour makes them easily dispensable. Additionally, employers do not believe that increases are necessary as domestic work is an „unskilled' job requiring no prior education and qualification (Naidoo, 1986: 53). Domestic workers are not allowed time off, and if there was an emergency and the domestic worker stayed off work, there was always a risk that the employer would find another domestic worker. Domestic workers are therefore subject to family disorganization because they are forced to live away from their husbands and children, sometimes not seeing their families for months.

Domestic workers are often shouted at, have had things thrown at them, been accused of stealing and sometimes even been physically and sexually abused by their employers. The literature shows that domestic workers feel exploited and undervalued, but they continue working because they may not have an alternative (Gaitskell, et al, 1983). Katzman's (1978) book on the lives of maids, laundresses and cooks in industrial America explores the exploitation evident in the history of domestic work following the shift to industrial labour. In 1890 most employed women were engaged in paid domestic work. Increased opportunities for employment in shops, offices and factories lead to White girls leaving domestic employment for better paying employment. This shift led to many openings in domestic employment which were filled by young Black women. Katzman documents the exploitation and abuse of these women who enter domestic employment because of its homelike and feminine qualities, and because of their lack of education. These women often worked long hours and suffered physical and sexual abuse. The employer had almost total control over her domestic worker. American domestic work carried with it a social stigma and domestic workers were considered to occupy the lowest socio-economic position within society.

According to Gordon (1985), many of the domestic workers, in a recount of their life stories mentioned that they wished to provide a better life for their children and wanted them to be well-fed and educated. There is no upward mobility in domestic work, it is a rigid and static category of employment where most employees accept their position. Therefore, these domestic workers often find that engaging in domestic work (and wearing the uniform) is their only alternative.

Domestic workers and class struggles

The body and how people perceive themselves within their bodies is constructed within the context of class, race, power and social relations (Adelman and Ruggi, 2008). Class is "defined according to standards of living or material conditions of life" (Glaser, 2010: 288). It is defined by the rich-poor hierarchy within society. Standard of living is a result of one's income, access to resources and the number of assets one owns.

Rich-poor hierarchies are found in almost all industrialized societies. According to Dickey (2000) domestic workers are lower down in the hierarchy when compared to their employers. In her study, she investigates employers' perceptions of the impact that domestic workers have in their lives and on their status within Indian society. Categorized as servants, domestic workers occupy a low status (and often come from a low class) and work for employers who are middle to upper class Indian women. The caste system is a significant part of Indian life. „Workers' moving in and out of employers' homes are regarded as inferior by their employers. Yet, employing many servants is symbolic of a high class status.

"Servants represent the dirt, disease, and „rubbish'...of a disorderly world that employers commonly associate with the worker class and that pointedly contrasts with the ideal cleanliness, order and hygiene of their own homes" (Dickey, 2000: 462). Domestic workers are commonly thought of as occupying a low class and therefore status, their employers who have „good, clean homes' have to maintain a distance from their domestic workers. These employees are constantly striving to close this distance by smiling at employers and attempting to have a conversation with them, not to have a better relationship with their employer, but to transcend the class barriers imposed on them.

Class is linked to socio-economic position and power within society, which then indicates ones hierarchical position and impacts on ones identity. Class is a multi-faceted term, a cultural product that is often uniquely applied to one society, but may seem anachronistic in another. It is primarily a result of socio-economic position and income, but it is also about ones residence, associates, honour, reputation and even about ones dress (Dickey, 2000).

Domestic work involves a mixing of race, class and ethnicity in the most intimate, yet alienated relationship within society. Domestic workers are needed within homes to clean, cook and provide care to employer's children, but they have to keep their distance as they are not a part of the family or home, rather they are often treated as an unwanted, unfamiliar entity. Class differences are thrown into sharp relief when looking at the contrast between domestic worker and her employer. Fish's (2006a) study on changes to domestic work since democracy focuses on class and gender issues and emphasizes the contrast between „maid and madam'.

According to Fish, class and social differences are exemplified in the domestic workers relationship with her employer, where the domestic worker is treated like a child under the scrutiny and authority of the employer. Therefore, "domestic work becomes a site of struggle between women in severely unequal relations to one another as a result of distinctive differentials in race and class locations" (Fish, 2006a: 112). Black women's position in their employers' homes reinforces their low status within society.

Recent Local (South African) literature on domestic work

In more recent literature on domestic workers, many of the previous issues of undervalue and underpay still persist (Beukman, 2008). Domestic workers often do not work under contract and have no employment benefits. Madywabe (2004) reports that domestic workers in South Africa are often lured with promises of a better life and good pay, but are then cheated out of it by lying employers. Madywabe gives a case study of a domestic worker who as a school dropout had heard about the good pay, free food and lodgings that domestic workers receive, since she had a family and child to support, she left her home in search of a job, but was quickly disillusioned.

Both employer and employee have expectations of one another, this is known as the „psychological contract' (Kandier, 2007: 9). The domestic worker expects continued pay increases the longer and harder she works. Instead their goals and expectations have become aligned with those of her employer in keeping a clean home because this ensures her job security which in turn allows her to support her family. In the employer-employee relationship, the domestic worker has less power to stand up for herself because her labour is being sold, and since this form of employment is competitive, she often is forced to work for minimum and sometimes less than minimum wage (Kandier, 2007).

In a study on the lives of migrant domestic workers and their vulnerability to Human Immuno Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), Dinat and Peberdy (2007) found that poor working conditions coupled with low income resulted in lack of access to healthcare. By working for a minimum wage for extreme hours, domestic workers put their health at risk. Approximately thirty-one percent of employed Black women are domestic workers, and most of these women are uneducated or have had a few years education and are therefore unable to follow certain precautions in relation to their health and safety. However, with the increasing number of women entering this form of employment and with employment options being so low, women are forced to work for low pay and harsh conditions. Employment was relatively stable, that is to say long term, although foreign migrant workers remained in full time employment under one employer for longer periods than their South African counterparts. Even though South Africa has instituted legislation indicating the maximum hours[4] to be worked by a domestic worker, as well as the minimum wage[5], these were often not adhered to by employers.

Despite formalities and legislation, the appointment and employment of domestic workers remains informal. According to Fish (2006a), even though democracy has arisen in South Africa, domestic workers still do not receive the legal attention that they deserve. The South African state attempted to protect domestic workers by including them in various legislations, like the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) and the Wage Act, but Ally (2008) argued that since the state intervened domestic worker unions have become almost unnecessary since the state views domestic workers as „vulnerable'. The state has therefore taken on a paternalistic and protective role acting as the „voice' of domestic workers and removing the need to join unions for legal representation.

Labour legislation has finally extended to include domestic workers but this still proves insufficient since it cannot pervade the private home and asymmetry that characterises domestic work. "Working behind closed doors, within private spaces, domestic workers in South Africa

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[4] The BCEA (2008) states that a domestic worker may not work more than 45 hours per week
[5] The BCEA stipulates the minimum wage of a domestic worker be between R1097 and R1340 per month.

may be relatively invisible" (Ally, 2008: 1). Prior to being included in legislation, domestic workers relied on unions to help resolve their disputes. The largest union formed was the South African Domestic Workers Union (SADWU). Formed during apartheid, this union was known for their immediate action against employers, but often without success since they lacked legal backing, therefore demands often took years before being met, and domestic workers were more likely to lose their jobs than have their demands met. The democratic state has led to the demobilization of unions because workers are under the impression that the government will ensure that their conditions are improved. Grant (1997) on the other hand states that although domestic workers are now covered by the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) and the Labour Relations Act, they are still treated as servants and not categorized as employees by the state. The lack of wage regulation leads to the creation of "an economic underclass of employees in the labour market, which allows disadvantage to perpetuate through generations of families" (Grant, 1997: 61). Legislation needs to be further adjusted to align with the needs of domestic workers.

Legislation is an important factor in studying domestic work, and there are several books and articles on the subject. Much of the research on domestic work in this field is carried out by scholars in many fields – anthropology, management and law, to name a few. But there is a lack of mention of other important factors within a domestic workers life, therefore giving these studies a static and vague overview of domestic work in general. This dissertation on domestic workers and their bodies focuses more specifically on the lives of domestic workers working in Indian homes, and the display of their bodies in fashionable clothes.

Literature on Anthropology and the body

Within anthropology, there is also a lack of scholarship in relation to body construction and domestic workers. The „body' usually goes unnoticed and Lock (1993) finds that there is a lack of research and theorizing about the body by anthropologists. She reviews accounts of changes on the body throughout the history of the discipline and "until recently, the individual body usually has been conceptualized as a universal biological base upon which culture plays its infinite variety" (Lock, 1993: 134). Anthropologists have had difficulty in the conceptualizing of the body because they find it hard to categorize and therefore regard it to be a ubiquitous concept that is dynamic and constantly changing.

There has always been the universal debate between the impact of nature versus nurture in the construction of the body. To an extent, the body is a biological entity but thereafter "social categories are literally inscribed on and into the body" (Lock, 1993: 135). People's dress, hair and makeup and jewellery are impacted on by their contexts. Anthropologists acknowledge that different cultures and social contexts have different conceptualizations of the body, and most research has been directed at medicine and politics of the body.

Scheper-Hughs and Lock (1987), in their study on the importance of conceptions of the body in medical anthropology, reviewed three perspectives taken by anthropologists on the body – as being phenomenally experienced (the individual body, or the lived experience of the body), as a social body (the interaction between social and natural worlds) and as a body politic (the control and regulation of the body). The main aspect that most anthropologists focus on in their research is the extent to which the body is either a natural or social body. Jackson (2006) also criticized anthropologist's obsession over the dual characterization of the body, stating that the body should be thought of in more of an abstract way.

According to Gubrium and Holstein (2007), the body is conceptualized as a system of signs within social anthropology. The authors found that anthropologists focus on the body (mainly in so called exotic cultures) in terms of ritual preparation and cultural transformations of the body through different rites of passage. According to McCallum (1996), in anthropological research, the body is situated within the material and social environment. Her study on the Cashinahuans revealed that the body is produced by others, and grows and learns through interaction with others. In a study by Weiss (2001), the body is understood to be a collective entity and the author suggests that national identity is inscribed on the body. Thus „body' and „identity' emerge as being both socially and culturally constructed, especially in the way people dress to express their bodies (Reay, 1995; Meijer and Prins, 1998).

In **literature related to body, dress and identity**, Pratt and Rafaeli (1997) carried out a study in a rehabilitation unit of a hospital. Their research focused on the uniform of nurses and how it affected their identities. The authors came to understand that the type of dress worn places one

into a certain category, for example nurses who wore a blue uniform held a higher position then nurses who wore a white uniform. Dress defines the person you are and serves as a medium that carries a message about a person – such as where they belong and their profession. They found that dress or uniform acts as a symbol that has different meanings for different people, and it also has certain behavioural scripts attached to it. This means that one behaves in a certain way when wearing a certain outfit because one has to comply with certain rules attached to their role when in uniform. A uniform defines who you are and the social group to which you belong. Issues surrounding social identities of nurses such as their goals, clients, roles and statuses decided how they wanted to dress – either in uniform or in casual clothes. Nurses in the study wore casual clothes, but a suggestion by management that they should change to wearing „scrubs' sparked debate amongst nurses. Therefore, the study examined the attitudes and preferences of nurses in terms of uniform to be worn. Nurses working by night in the acute care division preferred scrubs because it was more professional and practical, whilst those working during the day preferred casual clothes as they wanted to help accommodate people back into everyday life. "The meaning of a symbol within one organization, therefore, may differ from its meaning in a different organization or at a different place or time in the same organization (Pratt and Rafaeli, 1997: 864).

Choice of dress is used to assert control, with regard to nurses and domestic workers, when the choice to wear what one prefers to work in is taken away, then a sense of loss and power is felt since they are no longer able to express their individuality when under someone else's orders. Uniformed dress expresses ones status and place within an organization or within a social hierarchy, for example, student nurses wear a different colour uniform than matron nurses, creating a hierarchical division between them. Domestic workers felt that their positions in society significantly decreased if they wear their uniform in public. Their power is removed in the workplace, where they often do not have a choice over work clothes, but in public their clothes make a positive statement about themselves. Uniform is sometimes so intricately linked to a profession that one cannot help prevent the image of a „white cap and white uniform' when thinking about nursing. Domestic workers want to prevent this association when in public, therefore casual clothes are worn enabling them to conceal their statuses. Some nurses in Pratt and Rafeali's study preferred to wear casual clothes, while others that did wear the uniform liked

to personalize their uniform to reflect their identities and personalities – some wore heels, or jewellery, or pair their uniform with jeans, in an attempt to provide some variety, and therefore removing the homogeneity in the uniform (Pratt and Rafaeli, 1997).

Domestic workers, like nurses, wear a uniform in their work. The history of their uniform dates back to early colonial times when „houseboys' were forced to wear uniforms. These „houseboys' had to wear what became known as a „kitchen suit' to carry out their chores (basic domestic chores like washing clothes and dishes, gardening and chauffeuring). The men wearing this outfit regarded it as offensive and found it uncomfortable, but could not complain for fear of losing their jobs. "Originating in colonial Natal, the kitchen suit helped to reinforce this regime of labour surveillance." The „kitchen suit' was used to identify young Black men as domestic workers, or „houseboys', it served as a visual label and conveyed meaning of a lowly status within society (Carton et al, 2008).

Hence, dress serves as an identity marker, as Donahue (2004) discovered in her study on the importance of certain types of dress in late sixteenth century Spain. According to the author, "apparel had become an increasingly codified system of distinguishing among levels of society and professions" (Donahue, 2004: 105). In Spanish society, the types of clothes one wore gave an indication of their socio-economic position within society. Clothes have a manipulative function allowing transcendence into a higher class and the assumption of admirable qualities. Domestic workers may find that by donning smart-casual clothes, they transcend their self-imposed imprisonment within the gaze of the public. They may dress up to allow people to believe that they are rich and successful people. Social masquerade occurs when one uses clothes as a disguise or to assume another identity. "Fabric, colours, and styles carry associations which may empower the wearers, but may also restrict or impose obligations upon them" (Donahue, 2004: 109). The clothes that people wear are a result of their statuses and socialization, and the perceptions that they have of how their bodies are viewed, their clothes therefore are both enabling and restrictive.

According to Huisman and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2005), dress communicates identity and can empower those wearing outfits that they choose, but outfits imposed on people serve to restrict

them. In their study on dress practices of Bosnian born Muslim refugee women[6] living in America, they found that dress and style choice carries with it multilevel meanings. The Bosnian refugees dressed carefully paying special attention to the makeup, hair and outfits, making sure that they conformed to current trendy styles. Huisman et al investigated how Bosnian Muslim refugees negotiate their bodies in a collision of two worlds – their conservative customes versus American individualism. This is comparable to domestic workers who negotiate their bodies in work and public space, often within a radius of five kilometres, the work and public space are two dichotomous worlds, where the domestic worker appears different. In the workplace, she is a domestic worker wearing a uniform and under the direction and supervision of her employer. In public, she is a woman expressing her individuality through her dress sense. Dress carries messages about people, ones past impacts on the way they presently dress. The type of people they hope to become, or what they want to achieve in the future can impact on their dress choice. The Muslim refugees dress choice was affected by their conservative religion, their upbringing in Bosnia as well as their socialization in America. "Understanding change and continuity in gendered dress practices is achieved by examining the shifting macrostructural and microinternational worlds of the participants" (Huisman et al, 2005: 46). Oppressed, marginalized groups in society pay extra attention to fashion trends and apply these to their clothes, using dress in an attempt to transcend their subordinate positions within society.

In this study, the premise is that the body is inscribed and comes to be constructed through the uniform. I attempt to investigate the particular inscribing of the body in terms of the (Zulu-speaking) domestic worker's uniform and how it works on some levels to construct her identity and self image. This is pursued through examining her narratives of how she experiences herself while wearing the uniform. According to Foucault (1977), the body is both culturally constructed and „disciplined'. People have to dress in a certain way and behave in certain ways because of disciplinary power (which acts directly on the body such that people follow certain laws and norms). Foucault also states that people are also under perpetual surveillance, in this context by the employer, and thus forced to conform.

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[6] The women were born in Bosnia to Muslim parents. The women, also practising Muslims, escaped dire circumstances in Bosnia, and moved to America.

Principle Theories upon which the Research Project will be constructed:

A theoretical framework is necessary to guide the entire research process. Theories help to develop and refine the conceptual framework; it both guides and informs the research process. It is an account of social realities and it is both flexible and dynamic. The research design, informed by these theories, was qualitative. The three theories that are going to be used in this study are Feminist Anthropology, Social Constructivism and Semiotics.

Feminist Anthropology and Standpoint Feminist theory:

Historically, studies in the social sciences tended to be positivist and apply „scientific methods' to obtain empirical data. Positivists believe in applying a quantitative practice where the social reality is predictable and can therefore be controlled. It also involved a hierarchical relationship to exist between researcher and respondents where the researcher is always more knowledgeable. Feminist anthropology challenges this male-centred research process and the nature of this knowledge construction. Feminist anthropology has since provided new ways of thinking about social realities that does not separate subject and object. Objectivity is not altogether abandoned but transformed into „feminist objectivity' (Hesse-Biber, 2006: 26). They seek objectivity, but at the same time realize that knowledge is situated within particular contexts. According to Harding (1993, in Hesse-Biber, 2006), one must be both objective and reflexive. Reflexive meaning that one continually questions ones position in the research process as well as looking at power relations between researcher and researched. Subjectivity displayed through the emotions and feelings of both researcher and respondents must not be ignored. Most important is the critical engagement with the data from respondents so that the researcher is able to understand their perspective.

I intend using this theory to help highlight the various dynamics of domestic workers, particularly as a previously marginalized group in a post-apartheid South Africa. Using this theory also helps to situate me as a „Black'[7] female researcher and reflexively position myself. This is important for the study because despite the researcher and researched both being women, there are still significant racial, cultural and socio-economic differences.

[7] Modern South African definitions of Black women include Indian and coloured women.

Social Constructionism:

This theory helps one to understand the significance of body image in this study. The researcher would have to be a part of this reality and interact with participants in order to understand the meanings they attach to their experiences. Human beings create their social worlds as well as their identities and the social categories they fit into. According to Reicher (2004: 934), "we have a range of possible social identities that when we behave in terms of any given social identity, we act on the basis of the beliefs, norms, and values associated with that identity." This theory is used within this study to help understand indentity construction and social identity, and how social views and perceptions impact in these. Domestic workers have two „identities', one of which is related to their role as domestic worker, and the other as a member of society, ordinary and inconspicuous. As a collective, the domestic worker subscribes to certain scripts in relation to dressing up. This theory was used to analyze the data in terms of how social reality is linked to experience, and to guide methods used to elicit data about how, in this case, domestic workers experience themselves in their uniform.

Semiotics:

Semiotics is a theory of representation and meaning. Representation is both a description of and a symbol of something. The meaning of something "depends on the system of concepts and images formed in our thoughts which can stand for or „represent' the world" (Hall, 1997: 17). People conceive of things in different ways. Meaning is expressed through symbols, both spoken and visual. People assign meaning and "fix the meaning so firmly that after a while, it comes to seem natural and inevitable" (Hall, 1997: 21). Signs, codes and meaning are cultural constructions which are internalized and therefore can only be understood within specific contexts. When domestic workers „dress up' they conform to images in their minds of fashion conscious, stable and stylish individuals, likewise they want the same images to be recognized by other people when they see them. Fashion and dress are visual symbols, transmitting meaning about people's personality and status. This study focuses on the reasoning and meaning behind the domestic worker „dressing up'. Therefore the use of semiotics has value in illuminating the deeper meaning behind this. According to Barthes (1998, in Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006: 293), people are the signified who attribute meaning - signifiers which are then supplanted in a host of signs, this is a three part process in which cultural interpretative practices are socially constructed. Semiotics will be used to "analyze the signs or representations produced within a

society in order to deconstruct the process of meaning construction that created them" (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006: 293). In other words, the uniform is the signifier, and data collected shall be analyzed to ascertain the meanings that the uniform has for the domestic worker within the social context, as well as the meanings she believes other people attribute to it and how these interact with her meanings of it.

Structure of dissertation:

Chapter one is a discussion on the methodology utilised for this research. This entails an explanation of the site of research, how and why certain respondents were chosen based on certain characteristics. It includes the methods of obtaining information from respondents as well as methodological limitations faced.

Chapter two focuses upon the domestic workers and their employers' histories. This is done to acquaint the reader with the target group (domestic workers) and their employers, so as to better understand their lives and aspirations. This chapter includes a discussion of aspects such as natal origin, education and work life, employment, current homes and children.

Imagined status of domestic workers forms the title of *chapter three*. This chapter centres on the type of public transportation taken by domestic workers and how being in view of the public affects the perceptions of themselves. Domestic workers attempt to elevate their perceived low social status (as a result of their low income employment) by dressing up to „compete' with their fellow commuters.

Chapter four provides a discussion of the aspirations of domestic workers. These aspirations are analysed against the lives and aspirations of domestic workers parents and their children, and is then contextualized within their own life histories.

Conclusion is a general discussion of the dissertation and provides a brief guide for future research.

Chapter 1: Methodology

Site of research

Preceding apartheid (1948), Queensburgh was a relatively multi-cultural area, but following the rise of apartheid and the passing of the Group Area Act, Indians were either voluntarily or forcefully moved out of this area. This then became a White dominated area during the apartheid era. Following the collapse of apartheid, Indians began to move back into Queensburgh and Hillary.

Many houses in Queensburgh have been renovated due to the fact they are old and have a long history. Some new double story houses have been built in this area; however the typical type of house is of a 1900's design and consists of three to four bedrooms with lush gardens. These gardens become easily waterlogged during times of excessive rain.

The main site of the study was the immediate residential area in which I live. The Glen is nestled within Queensburgh, a suburb of Durban. Due to many limitations that occurred at the beginning of this fieldwork (for example, requests to be interviewed being declined by domestic workers) fieldwork was extended out of The Glen into two other areas namely Queensburgh and Hillary. Queensburgh encompasses Malvern, Northdene and Escombe. Malvern is near the Bellair off ramp and extends into Escombe and then into Northdene.

The Glen, which is a relatively new complex consisting of about one hundred modern brick houses, with a „main road' in the middle of the complex that is approximately half a kilometre long. This complex is relatively new, the houses having been built approximately thirteen to fifteen years ago. There are mostly Indian families (fourth and fifth generation) living in these two or three bed roomed houses, of mainly young couples with an average of two children per house, often under the age of ten years.

Within Malvern, is the large Queensmead Industrial Area that is situated at the bottom of a steep road just off the Stella main road. This area has several types of businesses including auto-panel, timber and transport. Situated directly behind this Industrial Area is an „informal' settlement where a few of the respondents in the study reside. It is a large area where African (Black) people reside, and this area stretches as far as Shallcross, which is situated west of Queensburgh.

There is a bustling shopping centre split by a single road just off the M7 highway entering Malvern. On the one side, there is the Sanlam Centre, which has a Pick n Pay and a few other shops, including a large Amalgamated Banks of South Africa (ABSA bank). On the other side is the Malvern Centre which has chain stores such as Mr Price, Checkers and Clicks. Malvern Centre is situated alongside one of the main roads in Queensburgh, namely Stella Main Road, which together with Sarnia Main Road are the two major roads that run through both Hillary and Queensburgh. Alongside Sarnia Main Road, in Hillary, is a small Spar supermarket, as well as a few shops.

Queensburgh and Hillary appear to be „Christian Dominated' suburbs due to the presence of more than thirteen churches across both areas, most of them built during the colonial and apartheid era's. There is a notable absence of places of worship for other prevalent religious denominations such as the Hindu and Muslim faiths.

Despite, the number of churches in the area, Queensburgh is often regarded by its residents as a close-knit predominantly Indian populated area. Most of the houses in this area have been built relatively close together, similar to the houses in Chatsworth (an area further west of Shallcross),

with the result that the areas around the houses are quite small. All of the domestic workers that worked in this area are African Black women that I assumed mostly came from Durban. Therefore the target group was based on these and other visual observations.

Conceptualizing an Approach:

The task of having to research domestic workers must be seen within the complex set of relationships that they share with their employers, other domestic workers, their families and the neighbourhood around them. In attempting to access a few who have permitted me to network with others in the neighbourhood, I had to first gain access to some of the employers. In other instances this was not required, although I had ensured their employers were informed in order for me to work within the ethical framework of my research. Contact was made varyingly with the different groups that were fundamental to the relatively successful outcome of this research. Three groups make up the core of this project viz. individual domestic workers, employers and two focus groups of domestic workers. It is within this triangular formation that both „maids and madams'[8] generally live their lives on a daily basis and which shaped and determined the dynamics of this study.

The initial target group was defined along the lines of my assumptions of domestic workers in the area of Queensburgh, and also based on literature that I had thus far read. The employer sample group was delimited to Indian employers, therefore their attributes were easily definable. Prior to the inception of this project, acknowledgment of domestic workers in my area was minimal and limited to a cursory greeting. I therefore anticipated some negative reception and prepared myself for rejection before commencing with sampling.

Once the target groups were defined, the type of sampling had to be decided on. Sampling was purposive since I purposely sought out respondents, and had defined general attributes of both domestic workers and employers. My point of entry began with those that I was familiar with and with others whom I felt were approachable.

[8] This is in reference to terms used within the South African context to refer to domestic workers and their employers respectively.

Interviews, prior to collection of ethnographic data, were to take the form of casual conversations with the aid of an interview schedule in the hope that the respondent would feel comfortable enough to express her views and opinions. Once agreement from both domestic worker and employer was secured, interview date and times were scheduled. Translators were arranged for those domestic workers that may have difficulty in articulating responses; however most of the respondents were relatively fluent in English.

The decision to carry out focus group discussions once interviews were almost complete was based on the need to supplement my data with more interactive responses. I again felt anxious about collecting the sample for the focus group, mainly because I had almost exhausted the amount of domestic workers in the area to interview. As a last resort, I asked friends and another domestic worker to help me collect the sample for these focus groups.
Once I had conceptualised my approach, I defined my target groups and then began collection of the sample from primary and secondary respondents.

Target Group

This study consists of three core groups of women, the target groups for each of these groups are defined below. Employers of domestic workers were sought on the basis of their racial affiliation (Indian) as well as their residence in Queensburgh. Two focus groups with domestic workers were carried out to provide additional data to individual interviews. Usually focus groups consist of approximately three to ten respondents, but for the purposes of this research I decided to keep both focus groups to five respondents each. Respondents for focus groups were defined along the same lines as those for individual interviews.

According to data obtained from interviews, domestic workers fell into the age range of twenty one to forty seven years of age, with seven being in their twenties, nine in their thirties and six in their forties. I began from the hypothesis that the women I was to interview were all of Zulu background, an assumption that was swiftly eroded as details of individual circumstances emerged. Five of the interviewees were foreign women, two of whom were from Zimbabwe and three from Lesotho coming to South Africa to seek employment, a better way of life and a way to support their families back home. Another five were born out of Kwa-Zulu Natal – in Eastern

Cape, including Transkei. There were only five or six out of twenty-two domestic workers that were born in Durban, the other respondents originating from areas directly around Durban (for example four of the respondents came from Pietermaritzburg). With regard to language spoken, nine respondents were fluent in English and were also Zulu-speaking, there were two who could not speak English at all, three were Sotho speaking and eight were Xhosa speaking.

It was also evident from data that most of the respondents (who were not already Zulu-speaking) were able to understand and speak Zulu to some extent depending on the length of their residence in Kwa-Zulu Natal and on how successfully they had been able to engage with the language. Five of the domestic workers in the sample were live-in, that is to say, they lived on the premises where they worked. Four of the live-in domestic workers worked in The Glen, and one of them worked a few metres outside The Glen, in Queensburgh. Six of the respondents lived in Burlington; three were from Daasanoek, two from Umlazi and Marianhill, while the others (seventeen) commuted daily from Shallcross, Chatsworth or Mandeni.

Three of these domestic workers lived in otherwise unoccupied homes and five of the respondents resided on their employers premises in Malvern. These domestic workers returned home either on a weekly or monthly basis. Most of the domestic workers had children (discussed below) with eight respondents in this study living solely with their children, another two domestic workers lived with their children and, either a friend or her husband, while the remaining respondents lived either with family or friends.

Clearly domestic workers are from a diverse range of domestic arrangements, which differ significantly from the normative patterns of nuclear households of their employers. Two of the domestic workers in this study were married while an additional two were divorced. Twenty out of the twenty-two interviewed had children that were almost entirely dependent upon their mother for support. One domestic worker had six children, another had five children that she had to take care of through remittance, four of the domestic workers had three children, seven had two children each and the last seven respondents had one child each. Fourteen domestic workers did not live with their children and often sent them away to live with other family members.

Domestic workers in this sample were often entirely responsible for the support of their children. They often mentioned that it was difficult to get a job based on their generally meagre education and therefore engaged in domestic work as the only alternative employment that does not require a school education. Three of the domestic workers had completed school but then could not obtain a solid tertiary education due to the lack of finance. Another three respondents were not able to complete primary school while the rest of the sample did not complete high school. Twelve of the respondents had to stop school because of financial problems and a further three had failed to return to school because they fell pregnant. A respondent left school because she had fallen extremely ill and another because her father did not want her to return to school after she had received a basic education. One of the respondents had failed in her last year at school and chose not to return, and lastly, one respondent was unable to attend school because she was the oldest female child and had to look after her other siblings while her parents worked to support them.

Despite a relative lack of education, seventeen of the domestic workers did engage in other employment besides domestic work, but evidently returned to domestic work as a simpler option. Six of the respondents engaged in factory work prior to domestic work and most said that they had left factory work due to its taxing nature. The other domestic workers did other work such as waitressing, selling vegetables and working on a farm.

Most of the interviewees were introduced into domestic work by close friends or family members; although one respondent said that she had actively searched for a job as a domestic worker. The younger domestic workers had only worked for a few months (data shows a range of five to six months), but one of the respondents had worked as long as twenty years at domestic work, and even though she should be close to retirement at forty seven years of age this was not yet an option because she not only had children, but also a few grandchildren to support. Her priority was to provide them with education and to prepare them for better types of employment.

Respondents worked an average of five days a week, either at the one place, or up to two or three different places per week, depending on where they found employment. Domestic work is one type of employment with limited options that women with lower education have access to. Ten

of the respondents worked five days a week, six of them worked six days a week, three respondents worked five days and an additional half day on a Saturday, two domestic workers worked four days of the week and one worked only three days. Most often domestic workers had the weekend off to spend time with family or friends.

In a review of dress and travel, twenty one of the respondents wore smart-casual clothes to travel to work, while only one of the respondents wore her older clothes. All of the respondents (except those that are live-in) commuted daily to work on public transport. In the case of live-in domestic workers, they commuted to and from home either once a week, or as in the case of one of the domestic workers, once a month. Fifteen of the respondents travelled by taxi, one of these travelled by taxi as well as two trains – a journey that sometimes took up to two hours. Another respondent travelled by bus, and the rest of the respondents (six) commuted to work by train.

One domestic worker wore her older clothes to work and the other twenty one respondents changed into uniforms once they got to work. Five of the domestic workers put on ladies overalls, six of the respondents wore an actual domestic workers uniform[9] , and eleven of the domestic workers wore older clothes to do their work.

The target group of twenty two domestic workers that had been individually interviewed had not differed greatly from the initial target group delineated prior to fieldwork being carried out. Once the target group was defined, I had to decide how I would go about collecting my sample, and what the best approach would be.

Sampling:

Purposive Sampling involves a set definition of the characteristics of the sample; it entails sampling on the basis of interviewing people that are relevant to the heart of the study. Once the initial target group was defined, which involved observing where domestic workers worked, the times that they get to work and what they wear to get to work (visual identification of the primary sample). Thereafter a list of approximately fifteen domestic workers was drawn up. These women would be approached over the next few days.

[9] A store bought dress with matching apron and doek, as opposed to the ladies overalls which is simply a thin overcoat that is buttoned over one's clothes.

Collection of the sample group began in mid-October. Domestic workers were approached while their employers were away working or out of the house where possible. I used this as an opportunity to talk to the domestic worker without any interference or influence by her employer.

Twelve domestic workers were personally approached within The Glen over two days. Since The Glen is a small complex with a total of six small roads that are offshoots of the main road the houses were near enough to walk to. Most often these domestic workers were familiar with my family, therefore our conversations were less tense and the possibility of eliciting a positive response was favourable. I choose to remain outside, at the door, to give the domestic worker „space' to make her decision and not have any sense that I was prematurely „invading' her work domain. In every case the domestic worker agreed to hear me out. Introductions were made and names were exchanged. I explained that I was studying at school and was doing research on domestic workers and body image. There were a few domestic workers who, at first, did not understand what my research was about, I asked them what they usually wore to work, and they responded that they liked to dress up. I then explained to them that that is what I am interested in – to know how and why women like to look nice and what they think of their bodies.

The initial sample size of approximately thirty-five to forty domestic workers seemed sufficient but was not reached within The Glen therefore I broadened my scope to outside of The Glen. Eventually, at the end of a week, I had approached twenty-eight domestic workers.

The explanation of what my research was about was well received by fourteen of the domestic workers approached[10]. These fourteen domestic workers either agreed immediately, or a day or two later. Eleven of the domestic workers that agreed worked within The Glen, two worked near Malvern Centre and the last respondent worked just outside of The Glen. Four of the domestic workers agreed almost instantly to be a part of the research, a decision which may have been

[10] It is important to note that this is preliminary sampling and interviews were only scheduled to begin at the end of October, therefore sample size did fluctuate.

influenced by their acquaintance with my mother, while the majority (twenty-four) appeared apprehensive about responding.

Once the area of study was carefully explained to each respondent, the terms of informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity was then explained to them in detail. This included the fact that the domestic worker could either be anonymous or choose another name for the purposes of the research. I explained that the interview and informal conversations outside of the interview would be entirely confidential and they could retract anything that they had said, or even withdraw from the research entirely if they felt even remotely uncomfortable. Following on from this explanation, participation of eighteen domestic workers was secured, while six domestic workers chose not to be interviewed.

Refusals to be interviewed occurred not only during the process of sample collection, but also before interviews were to be carried out. Only one of the domestic workers explained that she did not want to participate because she was afraid of her employer. Before carrying out the collection of the sample I had decided that I would first ask the domestic workers if they were comfortable with being interviewed, and then afterwards, both out of courtesy to the employer, as well as to ensure the domestic worker peace of mind, I would speak to the employer, describe my research and ask if she were comfortable with me interviewing her domestic worker, and at the same time I would ask if she would mind being interviewed herself (secondary sample). I explained to domestic workers when discussing my research and the interview process that I would speak to their employer and make sure that they did not mind the domestic workers being interviewed. Most domestic workers that refused were still sceptical about this.

The experience of being turned down was difficult the first two times especially since I wanted to get my sample size and the more domestic workers that refused, the more I had to branch out and the more time lost. Some refusals were harsh and even upsetting, one of the domestic workers frowned throughout my explanation, cut me off midway, refused and virtually slammed the door on me to attend to a crying child.

Domestic workers would have been more comfortable if their consent to be interviewed was given were they would not feel influenced or threatened. Therefore domestic workers were

visited during the day when the employer was most likely to be at work, and based on preliminary observations, ninety percent of females employers worked outside of the home. I then returned to these homes in the afternoon to ensure that the employers were comfortable with their domestic workers being interviewed.

All but three employers agreed to allow me to interview their domestic workers. Either my mother or I were acquainted with most of the employers to some extent. Surprisingly, those that I had just met agreed to allow me to interview their domestic workers, although a few were sceptical about the research.

The first refusal was from my immediate neighbour. Despite having been given a copy of my proposal and an informed consent form, she did not respond immediately, and after a lapse of two weeks I had to follow up with her where she promptly refused to allow me to interview her domestic worker. A week later in the course of an interview, a domestic worker stated that the employer that had refused often mistreats her domestic worker. Another employer that I was somewhat familiar with politely declined my request to interview her domestic worker. This refusal was disappointing because the domestic worker had, earlier that day, agreed to be interviewed. An acquaintance of my mother was the last to refuse, quite bluntly and without reason, to allow me to interview her domestic worker.

The employers that agreed to let me interview their domestic workers accepted my offer of complete confidentiality and also had the chance to review the interview schedule before interviews commenced. Two employers assisted in completing the collection of the domestic worker sample. By giving me the names and details of the domestic workers or employers of domestic workers they knew, their references led to the optimum sample size.

Three family member and two friends introduced me to their domestic workers. These domestic workers were taken aside (by me) before their response to being interviewed was given. This was done because there could have been a potential problem of domestic workers feeling intimated

by her employers authority over her[11]. The research was briefly described to her as well as the terms of voluntary participation and anonymity of interviews. This process helped win the confidence of these respondents.

This completed my sample of approximately twenty two domestic workers, although a domestic worker dropped out before interviews commenced, another was found. Interviews and sampling (after preliminary sampling) were carried out almost simultaneously at some points.

Interviews

The chief methods used to obtain data ranged from casual conversations to in-depth semi-structured interviews using predominantly open-ended questions to elicit a comprehensive description. Semi-structured interviews are important because it encourages interaction with participants and also helps elicit people's feelings and perceptions (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008).

Interviews with domestic workers

Once the sample size was reached, interview times were arranged with all of the respondents. Interviews were carried out from the end of October (2009) till the end of February (2010).

Given respondents lack of free time both during and after work hours, interviews were carried out during domestic workers work times often from a Monday to Friday and on a Saturday where possible.

A lack of personal transportation led to interviews beginning in the Glen. Respondents places of work was reached on foot and for those houses that were further away, I was compelled to arrange transport.

[11] Feminist anthropology played a part here, where the thoughts and feelings of domestic workers were taken into account and no pressure was put on them to participate in the research.

Fourteen out of the twenty-two respondents had limited time both during and after work, therefore follow up interviews with these domestic workers often occurred a few times a month, with each successive interview lasting between twenty and thirty minutes.

Two respondents were interviewed after work outside their place of work. These interviews lasted between one and two hours, and were comparatively better than having interviews split into four segments across many weeks. The remaining six respondents had more or less flexible lunch times, and were interviewed over two successive interviews, either over two days in a week, or over two weeks.

Interview times were entirely dependent on when the domestic worker worked. Domestic workers often worked at two or three different places in a single week and since I wanted to only interview a respondent at one of her places of work (such that I would only be able to analyse her relationship with one particular employer), I would therefore only interview the respondent when she worked there.

Five of the twenty-two respondents that were individually interviewed lived away from The Glen. One of the respondents worked in Northdene, another in Hillary, another in Escombe, while the remaining two lived a few minutes away from The Glen.

Interview day and times were arranged with both the employer and her domestic worker. Respondents who worked more than once or twice a week arranged with their employer on which days would be the least busy for interviews to be carried out.

I was aware of the emphasis that domestic workers put upon dress; therefore I too became conscious of this and felt that dressing casually with slacks and a loose t-shirt would contribute towards lessening possible power differences between the interviewee and myself.

Most interviews were carried out in the respondents' employers' lounge, but three interviews were carried out in the garden, in the kitchen, and on occasion in one of the bedrooms (this occurred for two separate interviews when the employer or her family were in the lounge). Most

interviews followed the same pattern, I would arrive at the respondent's place of work at a pre-arranged time, she would let me in and the interview would commence. In a few cases, the respondent needed a few minutes to complete some work, and then the interview would begin. A tape recorder was used for all interviews, provided the permission of the respondent was obtained.

I had initially decided that questions would be open-ended (although I had an interview schedule) using the method of casual conversations to carry out interviews, but this proved difficult (see methodological limitations) and a set number of questions were asked to respondents. Interview questions were divided into basic categories. The first few questions asked were about biographical details, this included place of birth, information about her parents, where she currently resides and her education. The next category involves details about her work life such as other jobs she had done, how she got into domestic work and how long she has been doing this job. The most important set of questions were about dress and the uniform. This included questions about what she wore to do the work and her perceptions about her body in uniform, what she wore to get to work, and her perceptions of the general public toward her. The last category involved basic questions about the perceived relationship between employer and respondent.

The first two categories were well received by domestic workers who did not find it difficult to speak about their families, and often the hardships that they had been through. They enjoyed speaking about their children, and the hopes and dreams they had for them. However respondents appeared reluctant to express their relationships with their employer's. The third and most important category for this research was not well received. Domestic workers tended to get nervous and restless, often glancing at the time, there were also other cases where respondents took some time to understand what was being asked. It is possible that they had simply not thought about why they had to dress up before and after work (that is to say dressing up to travel to work), and why they felt that there was some sort of „social stigma' attached to the uniform (as all responses pointed to a negative connotation attached to the uniform in relation to public perception).

Overall, most respondents were either fluent in English, or relatively fluent in English. A translator was required since five of the respondents could not speak in nor understand English.

Interviews were not ideally carried out in private as it was impossible to prevent employers or family members from providing an audience for six of the interviews carried out. Nevertheless, great measures were taken to ensure that the domestic worker felt comfortable during the interviews, or the interview was rescheduled. Female employers were present for four of the interviews. Thankfully their presence actually helped facilitate responses from respondents. In three of the cases, the employer and domestic worker were on very good terms, and conversation was three way, with responses often coming from both employer and domestic worker. Employers tended to contribute positively to the discussion and there did not appear to be any sign of intimidation.

Interviews with employers

A secondary sample is sometimes necessary within research to supplement the data derived from primary interviews and to help elaborate on certain parts of analysis. Within this study, once the sample for domestic workers was collected, and interviews with them had commenced, I decided to carry out interviews with employers of domestic workers so that there would be a more holistic analysis of the relationship between the domestic worker and her employer.

The sample size for secondary interviews was kept small since the study revolved primarily around the domestic worker and her perspectives of her body, therefore the initial secondary sample size (before collection) was ten.

Collection of this sample group was not difficult as the respondents were most often the employers of domestic workers that were being interviewed (primary sample). Only two or three employers refused to be interviewed, citing reasons such as lack of time, or fear of the law since their domestic workers were not registered. I had therefore managed to obtain a sample of ten employers to be interviewed.

Interviews with employers were usually carried out in the late afternoons, after the employer's return from work. These interviews occurred between mid to late February and lasted no longer

than an hour. An interview schedule with a short list of questions was used, but the interview was carried out as a casual conversation.

Eight of the respondents lived in three or four bed roomed houses, and had a family of four or five, while two of the employers were relatively young, one unmarried, and had smaller homes. Seven of the respondents within this sample were working women whose domestic workers were indispensable since they took care of the all domestic chores. The other three employers of domestic workers were housewives and said that they required a domestic worker to do work that they were not able to do – such as scrubbing carpets and wiping windows.

Interviews progressed smoothly with a casual and relaxed atmosphere. Employers talked openly about their lives and families, but were unable to answer most questions about their domestic worker's life. Interviews got tense over these questions. Other than this, interviews were successful, and a fair amount of data was collected from them. Further data was still required in terms of how domestic workers respond to one another. Since I noticed that all domestic workers interviewed felt some sort of social embarrassment when thinking of wearing the uniform in public, focus groups were carried out to analyze how domestic workers interact in their response to the issue of dress and the body.

Focus Groups:

Focus groups are often carried out in research to elicit rich data from respondents while engaging with one another. With regards to this study, two focus groups were carried out to provide additional data to the twenty two individual interviews already carried out. The focus groups were carried out over two consecutive Saturdays in late February. Usually focus groups consist of approximately three to ten respondents, but for the purposes of this research both focus groups consisted of five respondents each.

Both focus groups were held in Malvern, one in central Malvern at a friend's house and the other at my house, as these venues were nearest to the respondents' place of work. I decided to employ a translator fluent in English, Xhosa and Zulu to help run this focus group since the translator would be able to facilitate and encourage better responses in respondents' vernacular language.

The respondents of the first focus group arrived in their work clothes, four of which wore an older set of clothes and the other wore her uniform. Two of the respondents from the second focus group had changed into their own clothes before the interview, while another wore her uniform and the fifth member of this group wore ladies overalls. These respondents had come directly from work, and because they were eager to get home, both focus groups lasted no longer than two hours.

The first focus group centred on the main aspect of dress and the uniform, but the second group also involved discussion on biographical information, education and marriage. The age range of this group (focus group one) was from twenty-two to thirty six years of age. All of the respondents have received a basic education ranging from standard five till Matric and they each have children that they support.

Conversation flowed quite easily although I did have to guide the conversation by asking questions at certain times. Respondents often spoke only when directly prompted. They did speak in Zulu often but English was the preferred language to converse in. The general atmosphere was relaxed and easy going; this may have been helped along by the provision of refreshments – in the form of Coca Cola and biscuits – served halfway through the focus groups. Domestic workers responded well to one another, a few were acquainted with one another, and this facilitated discussion further.

Overall, both focus groups were quite successful, it proving to be a much better method than single interviews in eliciting rich data from respondents. Respondents found the presence of other domestic workers comforting and were therefore able to discuss issues with one another before responding to questions.

Methodological limitations:

Despite the interviews and focus groups being relatively successful, there were a few problems faced.

Language differences posed a barrier from the beginning. Despite most respondents being able to speak and understand the language they did not, however speak English as their first language. Therefore, as the interviewer it often became difficult to pose questions such that she would

understand them. Questions and conversation were broken down as simply as possible as domestic workers sometimes had difficulty in understanding the questions and responding appropriately. Translators aided in transferring questions and answers between respondents and I, though the meaning was sometimes lost in translation. Domestic workers often responded monosyllabically to questions posed.

There was difficulty in domestic workers discussing their job. To the respondent, domestic work was a means of survival, not something to be scrutinized, therefore when I asked respondents questions they often took a while to respond. It may also have been embarrassing to talk about issues like their lack of education, or getting pregnant early as they did not want to be judged. A few also appeared to be ashamed about their parent's jobs because they were shy and uncomfortable when talking about it.

Related to the above, I initially had an interview schedule that served as a guide to the interview. After the first two interviews, I realized that the interview seemed too formal forcing me to change any questions into „themes' making the interviews more casual, relaxed and without disruption. Some questions that were integral to the research could not directly be asked, as they may have been sensitive, and therefore impact on the responses in some way. Sensitive questions, if asked at too early a stage may make domestic workers clam up. Conversation and themes tiptoed around these questions in an attempt to elicit the answers to these questions. (For example, it is difficult and too direct to simply ask - are you ashamed to wear the uniform?)

There were limitations relating to the timing of which interviews were to be carried out. The weather, when temperamental, was often to be blamed, because when it rained excessively, one of the domestic workers did not come to work and rescheduled. Another major problem was the time constraints because domestic workers would need to get back to work or because their employers had said so. Sometimes domestic workers got restless after about twenty minutes into the interview because they were afraid of being reprimanded by their employer.

Another problem was the researcher effect, despite knowing most of the employers and some, if not all, the domestic workers quite well. Shifting into the role of researcher and interviewer

sometimes created a formal barrier between us to some extent, even though both parties were casual (in terms of body language) it was for a purpose and responses were well thought out before being given. There is also an employee-employer effect, at times either party was around for the others interview and this may have impacted on responses to some extent.

Even though focus groups were better than the single interviews, a problem that recurred in both focus groups was that more often than not one or two respondents in the focus group would lead the discussion, and answer questions first. I even had one respondent trying to run the focus group to the extent that she often cut the other respondents off and imposed her opinion on others. Some of the quieter respondents often had to be prompted to speak through questions being directed at them.

Conclusion

Researching a group of women that are such a fundamental part of South African life was quite taxing given the hours of work and sometimes authoritative employers. Methodology centred on semi-structured interviews and individual interviews, as well as in focus groups.

Malvern, Hillary, Escombe and Northdene were the sites of research, with The Glen in Malvern being the primary site where majority of respondents were interviewed. Twenty-two individual interviews were carried out over a three month period, culminating in data about various aspects of domestic workers lives, most important of which were their perceptions of their bodies. Additional and secondary interviews were obtained from two focus groups with domestic workers and from interviews with employers of domestic worker, respectively.

Interviews and the consequent collection of data were a success and the few limitations (time constraints and language barriers) were overcome. Data was analysed according to social constructionist and semiotic theories in the understanding of construction of bodies, and in identifying symbols and their meanings.

Chapter 2:

Contextualizing the personal and social backgrounds of Madams and Eves[12]

Introduction

My purpose, within this section is to briefly focus upon the significance of the domestic workers' uniform as a behavioural script. According to social constructivism, people construct themselves and are constructed through social contexts. In this regard, the uniform becomes a behavioural script in the way it inscribes itself onto the body of the domestic worker. Domestic workers behave in a certain way when in uniform because of the construction of the category of domestic work.

When the uniform is on, the Black African female „becomes' a domestic worker and is under the direction of her employer – in this case, a woman of Indian origin, who is more powerful than her by virtue of being an employer. I assert here that the uniform is an expression of the power relations between the employer and employee. The uniform, as an outfit worn for the purposes of work, is a requirement and an imposition that distinguishes the employer from an employee. In colours, pattern and overall designs, the uniform is intended to suggest status and ethical

[12] This is a euphemistic reference to the Madam and Eve comics created by South African artists Francis, S; Dugmore, H and Rico (1998)

requirements in the process of work within the household. This chapter thus provides a glimpse into the domestic workers experiences of herself, in the uniform and in relation to her employer. It will involve an analysis and comparison with certain themes in Madam and Eve comics[13].

Most importantly, this study has been about the domestic worker and her employer. The most frequent and intimate interface that she has with people of a different background is with that of her employer as well as the employers' family. Before one can go any further in analysis on the domestic worker herself, it is important to be familiar with these women. In keeping with feminist anthropology, in order to firmly grasp an understanding of domestic workers perceptions of their lives, bodies and relationships with their employers, a contextualization of the domestic workers and their employers' lives are necessary.
Therefore, this chapter begins with detailed profiles of both domestic workers and employers (to provide a more comprehensive analysis), which are then juxtaposed and compared with one another. Aspects such as age, educational level, marital status and household composition are explained below. These profiles are intended to provide a glimpse into the lives of the domestic workers and employers interviewed.

Following on from these profiles, a brief analysis of the relationship between domestic worker and employer is given, as well as preference of type of uniform.

Domestic worker profiles:

Age of domestic workers

Table 2.1 below refers to ages of domestic workers within this study:

	Age	**Number of domestic workers**
1.	20-25	4
2.	26-30	6
3.	31-35	5
4.	36-40	4

[13] Francis et al (1998)

5.	41-50	3
Total		22

Table 2.1: Ages of domestic workers

During the colonial and apartheid periods, domestic work was carried out by African men, until women from the rural areas began to struggle with the decreasing sums of money that were sent home by their husbands in the urban areas. Therefore, during the early 1900's rural women began to migrate into the urban areas seeking employment to ensure the livelihoods of their families and thereby securing their positions within this sphere of employment (Keegan, 2001). These women were often middle aged (between thirty and forty years of age), as the younger women were either in school or were expected to care for the young and elderly.

The data in the table above reveals that the majority of domestic workers in the sample are between the ages of twenty and thirty-six years. Results from this study reveal that the young African matriculants were financially challenged and therefore could not pursue a tertiary qualification. These women had thus engaged in domestic employment as an „easy' alternative to support their dampening aspirations. The age range is broken down into five year age gaps to indicate the move of increasingly younger women (approximately twenty years of age) into domestic employment. Most other domestic workers (seventeen) had been introduced into domestic work at an early age to support (through paid employment) initially their natal homes (homes of orientation) and later their own homes and families (homes of procreation).

Natal homes

Despite this study being situated in Durban, South Africa, many domestic workers have migrated to Durban from other parts of South Africa, as well as from outside South Africa.

	Natal Area	**Number of domestic workers**
	South Africa	
1.	Durban	8
2.	Pietermaritzburg	4
3.	Eastern Cape	3
4.	Port Elizabeth	1
	International	
5.	Lesotho	3
6.	Zimbabwe	2
Total		22

Table2.2: Natal Area

According to the data in Table 2.2, the majority of domestic workers (twelve) were born in Kwa-Zulu Natal, with only one domestic worker born in Durban. Four other domestic workers were raised in Pietermaritzburg, while a further seven initially resided in areas distantly away from Durban[14].

The area in which each of the domestic workers lived often dictates the vernacular. Twelve domestic workers from the Durban and surrounding areas, including Pietermaritzburg, are first language Zulu speakers. The foreign respondents (five) in this study had a relatively good grasp of the English language.

Most respondents (sixteen) in this study were able to spend their childhoods with their parents, although often either one or both parents had to commute to urban areas for work. Due to this, the remaining six respondents from this sample were sent to live with their grandparents, while their parents' remittances supported them through school.

[14] These areas include Hammersdale, Umzinto, Port Shepstone, Umkomaas and Escort.

These women had moved from their natal homes for various reasons. The foreign domestic workers had found the situations in their home countries to be too difficult to sustain both themselves and their families, as one domestic worker stated "There was no peace in Zim, no job, no food, no medicine". The respondents within this study had therefore migrated to South Africa as a more promising option for employment.

Local domestic workers had often been unable to obtain a high school education, and had moved out of their natal homes in search of jobs to support themselves and often their growing families as well.

Educational background

Domestic workers education within this study is tabulated below:

	Level of education	**Number of respondents**
1.	None	2
2.	Primary school – Standard 1-5	4
3.	High School: Standard 6-7	8
	Standard 8-9	5
4.	Matric	1
5.	Tertiary/other skill development	2
Total		22

Table 2.3: Educational background

Most, if not all, of the domestic workers in the sample came from low socio-economic backgrounds, where their parents were often unable to finance their education. The data in Table 2.3 shows that eight women were able to obtain a Grade eight or nine high school education. A further five domestic workers had continued onto Grade ten or eleven, while one domestic worker from this sample had completed school (Grade twelve) and was on the path to securing a tertiary qualification. Despite the varying educational achievements, or lack of any school education as in the case of two respondents, all of these women were domestic workers at the time that this study had been carried out.

Engagement in domestic employment should not be divorced from level of educational achievement, however according to the data in Table 2.3, three women had completed high school (up to the twelfth grade) and a further two had engaged in tertiary education only to a limited extent. Therefore, it should not be assumed that all women who engage in domestic work do so due to lack of skills or education. The three women who had completed their Matric had become domestic workers because of the unavailability of other forms of employment more suited to their qualifications. These women unanimously argued that the employment sector within South Africa is poorly structured and underdeveloped. The domestic workers therefore had no alternative but to engage in domestic work to support their children until they were able to secure more formal and better paying jobs. These respondents continued to romanticize about securing better types of employment.

The remaining (nineteen) domestic workers in the sample had engaged in this form of employment as a final alternative. Their lack of educational achievement was expressed with an air of regret, as twelve of the respondents were unable to complete their education due to financial restraints faced by their parents. A further two fell pregnant before completing school and engaged in domestic work to support their children without having the choice of returning to school. Two respondents were not able to attend school – one because of familial responsibility as she was the eldest sibling in the family, and another because her family was poverty stricken and could not afford it. The respondents in the study have all had aspirations during their years at school, but for most of the respondents (nineteen) achieving these became impossible since they had families to support and their children's aspirations to nurture.

Other types of employment

	Types of employment	Number of domestic workers
1.	Only domestic work	8
2.	Waitressing	2
3.	Farm work	2
4.	Factory work	6
5.	Selling of goods	2
6.	Care for the elderly	2
Total		22

Table 2.4: Types of employment of domestic workers

The respondents in this sample were obliged by circumstances to enter into employment at a young age, often when they had stopped school. The results displayed in Table 2.4 show that many respondents had always engaged in domestic work, but the majority within this sample (fourteen) had attempted to engage in other types of employment before entering into domestic work. Twelve out of the twenty-two respondents had only engaged in one other form of employment before entering domestic work. One domestic worker engaged in two other forms of employment, that is to say, both elderly care and factory work, and another respondent worked in sales, the factory as well as hairdressing before delving into domestic work.

Reasons for leaving

There are various reasons why domestic workers did not remain in other forms of employment. Data derived from interviews indicates that most respondents (four) left their job because of remuneration. The three domestic workers that worked in factories, in these cases shoe factories and paint factories had said that the conditions within these factories proved hazardous to their health and therefore they had opted to leave this type of employment. Three respondents within this study had to leave other types of employment and thus entered domestic work because the temporary nature of contract work was difficult to sustain their families over long periods. Domestic workers (three) that had engaged in factory work and farm work found that the conditions were often debilitating to their bodies and therefore chose to leave this type of employment. Domestic work proved to be a better option for respondents in terms of pay and

hours of work, especially since these women often have children to support without the additional help from fathers of their children.

Marital Status

	Marital status	**Number of respondents**
1.	Single	16
2.	Engaged	1
3.	Married	2
4.	Divorced	2
5.	Widowed	1
Total		22

Table 2.5: Marital Status

African marriage, prior to the advent of colonialism and later apartheid, was synonymous with celebration as well as the union and extension of families. Zulu speaking people in the past traditionally practised polygamy (where a man may marry more than one woman), and marriage occurred across families[15]. With time this has changed and currently within South Africa, the nuclear family has become a „norm' of sorts amongst middle to upper class families, this has occurred especially since polygamy is covertly considered to be taboo amongst society. (Benedict, 2008)

The table above indicates that the largest percentage of women in this study, were single. „Single' within the context of this study refers to those women who had never been, were not planning to, and were not already married. Referring to these women as single does not intimate that they were not engaged in some form of romantic relationship since more than half of these women (sixteen) had a boyfriend. Two respondents were married with a further two divorced, and the last two out of the sample of twenty-two were either engaged or widowed.

The institution of marriage was not mentioned as a priority during the process of interviews, especially when pitted against the provision of basic needs and support of their families. Those

[15] Meaning that entire families were involved in the marriage, creating a large extended family unit

who were married spoke of their husbands dismissively since their primary responsibility and concern was for their children. This concern was supported and voiced by the other domestic workers with children, and Table 2.6 below displays those respondents with children.

Offspring of respondents

	Number of children	**Number of respondents**
1.	0	2
2.	1	7
3.	2	7
4.	3	4
5.	4	-
6.	5	1
7.	6	1
Total:		22

Table 2.6: Number of children

Table 2.6 above demonstrates that twenty respondents out of the sample of twenty-two had children. The majority (fourteen) of these twenty respondents had either one (seven respondents) or two children (a further seven respondents).

All of these women have posited that their primary reasons for both entering domestic employment and for remaining domestic workers was due to them their minimal educational achievements, lack of employment opportunities and most importantly, the responsibility of supporting their children. This should not lead to the presumption that these women were dissatisfied with being mothers. Rather, they were united in their intent to protect and support their children's education and aspirations.

None of the respondents in the Table above had expressed regret at having falling pregnant even though more than half (twelve to thirteen) of these domestic workers had unplanned pregnancies, and especially since they did not immediately have the means to support their children. As mentioned above, two domestic workers fell pregnant during high school and subsequently left school to support their children.

Every respondent in this sample mentioned the invaluability of education for their children. Each of these mothers had said that they would continue to work because their child's education and future depended on their income. However, many domestic workers had stated that "I don't want my children to be like me, a domestic. They must have a good job".

Many of these respondents had to live far away from their immediate families in order to sustain their jobs. The household composition, often not structured on that of a nuclear family, is reflected in Table 2.7 below.

Household composition

	Type of composition	Number of respondents
1.	Live-in (at work)	5
2.	With children, but without partners	8
3.	Nuclear family	1
4.	Alone	3
5.	Family or friends	4
6.	Children and friend	1
Total:		22

Table 2.7: House composition

The nuclear family is the basic composition within most homes for families of (South African) Indian origin[16]. It is clear that most (twenty-one) of the sample besides one did not enjoy the

[16] This does not exclude other race groups within South Africa

privilege of living in a conventional nuclear household unit. This is also based on the fact that twenty of the respondents were unmarried.

Five of the respondents lived-in[17] with their employers and spent weekends with their families. Of the twenty respondents with children, only eight lived with their children full time. The rest of the sample either lived alone (three), with family or friends (four) or with children and a friend (one).

Employer profiles:

Ages of employers

	Age range	**Number of employers**
1.	20-25	2
2.	26-30	1
3.	31-35	1
4.	36-40	2
5.	41-45	1
6.	46-50	3
Total:		10

Table 2.8: Age ranges of employers

[17] Domestic workers that are regarded as 'live-in' reside on their employers residence

The information displayed in Table 2.8, the ages of employers, is only tangential to the crux of the study. This and other biographical details of employers are intended as part of a holistic exercise with the secondary sample of women (employers) who were interviewed for this study.

According to the table above, the majority of employers fell between thirty-six and fifty years of age, and overall, the age range of the ten employers was from twenty four to forty-eight years of age. The age range within this Table (2.8) is in five year gaps to indicate that younger women (twenty to twenty-five) were beginning to employ domestic workers. Further to this it provides a comparative framework against the age groups of domestic workers interviewed, where young women were engaging in domestic work at younger ages (twenty to twenty-five).

There is a societal expectation within the Indian community that Indian women should be domesticated from a young age. Given this expectation, these young women are taught from as early as possible to clean up after themselves, and by the time they have completed school, they should be fully skilled at all domestic chores (Freund, 1991). The employment of domestic helpers by Indian women is a recent phenomenon. Indian women were becoming increasingly career orientated and required the extra help to take care of domestic chores and sometimes to care for their children, as often both parents would be working.

Marital Status

Table 2.9 below displays the marital status of employers:

	Marital Status	**Number of respondents**
1.	Single, living alone	1
2.	Engaged, living with partner	1
3.	Married	8
Total:		10

Table 2.9: Marital status of employers

Given the data displayed in Table 2.9, eight out of the ten respondents in this secondary sample were married (at the time of the study), with a further one engaged and the remaining respondent had no current plans for marriage.

It is a traditional expectation and norm within Indian homes that women marry at a young age (approximately twenty years of age), especially since these women were often not permitted to leave the natal home and live alone. This expectation has extended over the years within South African Indian homes, and in keeping with the modern trend of women becoming more career orientated, the age of marriage is often deferred, giving priority to education and employment (Freund, 1991).

Marriage had been mentioned as a priority for the women of the secondary sample but once they were settled in their marriage, and later had children, they often returned to advancing their careers. Therefore domestic workers were often required to aid these women in ensuring that the domestic sphere of the home was taken care of.

Number of children

The table below displays the number of children that employers have:

	Number of children	Number of employers
1.	None	2
2.	1	2
3.	2	5
4.	3	1
Total:		10

Table 2.10: Children of employers

Table 2.10 above displays the number of offspring of employers within this sample. Most of these women (five) had a pair of children, while two respondents that were unmarried have no children, one respondent had three, and a further two employers had one child each. These

children often entailed further job responsibilities for the domestic workers, in terms of post-natal care and after-school care.

Producing children after marriage is regarded as a natural progression for Indian women. Historically, and traditionally, Indian women were married when they were of child bearing age, often before they completed school. Presently, despite this traditional role expectation remaining to a large extent, Indian women's primary concern and responsibility is no longer the domestic sphere. This responsibility has been passed on to paid employees in the majority[18] of middle class to upper class homes in South Africa.

In comparison with domestic workers, Indian employers mentioned that their children's education and future were important, but where domestic workers continuously worry and prepare for it, the provision for employers children's future was often guaranteed. These women therefore continued with their career aspirations and did not have to subjugate these to be full time mothers, as was the traditional role expectation; rather they relied on their older generation, crèches and sometimes on domestic workers who also played the role of nannies. Since their children's education was not necessarily a troublesome aspect, the advancement of their careers had often taken centre stage.

Educational levels

	Level of education	Number of respondents
1.	Matric	5
2.	Tertiary level	5
Total:		10

Table 2.11: Education levels of Indian employers

Table 2.11 above displays that an equal number of respondents in the secondary sample had received either a high school education or a tertiary qualification.

[18] This 'majority' is with reference purely to the results of this research

Up until the early 1980's, education for Indian women was not considered important or necessary. The five women in Table 2.11 above that had completed their Matric, but had not studied further, fall within the higher spectrum of the age range given for this sample. For these five women, the dual interaction of financial constraints coupled with the patriarchal notion that Indian women belong in the home, had resulted in completion of high school, without the possibility of pursuing further education.

The younger five respondents out of the sample had a tertiary qualification. Being career women was not a primary objective but whether these women were career orientated or not, the importance of securing employment, to sustain the needs of their families, resonated in the responses of these women.

Employment

	Type of employment	**Number of respondents**
1.	Administrative/secretarial	3
2.	Accounting	1
3.	Human Resource	2
4.	Psychology	1
5.	Unemployed	3
Total:		10

Table 2.12: Employment of Indian respondents

The respondents within the secondary sample maintained that a ‚good' job – one that paid well, and challenged them often – was of utmost importance. Unlike domestic workers (within this study), who found it difficult to secure better paying employment, Indian employers were adamant about being financially secure in a formal job suited to their educational level and experience.

According to the results in Table 2.12, three respondents are unemployed, while the remaining seven engaged in Administrative/secretarial jobs (3), as well as jobs in the accounting (1), human resource (2) and psychology (1) fields at the time of the study.

Four of the respondents that had obtained a tertiary qualification were in accounting, human resource and psychology fields. The remaining respondent out of the five worked in the administration field. The women stated that they would not work in any field below those which they are qualified for, unless that employment offers better remuneration. Even those women that were unemployed support this; since one of these women had been unfairly dismissed and could not secure employment related to her work experience. Another was unable to find a „good paying job at her age', and the last respondent believed that since her husband was able to provide comfortably for their family, it was unnecessary for her to work in low paid employment (as she did not have the qualification for better employment). Therefore, securing good employment was thought of as necessary and important to ensure a good life and home.

Employer's household composition

	Number of members	**Number of respondents**
1.	4 adults and child/ren	1
2.	3 adults and child/ren	3
3.	2 adults and child/ren	4
4.	Alone	2
Total:		10

Table 2.13: Household composition within employers' homes

The data in Table 2.13 indicates that, in direct contrast with domestic workers, the majority (eight) of the employers lived with their nuclear family which includes the husband and children, and in four cases, with the extended family (parents or in-laws). The married respondents (eight) within this group lived with their families and the two that lived alone were unmarried. It is evident that, unlike domestic workers, these respondents did not have to live apart from their families for their work.

The relationship between Madams and Maids:

Knowledge of basic biographical details and background

Indian employers and their domestic workers interacted, at least, on a weekly basis. The type of relationship they had depended upon the regularity of work and the personalities of both these individuals, it is a common interaction based on how much each party wanted to know about the other, as well as how much they wanted to reveal about themselves. Given that this study primarily revolves around the domestic worker Table 2.14 below displays how knowledgeable the employer was about the domestic worker's life.

	Information known	**Number of employers**
1.	Some basic biographical information only	2
2.	Basic biographical information, residence and family	5
3.	All of the above, and hobbies, other jobs, food preferences	3
Total:		10

Table 2.14: Amount of information known by employer

The amount of information that the employer had accumulated about the domestic worker indicates their level of interaction. According to Table 2.14 above, five employers knew the

basic biographical details of their domestic workers. Two of these employers were housewives. They mentioned that they preferred to keep conversation to tea and lunch times, when the domestic worker was not under their supervision. The two employers that knew only basic biographical information about the domestic worker, such as their names, found that it was difficult to communicate with the domestic workers for two separate reasons. One employer mentioned that her domestic worker was not fluent in English, and since the employer was familiar with very basic Zulu, engaging in conversation was deemed to be awkward and almost impossible. The other employer stated that her domestic worker was distant and therefore she preferred not to engage in conversation.

The employers who were not entirely familiar with their domestic workers found that they felt awkward to ask many questions on the basis of coming across as inquisitive and probing. Additionally, the employers believed that there was a need to establish authority, and this could not be done if one was too familiar with their employee. Most often the employer dictated hours of work, including tea and lunch breaks and often provided leftovers for lunch. Authority was established through such rigidity and structure imposed by the employer.

The three employers that were familiar with their domestic workers disagreed with this. They argued for creating and fostering an informal and casual atmosphere that breeds trust between employer and employee. Two of these employers worked and they mentioned that a prerequisite for employing a domestic worker lies with friendliness and trustworthiness, therefore fully acquainting oneself with the domestic worker was necessary.

Preference of uniform type

Within the context of this study, the uniform is categorized as a disciplinary mechanism (where the uniform „restricts' the domestic workers behaviour), and the relationship between domestic worker and „madam' is negotiated through the use of the uniform.

There are various „types' of uniform. A domestic worker may wear old clothes[19] that function as a uniform since it is constantly worn to carry out her work. Domestic workers also wear a ladies overall, which is similar to a thin overcoat, or she may wear a store bought uniform[20]. The types of uniforms worn by the domestic workers, in this study, are displayed in Table 2.15 below:

	Type of uniform	**Number of employers**	**Number of domestic workers**
1.	Anything	6	1
2.	Old clothes	1	5
3.	Ladies overalls	1	2
4.	Store bought uniform	2	14
		10	22

Table 2.15: Preference of type of uniform for both employers and domestic workers

Table 2.15 above indicates a disproportionate relationship between preferences that employers had for the type of uniform worn compared to the preferences of domestic workers. The employers (six) that mentioned that their domestic workers were at liberty to wear anything added that „anything' should be within boundaries. „Anything' further entails comfort, because comfort results in efficiency and an accomplishment of tasks. One of these six employees mentioned that,

I am not fussy about what she should wear, nor do I insist that she should wear a uniform. She comes to work smartly dressed with skirts and shirts. I don't like her wearing those clothes and doing her work because I don't think it's appropriate to do domestic chores with such clothes. If she wants to wear anything else such as old clothes or an over-coat, it's absolutely fine.[21]

This indicates that the domestic worker could wear „anything' within the limits set by the employer, for example, pants, t-shirts or overalls, and these were often provided by the employer.

[19] This includes trackpants, old jeans, baggy t-shirts
[20] This includes a dress (button down), apron and doek
[21] All quotes from respondents are in italics

In relation to domestic workers preference, data in Table 2.15 strongly indicates that domestic workers preferred a store bought uniform over other types of work clothes. A few (five) preferred their old clothes, or ladies overalls (two), but the majority (fourteen) preferred the store bought uniform. These respondents preferred the uniform because it was cool, comfortable and appropriate for work. Unlike their middle class employers, domestic workers did not have an array of old clothes. They preferred to wear a uniform that was provided by the employers, and if it got torn or worn out, there was an expectation expressed by the respondents, that their employers would replace it.

The uniform is the single most pivotal aspect of this project. The uniform ascribes (labels, gives meaning to) the body of the woman as a domestic worker. Social constructionist theories indicate that the body of a woman is constructed through the use of the uniform and she is therefore categorized as a domestic worker. The woman, in the dress of a domestic worker, becomes subordinate to her employer. There exists a constant underlying „battle' between „Madam and Eve' in terms of the type of the uniform worn and negotiation over the type of uniform used is non-existent in most of these cases. Domestic workers were often afraid to make their preferences known since the relationship between employer and domestic worker was often perceived to be unequal.

Classification of the relationship: „Madams and Eves'

The relationship between domestic worker and employer is always a complex one. Not much is known about the relationship since it is carried out within the private domain of the employer's home, and yet domestic employment had formed a controversial and integral part of South African history. Domestic employment is a recent phenomenon brought into South African homes with the advent of colonialism and later perpetuated by apartheid, thus the ideology behind employment of a „social inferior' to carry out domestic chores, is a Western one (Nyamnjoh, 2006:119).

Generally, research within South Africa has been carried out between White (European) employers and Black domestic workers (Cock 1980, 1981; Anderson, 2001 and Gaitskell et al, 1983). Capitalizing on this Francis et al (1998) branded a „Madam and Eve' comic which

chronicles the relationship between a White employer and Black domestic worker. Although these comics are filled with satire and humour, the cartoons serve to parody social relationships between employer and domestic worker extremely well. The relationship between Madam and Eve seems to be easy going (refer to Appendix A as an example) but there are crucial underlying elements that connote power struggles and hierarchical racial and socio economic barriers. Referring to the comic in Appendix A, it is evident that after many years of service, Madam does not know Eves surname. There is also a formality with which Eve refers to her employer as Madam, and either decides herself to call her that, or being told to do so. Lastly, the main aspect in the comic (Appendix A) is maintenance of hierarchy, because even though the power (im)balance has been momentarily tipped in favour of Eve, in the last few frames Madam reasserts her authority.

These aspects, and others, were apparent between the employers and domestic workers in this study. On the outside, explicitly, employers declared a fair, easy going and friendly relationship with their domestic workers. Although, two employers had stated that their relationships with their domestic workers were formal and distant, and this was preferred over familiarity since the domestic worker would be less likely to neglect her work.

Domestic workers had often stated that they were „friendly and open' with employers, yet more than half the sample (sixteen) did not refer to their employer by name, rather they called employers Madam, missus, aunty or maam, because they „feel shy' to call her name, even if their employer did not mind.

There was an explicit and implicit relationship in existence. This relationship is illustrated in the case study (1) below:

An employer, Sue, stated that her domestic worker and she had an "easy going relationship" and that "we get along well". Her domestic worker, Ritabile, called Sue by her name, and also mentioned that they have a good relationship. This is considered to be the explicit relationship, described by the individual parties that constitute the relationship. During the course of an interview with the Ritabile, when Sue was present, the atmosphere between them was tense and

awkward, indicating a direct contrast to the one that they had been described. Sue and Ritabile were formal and distant with one another beneath the facade of familiarity and friendliness toward one another.

This facade is an indication of the complexities and injustices of the past that have perpetuated into our present lives, both employer and domestic workers want to be happy and friendly with each other, but this is not always possible. Implicitly, within their relationship, a hierarchy exists where the employer has the authority especially since the domestic worker refers to her employer as Madam or Missus, further crystallizing this asymmetry.

Within the context of this study, the relationships between employer and domestic worker had marked differences to those in the 1800's and early 1900's, because here there is an air of civility, where an effort is being made to be friendly with one another, most importantly, there are no signs of the types of emotional, physical and sexual abuse that was in existence during colonial and apartheid eras (Cock, 1980). Domestic workers mentioned that they would like to be friendly with employers but, when in uniform, they felt shy and believed that they had to be quiet and compliant. Therefore the uniform tends to function as a behavioural script where the domestic worker believes that she has to behave in certain ways and in accordance with her employer's instructions. Domestic workers also mentioned the „freedom' they felt when out of uniform, stating that they felt more like social equals to their employers.

Domestic employment has increased monumentally over the past few decades within South Africa as more middle to upper class housewives have joined the workforce and therefore require help with domestic chores. The relationship between domestic worker and employer is one of convenience and necessity. It is convenient for those Indian women who have careers and find it difficult to be a housewife and working mother, and on the other hand this type of relationship is created out of necessity for the domestic worker, who after trying and failing at other forms of employment, relies on this job to support herself and her families.

Conclusion:

This chapter has given an overview of the lives of both domestic workers and employers in the form of profiles. These profiles included aspects of their lives such as age, educational levels,

employment, marital status, number of children as well as household composition. The data from interviews were tabulated and analysed briefly in each of these cases.

Domestic worker profiles focuses mainly on biographical information, with Tables 2.1-2.3 displaying relative ages, natal backgrounds and educational levels. Other data on domestic workers involves their families in terms of marital status (Table 2.4), offspring (Table 2.5) and household composition (Table 2.6).

In terms of employers, the most important data revolved around their educational levels and types of profession, which are displayed in Tables 2.11 and 2.12 respectively. Additional data on biographical backgrounds such as age (Table 2.8), family life (Table 2.9 and 2.10) as well as household composition (Table 2.13), is also provided.

These profiles were explored as a holistic background to this project, it assisted in a deeper understanding of the lives of domestic workers and their relationship with employers. The relationship was analyzed in the following format: firstly employers knowledge of domestic workers backgrounds was explored showing that employers are not entirely familiar with the lives of their employees. Secondly, the preference over the type of uniform was investigated, and results indicate that often domestic workers preferred the uniform, but these preferences are unknown since they did not voice it, and their employer did not have an interest in it. Lastly, given the information displayed in the preceding section, the relationship between domestic worker and employer was analyzed briefly, and elements of civility, power asymmetry and the uniform as a barrier between these women have become evident.

Dressing for the public: Domestic worker's 'imagined status'

Introduction

This chapter is about the domestic worker's perception of herself and, more specifically, her body with regard to the types of clothes she prefers. Domestic workers within this study have worn „uniforms' to carry out their work. This is the crux of the study since it is important to understand how the domestic worker perceives herself when wearing an older set of clothes, or a uniform doing work, as well as outside her work environment. This project served to illuminate another aspect of the domestic worker, as a woman who enjoys „dressing up'[22].

Domestic work is an established form of employment within South Africa as well as most parts of the world, such as in the Philippines (Lan, 2003), England (Lutz, 2002) and San Diego (Mattingly, 2001). As a result, there have been various studies carried out in this area ranging from houseboys as domestic workers (Martens, 2002) to recent legislation on domestic work

[22] This is in reference to the domestic worker donning smart, casual clothes to travel to and from work

(Grant, 1997). It is evident though, from these studies that there is an absence of information on the domestic worker as a woman, that is to say, studies often focus on issues such as remuneration, exploitation and legislation.

The notion of perception is closely tied to notions of social construction of the body which inevitably contributes to the domestic workers consciousness of her identity[23]. The social constructivist perspective delineates the significance of body image in this study. “The central assumption of this paradigm is that reality is socially constructed, that individuals develop subjective meanings of their own personal experience, and that this gives way to multiple meanings”(Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008: 9).

According to this theory, there is no set objective reality, rather it is subjective and given meaning by people within it. Social constructivism has its roots in phenomenology, the main aim of which is to explore how people experience phenomena in their social worlds. “Experience is perceived along a variety of dimensions: How the experience is lived in time and space and vis-à-vis our relationship to others as well as to bodily experience” (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006: 24).

Domestic workers may experience their bodies in a particular way in different spaces and in relation to different people. It is important to understand these experiences in order to obtain some understanding of why the domestic workers felt the need to „dress up’. Results from the study which are elaborated upon in this section, indicate the stigma associated with the uniform, and the ability to „fit in’ with the crowd, and feel good about herself when the domestic worker has shed her uniform once work has ended for the day.

Dressing in „normal’ civilian clothes before and after work, and wearing the uniform induces a dual identity among domestic workers. During interviews, domestic workers had often mentioned that they felt like two different people in these two sets of clothes. On the one hand, she was an individual – a woman with a family, a home, a job, and on the other hand she was a

[23] Awareness of the self within the context of this study relates to ones identity being closely tied to the construction and perception of the body and the importance of how interpersonal interaction influences this construction.

domestic worker wearing a uniform. Commencement of work signals a transition from domestic worker to the woman behind the uniform, emerging to fit in with society. The „incognito effect'[24] of this allowed the domestic worker to adorn herself in clothes that she deemed admirable thereby ascribing to herself an „imagined status'. The „imagined status' refers to the perception and belief that the respondents had about the high status that was attributed to them wearing smart clothes, as opposed to their feelings of inferiority when in uniform. Dress and the uniform serve as symbols that transmit meanings about a person to the public.

Domestic work was seen by the domestic worker as, not only a lowly paid job, but as an inglorious type of employment that was almost reluctantly entered into as a means of earning a living, as domestic workers did not often like to talk openly about the type of work they do. Additionally, the uniform is inherently linked to this job such that once the woman wears the uniform, overalls or older set of clothes she is immediately identified as a domestic worker. Contrary to this, the domestic worker enjoyed, and preferred wearing her own clothes, and being seen as an „ordinary'[25] member of society.

These issues are explored below using a semiotic and social constructionist approach, and are situated around the significant issue of commuting. This is especially important since, the respondents interviewed travelled via public transport to and from work and were adamant about the inappropriateness of wearing a uniform to travel. This chapter discusses this issue through the views of: live-in domestic workers, those that commuted daily and the domestic workers who made up the two focus groups carried out. Each of the sections will demonstrate significant overlaps in what domestic workers thought about adorning themselves with the clothes that they considered „smart' as opposed to wearing either the uniform or older clothes to work. In each of these instances, the images that domestic workers talked about varied so widely that they effectively saw themselves in two different perspectives, almost inferring dual identities for themselves. However, irrespective of their modes of transport to work (taxi, bus, train or on foot), presentation of themselves in public was of utmost significance to them.

[24] Indicating an ability to blend in with other people in public, without being singled out and identified as a domestic worker
[25] Terms such as 'normal' and 'ordinary' are based on the perception of domestic workers, and are therefore placed in quotation marks based on their ambiguous nature.

Dressing to travel and dressed to impress

A significant feature within domestic employment, one that has often been played down in most studies (Mendez 1998, Pape 1993), is that of commuting. For the purposes of this project, commuting has become prominent and pivotal to understanding the notion behind the domestic workers need to dress up.

The live-in domestic workers:

The live-in domestic workers (5) within this sample either travelled to and from work once monthly (4 respondents) or once weekly (one respondent). These domestic workers lived on their employer's property because of the convenience, as travel costs and distance would have been immense. Their weekly or monthly return home, or to family nearby held a sense of occasion for them as Monday mornings they often awoke early to prepare themselves for the day.

Case Study 2:

Dumi, a twenty-four year old live-in domestic worker often woke at four on a Monday morning to prepare herself for the nearly two hour journey to her place of employment in Malvern. Dumi spent the weekends with her daughter, who lived with her aunt during the week. This respondent mentioned that she often woke early to iron clothes which she would wear to travel to work that day.

Dumi, like the other respondents, commuted to work via public transportation. Data displayed in Table 3.1 above indicates that the taxi was the preferred type of transportation for the live-in domestic workers.

Category	Beatrice	Dumi	Penny	Petronella	Thembi
Bus					
Taxi	1		3	1	4
Train		2			

Table 3.2: Category of public transportation

Given the large distances between the place of employment and residence, three of the respondents had to travel on more than one train or taxi. Each of the figures in the columns above indicates the number of taxis or trains that each of the live-in respondents had to take to reach their place of work. Taxis are noted to be the quickest form of transport, with buses, then trains being the preferred form of transport, forming a hierarchy in preference of travel. Penny and Thembi had to take more than one taxi to get to work compared to the other respondents, and yet have never complained about the stress associated with travel.

Case Study 3:

Thembi (forty) resides with her employer, in an outhouse, in Malvern. She would visit her family in Pietermaritzburg, leaving on a Friday afternoon, and returning on a Monday morning. She would wake at four in the morning and leave home at "five-thirty, then I get there at eleven o'clock. I take four taxis. I come alone, but there lot ladies in the taxi, I put nice clothes and come."

The domestic workers interviewed emphasized that they carefully ironed and dressed themselves in smart, casual clothes meant to impress others, and more importantly, themselves. The five live-in respondents dressed in this way on the morning that they were to travel to work from their homes, as well as from their place of work to their homes. They „dressed up to look nice' in the taxi or train and once they arrived at work, they changed into their uniforms and commenced with their work. Therefore, travelling became an occasion for them, making it a worthy phenomenon for analysis.

Public perception and social stigma

Women often have an unconscious concern for their appearance. This concern was originally a Western phenomenon that has spread around the world via global networks and technologies. Women's concern for their appearance is often a result of a willingness to keep healthy, as well as to look good in public. Often this desire to impress others leads to a shift in identity, where one may „pretend' to be something else, that is to say, a woman may construct another self, one that she perceives appropriate for public „viewing'.

The live-in respondents interviewed for this research project, were unable to imagine themselves wearing their uniforms in public. They believed that they were obliged to conform to „western' notions of beauty or what is presented as fashionable by major retail chain stores such as Mr Price, Jet and Edgars. Often, the respondents mentioned that they enjoyed following the world of fashion. Although, not always able to afford it, they took advantage of store credits, to purchase „good quality' clothes for their families, as well as themselves.

The live-in domestic workers thought of these clothes as a consolation prize, given that it often took months to pay off their credit. Clothes served as status markers for the women where, despite their low socio-economic standing, their clothes gave them a sense of pride that elevated them from their perceived (low) position within society and gave them a higher, admirable „imagined statuses'. This sense of pride, and aspiration for acceptance indicated how conscious the domestic workers are of their bodies. The construction of their bodies (how they view their own bodies) was intrinsically linked to the clothes they wear. This then linked to their identity and how they perceive themselves as individuals, since they categorized themselves on the basis of what they wore. Most importantly, the „construction' of their bodies and selves was social, since they depended on social acceptance of what they wore and who they are.

The domestic workers believed that the uniform was an antithesis to social acceptance. According to them, they could not „fit in' with the strangers that they travelled with. There was a perceived stigmatization by members of the public if one was not dressed appropriately. According to respondents, the public could infer ones job from the type of clothes worn, therefore the „imagined status' attributed to their smart clothes allowed them to distance themselves from the domestic worker category of employment. Members of public included, not only, strangers on the taxi or train, but also people that the domestic workers were familiar with, such as family, friends and other domestic workers that were travelling companions.

This was further illuminated by the responses to a hypothetical situation I had placed domestic workers in during interviews. Respondents were asked if they had finished work late one day, it was raining, a member of their family urgently required their assistance, and if they did not hurry, they would not get transportation home, would they wear the uniform on the train or taxi

to travel home. The unanimous response to this was negative. The respondents expressed chagrin when even imagining it, as wearing a uniform home made them easily identifiable as domestic workers. As one respondent stated „*The uniform is look funny. All can see I'm working housework, how I can wear it? Everyone else got nice job'.*

The statement above suggests two things. Firstly, there is an element of shame and stigma attached to the uniform by the domestic worker herself, deeming it inappropriate for public use. The uniforms source of shame is domestic work or „housework' as the respondent calls it. Importantly, the perceived stigmatization of the uniform is linked to the perceived stigmatization of domestic work as a form of employment. Respondents interviewed were involved in domestic work as a last resort, and in an effort to support them and their families. It was not the type of employment that they would have entered into had they a choice. According to the live-in domestic workers, they consequently felt inferior to other people given their low paying jobs. Despite this, four of the five domestic workers mentioned that they were not ashamed of what they do (while one respondent expressed shame in relation to revealing her line of work to people), their families and friends are aware of their jobs, and if asked by strangers, they „*won't feel shy to tell I'm a domestic*'. Therefore, it is evident that domestic workers were able to acknowledge the work they were involved in, but they did not want to be identified by others as a domestic worker. Secondly, the respondent had mentioned „*everyone else got a nice job'*. By observing the „nice' clothes of other taxi commuters, she actually deduced that they all had „nice jobs'. Hence, wearing nice clothes, by inference, allowed her a degree of status, the elusive „imaginary status', albeit false.

The domestic workers within this study were wary of public perception as they did not want to be judged and as one respondent stated that she did not want people to „*look down on you, you a maid*[26]*'*. The receipt of acknowledgement by others of the respondent as a domestic worker fuels the social stigma of being a domestic worker in uniform. There is a stigma, and therefore a fear of being labelled as a domestic worker, and being considered an actual outcast because everyone else would be „*all wearing nice clothes'*.

[26] this is a colloquial reference to a domestic worker

Domestic workers preferred to travel in their smart-casual clothes because they felt more comfortable. One domestic worker mentioned that she would not wear her old clothes (uniform) in public because „*there are two different types of clothes, old clothes is for doing work'*. This was the obvious reason that most domestic workers had given for not wearing their uniform in public – it is for work, it's torn, smelly and dirty. But when asked if they were to be given a new uniform to wear in public, all respondents refused.

Case Study 4:

Penny (21), the youngest respondent in the sample, was a recent high school graduate. Penny's family lived in Folweni and she would take three taxis to visit them. She often wore old clothes as a uniform to do her work, but would "*always wear something nice"*, *like skirts and a fashionable top, to travel. Penny chose not to wear her uniform in public because she was afraid that other people would "complain" and think that she was poor. She also mentioned that people may say that she is too young to be a domestic worker. Therefore, Penny preferred to „dress up' to allow people to think* "*everything's ok with me"*.

All of the live-in respondents would „dress up' because they felt that people would then not concern themselves too much with them, apart from thinking that they are „*good, nice'* people. Overall, their smart-casual jeans, or skirts, boots or sandals, allowed the domestic workers a sense of comfort and confidence in themselves. It allowed them to „*feel good'*, and they then perceived themselves as they believed others perceived them – as happy, successful people.

Negativity and the uniform: the daily commuters

The majority of domestic workers (seventeen) interviewed for this study commuted daily to work. Daily travel often involved rising at dawn to get their children ready, to carry out basic household chores and most importantly, to cater to their appearance. Smart-casual clothes, well oiled hair and a squirt of perfume ensured that domestic workers were ready to make their journey, via bus, taxi or train to work.

Travelling by taxi

Respondents had walked to the taxi rank daily, a distance of up to two kilometres. They sometimes met other domestic workers that they were familiar with and made the journey with

them. Domestic workers found that everyone looked their best in the taxi. They believed that they also had to live up to this „expectation'. It was an expectation to them because there seemed to exist an unwritten rule about dressing up to travel, as displayed in the quote below:

"I am coming in the taxi, and the people will see me in the taxi, you can't just wear anything and come in the morning, I will wear the skirt and blouse and come in the morning, then I will change and put my overalls, then before I go home, I will wipe myself put perfume and put my same clothes I came with and then go."

The taxi is a comparatively more expensive mode of transport, but it is also the speediest. Four of the seventeen daily commuters travelled daily by taxi. Respondents had short distances to travel to work, with three of them having travelled for thirty minutes and one for an hour and a half, therefore the taxi was the preferred form of transportation.

Their view of the taxi is that they are *„loud and fast'*. Three of the respondents lived in the Burlington (South Durban) area, and another near Marianhill (Pinetown), they mentioned that the taxi rank was much closer to them and the taxi took them closer to their work. The taxi rank had an atmosphere of bustling energy, and although it provided a common meeting place for family and friends, respondents mostly travelled with smartly dressed strangers.

However, the taxi rank was described by the commuters as *„dirty, smelling and overcrowded'.* Commuters had to withstand illegal tactics and manoeuvres performed by taxi drivers, as well as speeding, coupled with extremely loud music. Despite these negative aspects, respondents were often forced to travel by taxi due to time constraints and at times bad weather.

There was an importance surrounding being observed. Domestic workers interviewed travelled directly to work and back home, therefore „dressing up' was simply for the purposes of travelling. Once a domestic worker got to work, she would undress and put on her uniform, or her old clothes that functioned as a uniform. Once their work was complete, she would change back into her smart clothes to return home. The domestic worker often wore smart jeans or skirts, a blouse and high heels.

When asked if they would wear their uniform in public all respondents responded - „*No, I won't because all the people will see me and they will laugh.'* There is an inherent fear of being spurned by members of public. The uniform provided a negative public perception. The domestic workers had not gone out in public whilst wearing the uniform and the mere thought of doing it terrified them. They fear of being singled out in a crowd and being ridiculed made them wary, as one respondent stated that people - „they'll *think I'm some ruffian'.* Perceptions of negativity abounded. Most domestic workers mentioned that people will think that they are uneducated, ignorant and perhaps crazy. As one domestic worker claimed „*they must be thinking that I am mad, why I am wearing so dirty and untidy.'* Respondents tried to avoid judgement by others, because people in the taxi may have behaved condescendingly toward them had they worn their „*dirty and untidy'* uniform. Domestic workers were also asked if they were given a brand new uniform, of the colour of their choice, would they have worn it to travel. Again, the unanimous responses were in the negative. The uniform itself then carried with it a stigma that indicated a lack of self-esteem and therefore made the domestic worker feel degraded as many domestic workers had mentioned that they believed people would think „*I don't like myself'* if they wore the uniform.

Domestic workers in their smart-casual clothes invite positive reception from the greater public. Respondents may „*feel very funny if I have to wear the uniform and go in the taxi',* but in a direct contrast to this, wearing their *„goodclothes'* ensured their positive public images. In their smart clothes, the domestic workers „*look more like everyone else',* and therefore gave in to the desire to dress up since it made them *„feel good about myself.'* Antoinette, a thirty year old domestic worker is no exception to this (Case Study 5):

Antoinette often woke at five-thirty on work mornings to prepare herself and her children before they all left for daily duties. She enjoyed wearing smart jeans and t-shirts and flat sandals as well as her favourite name brand bag, which she shyly admits to loving but not always able to afford. She suggested a distinction between „work' clothes and „travel' clothes by having mentioned the need to change out of her uniform before she travelled home. Antoinette believed that even though she was going directly home after work, she still had to change into smart

clothes because "I still want to look nice, because I like myself". She, like the other respondents within this sample that commuted via taxi, felt good when well dressed up.

Train

The train station within Malvern is situated directly opposite the Malvern Centre, and is nestled alongside a taxi rank. The area is full of activity and runs parallel to the main road in Malvern. The train runs through Malvern, Escombe and Northdene. On most days there are street vendors outside the train station selling everything from sweets to shoes, and even offering telephonic services.

Eight of the commuting domestic workers interviewed travelled via train to work. Most often the journey took an average of twenty minutes to an hour, and this was their preferred mode of transport given the distances travelled. The train had been described by the respondents as quiet when compared to travel by taxi.
Students travelling to school or their various types of employment were regulars on the train, and it had been made obvious to the respondents that only school goers wore a uniform to travel. According to them, all other commuters were *„dressed up'.*

„Jeans, nice tops, handbags, high heels, sometimes I wear takkies[27] or sandals. I only wear fashions.' This quote indicates the attempt that all the respondents made to impress others on the train, and to keep up to the level of dress displayed by the other commuters. The train commuters within this sample woke at four in the morning to prepare lunch for their families, and then to get themselves ready to go to work. The train had many other domestic workers, and although the respondents did not make their acquaintance, they were acutely aware of being observed.

The respondents travelled in their smart-casual clothes, either alone, or with a friend. Once they reached their stop, they would walk a distances of up to three kilometres to reach their employers residence. Domestic workers would then change from their „good clothes' into their uniforms, keeping their „good clothes' neatly folded aside for the journey back home.

[27] This is a colloquial reference to sneakers

„I don't like to walk the road with uniform because everyone will know that I am a maid, and what I do.' This statement was made by a domestic worker when put into the hypothetical situation – if they were in a hurry, would they wear their uniform. Besides the obvious reason that the uniform may have been smelly and dirty after carrying out housework, the uniform as clothes worn provides a statement about the person. The uniform put the woman as a domestic worker on „display' where she can be scrutinized and judged by members of the public. Everyone else on the train was well dressed therefore they wanted to dress in the same way.

When in uniform, if the domestic worker ever had to venture out in public, she could be vulnerable to ridicule. Therefore, even when asked if they were to be given a brand new uniform to come to work in, respondents mentioned that they would still be ridiculed - *„Yes, they will laugh, think funny, I'm stupid.'* They believed that their sanity would be questioned since according to them only people in dire circumstances, such as beggars, criminals or the insane would wear such unfit clothes in public. Despite their low income, domestic workers had to dress up because wearing the uniform in public would have been highly embarrassing.

„Not be free, feel shy'. Domestic workers often mentioned that, apart from feeling embarrassed about being in uniform, they felt a sense of entrapment. They felt trapped by the uniform and believed that people would only notice them as being domestic workers, and not as a person separate from the job that they do. The uniform, and domestic employment, took away their individuality and deemed them inferior to others, therefore respondents preferred to leave their domestic worker „self' behind when in public.

There therefore was a duality in self, where the respondents acknowledged both to themselves and to others that they were domestic workers, but wanted to be seen as well-dressed and successful. They preferred to prevent assumptions made by other people about the type of individual they were because of their type of employment. Domestic workers had a preference for *„nice clothes so people think that lady is working'* in an office type job rather than people correctly assuming that they were domestic workers.

Domestic workers did not have much social or leisure time outside of work and family commitments. Therefore, they enjoyed dressing up for travelling, enabling them to „*feel pretty in my own clothes'*. Added to that, was the image that the respondents had to uphold – that of a working woman, and not just a domestic worker. When dressed up „*the people think I have money and I am not poor. They think I am not someone who is doing domestic work.'* Their smart casual clothes indicated prestige and honour which gave them an „imaginary status' and relayed the message of the better forms of employment to which they aspired.

Case Study 6:

Pretty, twenty-eight, is a tiny woman that could pass for twelve years of age. She is good natured and opinionated. She wore old clothes to do her work. Pretty travelled daily from Marianhill to Malvern. She woke at four in the morning to "have shower, brush teeth, iron clothes and sometimes eat". She took the train at five-thirty and arrived at work an hour later, after walking the short distance from the train station with her friends. Pretty often wore skirts and tops with flat sandals and she carried a handbag. She mentioned that once her work was complete, she applied lotion and would change back into her smart clothes. Her uniform could not be worn in public as "people will think you mad". Pretty had said that she "must change to look nice, for the people and for myself". There is an impression that must be made on the public, if Pretty was dressed nice then she felt good, and people would see her smart clothes as well as her confidence. Pretty believed that if she wore a uniform in public then "everyone will see me I'm working as a maid. They will look at me, think I am too young, I'm lazy and not look for a nice job". She assumed that her uniform would evoke negative perceptions from the public, and she associated domestic work with older women who were not able to obtain better forms of employment. Pretty therefore preferred the more viable, less embarrassing option of dressing up because then she would fit in.

<u>Bus</u>

Agnes, 40, was the only respondent that travelled daily by bus. She worked in The Glen, travelled on a bus from Chatsworth to the Malvern bus stop. The Malvern stop is situated less than a kilometre from the Malvern Centre. It is a quieter stop than that of the taxi rank and train station.

Case Study 7:

Agnes woke at five-thirty on weekday mornings to "clean my room, bath, iron clothes and have tea". She then took the bus at six forty-five and arrived at work an hour later. This respondent travelled alone, both on the bus and when walking from the bus stop to work. She often wore a skirt and top with flat shoes, and would change into her uniform once she got to work.

Since Agnes was not fluent in English and was shy, she found it difficult to articulate herself. Despite her personality, she made it clear that she would not wear her uniform in public, even in the most dire circumstances. The uniform was unsuitable and oppressive, making her "look funny" and enticing ridicule from others. Agnes felt more comfortable and more like herself in her smart clothes as she "feel nice when I wear".

<u>*Walking*</u>

Two respondents walked together from Burlington (a low cost housing area) into Malvern daily. The distance of five kilometres took them approximately thirty minutes to walk. These two respondents took a taxi when they were late, or if the weather was unfavourable, but this rarely occurred.

Case Study 8:

Gertrude, thirty-seven, was the only domestic worker out of the entire sample that wore her 'uniform' to travel. Gertrude, a mother of three, resided in Burlington with her husband and children. "I wake up four o'clock. In the morning first I have bath and then all change, after that make lunch for the children then make them ready for school". Gertrude travelled to work on foot with a friend, who was also a domestic worker and worked nearby. Gertrude wore casual clothes to work – a skirt, button down top and flat shoes, changing her outfit daily. She mentioned that she would not wear old clothes, especially if they were dirty, smelly or torn. Therefore, she still kept up the image of one who is well-dressed.

When Gertrude was asked if she would wear a uniform to travel she had said that it would not be possible. "Ah, when I am coming I can put my normal clothes, like how I am dressed now, so when I come here I change, for the time to go, I go change, I can't go with the overall on the

road and all". She too preferred to avoid being noticed as a domestic worker, but if she had to wear a uniform or ladies overalls then she would be identified as a domestic worker. As she suggested "if I use my overall, I have to take my clothes and leave one side, then I put the overall everything. Time to go now, I use my clothes". The uniform itself was associated with domestic work, low income and a marginalized status.

Gertrude felt a difference when wearing the overall and her own clothes. "It's a different thing because when you are wearing the overalls, like apron on that means you are doing the work. When it is time to go home, you out now, you free now, you can't put overall". The end of work, suggests freedom, and the uniform took that freedom away. When the domestic worker wore her own clothes, she felt free to be herself. On the other hand, domestic workers were willingly imprisoned by their perceptions of their bodies.

Case Study 9:

Joyce, thirty-two, walked to work daily with Gertrude, and displayed similar sentiments. Joyce lived with her daughter and fiancé in Burlington. She often wore a "skirt, and t-shirt, flat shoes, and carried a bag". Joyce changed into a store-bought uniform when she got to work. She, like Gertrude, would not wear her uniform out of work because "the people will see me I am a domestic worker". These respondents believed that the public would perceive them as offensive in uniform since there was a common belief that unsuitable attire would provoke concealed disgust among the public. Joyce mentioned that she felt shy and quiet in uniform and preferred to change "because if I'm wearing this uniform everyday they will notice me, but if I'm wearing my clothes, I'm changing everyday".

<u>Various forms of commute</u>

Domestic workers lived in rural or less developed areas located at a distance from places of employment. These domestic workers had to commute via various forms of public transport to get to work. Two domestic workers in this sample travelled larger distances than others to reach work. Travelling in this manner entailed leaving home early (when compared to the case studies above) and making it to the nearest train station or taxi rank, and then being on time for the next taxi or train thereafter. Two case studies are given below, detailing the tedious travel of the women, including the types of clothes worn.

Case Study 10:

Princess, a very cheerful domestic worker was forty years of age and lived with her sister in Umlazi. She had three children to support and mentioned that although travel was expensive, she did not wish to be a live-in domestic worker because it meant more work for her. Princess awoke daily at "half past three have to take train". After waking, she would often "bath, dressing up". Despite the morning rush, especially to make the train, Princess still found the time to dress up, creating a necessary niche for it amongst her busy schedule. The concept and act of dressing up to travel was habitual and a definite part of her life and was not contested.

Princess took a "train is quarter to five, take taxi half past five. Jump off take another train from Rossburgh at twenty past six, and then twenty past seven, I'm here, takes about two hours". Commuting via taxi and two trains, Princess made the two hour journey from Umlazi to Northdene six days a week. To make these journeys, she wore smart-casual clothes, and an example of this would be "grey skirt, pink top and blue sandals. Reebok sandals and red bag". Princess often wore eclectic yet fashionable clothes to work. Even though she mentioned that she did not exactly follow fashion, she still wanted to look good. She emphasized the type of sandals she wore, „Reebok sandals', because she liked name brands, even though she might have bought them from a second hand shop, she wanted people to appreciate her well thought out ensemble of clothes. Brand names, whether fake or not, acted as a status marker, the „imagined status' of someone with a higher income served to contribute to their self esteem and confidence. When Princess arrived at work, she changed into her uniform (store bought), and before leaving for home, she would "wash then change". It was necessary for her to change because the uniform was "dirty, smelling". But, even when offered a new uniform as an experiment to travel in, Princess stated that she could not go out in public wearing it. She would "feel shy", and people would "think I'm mad". She was more comfortable in her smart clothes. She wanted people to think "that I look nice", as opposed to thinking that she was a domestic worker without aspirations.

Case Study 11:

Phindile, (thirty), also travelled to work six days a week. She was a mother of two, and lived alone in Marianridge. Phindile mentioned that she did not want to be a live-in domestic worker

because she would not get enough freedom, and in addition to this, most employers found it difficult to accommodate a domestic worker. This respondent worked five full days, and one half day. On a Saturday afternoon, she would go shopping to Malvern Centre or Pinetown, where she would shop at Edgars, Jet and/or Fashion Express. On the other working days, she would go straight home, making no stops. Phindile woke at half past four on work mornings to "bath, brush my teeth and dress up". She took a taxi at half past five, and then took a train from Pinetown to Malvern. She then walked the three kilometres from the train station to her place of employment. When Phindile arrived at work she put on an old dress (similar to ladies overalls) over her clothes. Once work was complete, she would "wash face and take this thing off[28]". Even though Phindile had said that „I'm not worried about other people', she was still concerned enough not to wear her uniform as "you can't wear torn things in public", and therefore dressed up in the hope that people would perceive her positively. In her uniform, she was afraid that people would "think must be poor, don't have money to buy clothes", or worse that she was uneducated. There was also a link between age and domestic work as Phindile mentioned that people "might think this girl is too young to be a maid". This respondent believed that as a „young', educated woman, she should not have fallen prey to a lowly paying job. She preferred to wear her smart clothes such that people could make positive assumptions about her character.

Focus groups

In addition to individual interviews, two focus groups were carried out. Due to the vast amount of data produced, these groups deserve separate analyses.

The ladies in the focus groups commuted via taxi to work. They, much like the other domestic workers, felt a need to present themselves in a positive way. *„I come in my nice clothes, I wore a dress in the morning then I change into this dress here, this is old one'.* Whether travelling alone, or in groups, domestic workers vulnerability[29] was tied to their dress, as domestic workers in public felt that the presentation of their bodies was extremely important.

[28] 'This thing' is in reference to the old dress worn over the clothes

[29] Vulnerability, within this context, is in reference to their self image and self esteem. They are vulnerable against the judgement of members of the public

„*When we are at work, we are sweating and dirty, and then we must go on the taxi, and we are not clean'.* Work and uncleanliness were inseparable concepts. The sweat and dirt attached to the body may be wiped off and masked by perfume. But the „sweat and dirt' attached to the uniform was a constant reminder of their job, and must be removed before travelling.

„*I have a shower, my madam she lets me have a shower, then I put my lotion and perfume. Then I put the same clothes I came with, then I can go in the taxi and go home'.* The respondent quoted here submits herself to ablution rituals to get into the taxi and travel home. She wants to smell pleasant and look appropriate for whomever she may pass on the road, and for the other taxi commuters. She set out from work looking presentable and hoping for approval. „*In these days, people are wearing nice clothes then if I'm dressed in the old clothes then they thinking I'm mad'.* The respondents felt obliged to dress up since „*people want us to dress like them'.*

Domestic workers interviewed mentioned that they were afraid of what people will think of them, if they had to sit in the taxi whilst wearing a uniform. One respondent stated that „*I am not knowing what they are saying, but they will look at you funny and tell other people things about you'.* People in the taxi are the jury, and fashion police, and have the power to make a judgement about the type of person the domestic worker was.

According to respondents it could have been anyone talking about them, „*any ladies, but because I am a Black lady, the Black ladies are going to talk'.* The other ladies, who commuted on the taxi with them, had good jobs because they were well dressed. It did not matter if another lady was a domestic worker, as long as she was dressed well, she avoided scrutiny. When asked if they also criticized other women who might have worn tattered clothes, respondents said that they were not spiteful and „*We can't say anything about them*; *maybe they are wearing like that for some reason'.* Despite them not judging others, they believed that they would still be judged by other women in the taxi because „*It's about jealously, for our nation, for the Black people are very jealous'.* The respondents believed that they were involved in a competition with others and had to look their best to avoid judgement. The judgement was never a sure thing, and the respondents knew that, often stating that they „*don't know what people are saying, we are just thinking what they are thinking'.*

Respondents believed that the public would be observing and perhaps criticizing them, but this could not be substantiated. They therefore preferred to be safe and avoid criticism by dressing up because people „*will say that you are not dressed properly, then I feel bad if I know the people are saying things about me'*. Malicious talk and thoughts about a domestic worker were widely perceived, but not substantiated. Respondents became highly sensitive, and suspected any gaze or talk to be about them. They were very conscious of their bodies „*because when you put the overall, people are calling you maid, that name I don't like. We are the helper. Even in the adverts, they call us that. Because we are not in the company, we are working for the house. I don't like they must call me maid or domestic'*. Being labelled and categorized as a domestic worker, simply for wearing a uniform was considered derogatory to these respondents.

The body in uniform was „taboo' as it was linked to domestic work. „*When I meet people, then I can't tell them this is what I do. It is very embarrassing. So I just say I am a teacher or something, so that is why I dress up nicely, then people can see I am something'*. Domestic work was viewed as a source of shame, as others in the taxi may have higher income employment and are „dressed for success'. Therefore these respondents did the same and allowed the other commuters to admire them. In contrast to this, when in uniform „*people will look down if they know you are a maid. Like if I see my friends, I went to school with them, I can't tell them I'm a maid. They got nice jobs, then they think – here this girl, she got nothing up here (*points to head). *Then I can't tell anybody'*.

The embarrassment that respondents felt for their jobs and the uniform was counteracted by them dressing up. Stylish clothes are a salve against the stigma and shame associated with the uniform. „*I feel good about myself when I am wearing my nice clothes, when I am wearing this, the shorts with all this stains, and if I go on the road, then I'm not feeling good. I feel bad inside, I'm looking down'*. Respondents felt stigmatized through being domestic workers, they chose to wear smart clothes to avoid being vulnerable to nasty thoughts and gossip directed at them. The uniform had such a negative connotation for these women that they would even wear torn smart clothes because „*people will be worse about the overalls, they will say more worse things, so I rather just wear my nice clothes, never mind if it's torn'*. Burdened by shame for their jobs and

the uniform, domestic workers often go to great lengths to acquire clothes that will deem them respectable people. *„I look at magazines, or see the rich people wearing then I like to wear. I also like the name brands, I buy Guess jeans, but sometimes I can't afford'.* Domestic workers dressed in this way to be considered as people, and not just as domestic workers because *„they won't think that I am working, or at least doing something, no, they will think only bad that I am doing this kind of job'.*

Conclusion

This section covered the aspects of social stigma, shame and negativity attributed to the body via the uniform. Domestic workers, both live-in and daily travellers, felt the need to dress up to travel to work. The respondents interviewed travelled via bus, taxi and or train, often having to walk from their stop to their place of employment.

Waking at dawn was the norm, and time was required to prepare themselves for travel. All domestic workers had to be presentable to other commuters. They wore good clothes in an effort to avoid being exposed as domestic workers and to feel good about themselves. The uniform was never worn to travel, as the respondents believed that they would be judged.

The uniform and domestic work tainted the image of the domestic worker. Respondents constructed their bodies through the eyes of people in public, of how they believed these people perceived them. If in the uniform, the women would be categorized as domestic workers – considered to be insane[30], poor and definitely inferior. But, when wearing their smart clothes, the respondents' confidence was evident in their assumption of other people's perception of them – someone of high status and good character. Respondents preferred to be seen as someone of higher status, as these were aligned with their aspirations, people who they had always hoped to become.

[30] Insanity was a common reference to the domestic workers mental state if they chose to wear old, torn and or tattered clothes in public.

Aspirations of domestic workers: when goals become dreams

These issues of class and status are discussed in this section. Domestic workers, their parents and their children are three generations of African people living on the poverty line (Grant, 1997). An analysis of these three generations in terms of their education, lifestyle and domestic socialization, and employment and career aspirations are given below. Domestic workers have had goals and aspirations in terms of their education and career opportunities but these had become intangible dreams because the respondents were unable to transcend class boundaries. Traditionally, domestic workers came from households that were polygamous and consisted of their extended family. Therefore, employed family members had both immediate as well as extended families to support. Income generated often proved insufficient to send all their children to school, therefore the cycle of domestic labour continued. Disparities between centre and periphery were further exacerbated by the increased movement of both men and women from rural to urban areas. "The centre is the zone of maximum dignity and worth, and they diminish as we move outward towards the periphery" (Beteille, 1996: 517). Apartheid gave way to democracy but as mentioned had not led to the expected deterioration of social differences. Racial hierarchies still entrenched in South Africa begot class hierarchies based on levels of income. Inequality unequivocally relates to class, economic level and power within societies.

When the possibilities for fulfilment of goals are low, dreams manifested themselves in „imagined aspirations[31]'.

Parents of Domestic workers

This project has predominantly focussed on the aspect of the domestic worker's perceptions of herself through the „gaze' of others in relation to dress. Dress has been inherently linked to status – both imagined and real. An important aspect of imaginary status apart from dress was the aspirations that domestic workers continued to have, and which had been expressed through their choice of dress. To fully understand the conception of their aspirations, an analysis of their parent's upbringing and lives, as well as the connection surrounding their upbringing, is necessary.

The respondents (aged between twenty and fifty years of age) parents' were born in the early twentieth century. This era in South Africa was burdened by the sister ideologies of colonialism and apartheid. These ideologies were synonymous with racial suppression of people of colour[32] and had been carried out in various legislations directed at education, living areas, housing and marriage.

Education

Regulations on education in South Africa proved to be a formidable barrier to African Black[33] people in terms of education. Black children were prevented from attending most schools and the schools that they did attend lacked proper structures. It therefore proved difficult to obtain a primary school education and even if one was able to be further educated, it was not possible to enter a skilled workforce that catered to only White South Africans.

South Africa, from being a „free country' to one plagued by conflict changed things tremendously for Black (Zulu) South Africans. From being the „rulers of the land' living in a polygamous „paradise' to struggling for survival, they were forced off their land by colonialists

[31] This is in reference to the aspirations of domestic workers, and their continued hopes of furthering their education and/or securing better forms of employment. It is also a reference to the respondents dressing in a manner to provoke assumptions by others that the respondents have well paying jobs.
[32] Reference to African (Black), Indian and Coloured people within South Africa
[33] This is not to the exclusion of other 'Black' races – Indian and Coloured, but this study focuses specifically on African Zulu.

and the men were obliged by law to pay a tax on their land. The burden of this tax forced men to move to urban areas leaving their families behind (Carton et al, 2008).

No, my parents never go school, they were very poor, only my father. I think till class two. Sentiments of regret and sadness were displayed by respondents when talking about their parents' lives. The disruptions in the rural areas bred conditions of poverty. The options for education available to parents of domestic workers were reduced drastically. Women were left to support themselves and their families, and after ever failing attempts at living off the land, moved to urban areas to become domestic workers.

During apartheid, a decent[34] education for African (Black) women was difficult to obtain. Negative legislative requirements coupled with cultural traditions of domesticity of women ensured that educational opportunities were difficult to obtain. Many women in the rural areas were forced to use their domestic skills to support themselves and their families, given the mass movement of men from rural to urban areas. The women and their partners (husbands or boyfriends) worked in low income employment that was barely enough to sustain themselves and their families.

Domestic workers parents' were either sent to live with their grandparents or had to take care of themselves. If there was an opportunity to attend school, preference was given to the oldest males in the family. Colonial and apartheid legislation, as well as patriarchal institutions embedded in Zulu tradition was especially hard on females. Of the nine parents (of respondents) that attended school, albeit to a minimal extent, six were male. Survival proved to be more important than education.

A few people of African descent were able to bypass the system and entered the skilled labour force. But, unfortunately for the parents of respondents, the lack of education impacted on the lives they lead. Additionally their lifestyles and conditions within South Africa prevented them from becoming educated individuals.

[34] Decent refers to a formal education sufficient enough to enable one to obtain employment

Lifestyles and domestic socialization

Parents of respondents were constantly faced with poverty (or near poverty) and struggle for survival. With both parents living and working in the urban areas and sending home remittances when possible, family consisted of siblings and, sometimes grandparents and friends. Parents of domestic workers sometimes farmed the land they lived on, but this was often not enough to sustain their families. A few of the parents left home to work, and established traditions began to deteriorate.

According to Zulu tradition men supported their wife (or wives) and families – this often included their parents as well. But the beginning of apartheid and the movement of Zulu people shattered these traditions. Most domestic workers were unmarried, the few that had been, did so under Christian traditions, being unable to afford „lobola[35]'. Males would work on the farmland outside their homes, and females were taught domestic skills.

There was minimal parental involvement in their lives and no parental encouragement in terms of education. Respondents grandparents' were absent for a large part of their children's lives. Expectations and encouragement to „become someone' was unnecessary as legislation and financial difficulties prohibited this. The major concern was working for survival, and not for career aspirations.

Parents were often domestic workers, in the case of mothers, or working in mines or some other form of hard labour, in the case of fathers.

Employment and Career aspirations

Employment was solely directed at the survival of the family and skills learnt at home were transferred to their work environment. "*My mother, she was also a domestic worker, my father, he worked in a furniture factory*." Career aspirations were a foreign ideology to parents of respondents. Lack of opportunities and possibilities for anything beyond a primary school education ensured their entry into unskilled labour. The highest form of education that any of the

[35] A Zulu tradition of a bride price paid by the future husband to the bride's family

parents completed was standard three, and they were prevented from attending school any further.

Ten of the parents of domestic workers were unable to find employment and lived in extreme poverty with the domestic workers and sometimes their grandparents supporting the family. Many fathers worked in factories, some did assembly work, some were truck drivers transporting goods, and a few were farmers or miners. Most mothers of respondents were domestic workers in the urban areas, and a few did farming work.

The lives of domestic workers parents' were riddled with struggle; everyday was a fight for survival. There was no funding for education available to them and therefore definitely no space for the formation of aspirations. The lives of their parents have impacted on the thinking and perceptions of domestic workers, and were made explicit in the upbringing of and aspirations for their children.

Children of domestic workers

The end of the twentieth century heralded an era of democracy and „equality'. The year 1994 ushered in a new president for South Africa and the abolishment of apartheid. A „mixing' of races was legally permitted in all areas of society, but the stigma attached to people of colour remained. Despite various changes having been made, African (Black) people remained at the bottomed of the socio-economic ladder.

Democracy is a recent burgeoning ideology within South Africa and despite legislation prompting equality; social, racial and class hierarchies remain relatively intact. Despite the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa, remnants of apartheid legislations continue to cast a shadow over the possibility of quality among South Africans. Apartheid hailed an era of racial segregation which laid the foundation for segregation across social, class and economic spheres. Racial constraints based on law provided substantial barriers to people of colour[36] in relation to obtaining sufficient education to secure employment.

[36] Colour is in reference to people of Indian, African and mixed descent

Unskilled labourers often had children that were unable to attend school because of financial difficulties and legislation against them. Respondents in this study, despite being „unskilled', worked primarily to earn a living and support their children's education. Opportunities in education and employment had increased dramatically for people of colour. There were marked differences in education, lifestyle and career opportunities and aspirations between domestic workers children and their parents.

All but two domestic workers did not have children at the time of this study. Their children's ages ranged from two to twenty years of age. Respondents' children were of utmost importance to their mothers as their lives were centred on them. Below is an analysis of the children's lives in three aspects – education, lifestyle and career aspirations.

Education

The option to be educated was not open to parents of domestic workers, but respondents found it absolutely necessary for their children to attend school. Low income employment indicated a life of struggle for the domestic workers who worked, sometimes, six times a week to support their families. Their struggle in life was not to be transmitted to their children, therefore education was the way out of their lower class living.

The children of domestic workers lived either in low cost houses in the urban areas, or mud or tin homes in the rural areas. Travelling to school on foot was possible, but where there were weather constraints, or a vast distance between school and home, a taxi or bus was taken. Domestic workers therefore had an array of costs to consider – travel, school fees, uniforms and stationary. Yet, respondents did not consider these issues to be obstacles as they wanted to provide the opportunities and choices that their parents did not have.

The younger children either attended a crèche or lived with a family member. All the children of school going age attended primary or high school, depending on their age. One of the domestic workers children had completed high school and was at teachers college, while another had dropped out of school because he had not found it enjoyable. This was the only case where a domestic worker had allowed her child to leave school.

Despite the various obstacles faced, domestic workers were adamant about their children's education, and saw it as a step toward secure formal employment. The importance of education was expressed by all domestic workers as when compared to the education available to their parents. They had taken on the responsibility of sending their children to school such that they may become someone other than what they were – domestic workers.

"*I want my daughter and children must have good education. It's up to the education, I can't say what work they must do, because me, I am a domestic. It depend on if she finish Matric."* This quote indicates the synonymity of education with the transcendence of class barriers. While domestic workers worked in low income jobs, by educating their children, they attempted to ensure them better lives than those led by themselves and their parents.

Lifestyles and domestic socialization

Respondents' children lived a much more sheltered life when compared to their grandparents. Unlike the fears and tensions experienced by their parents, respondent's children were not exposed to the same problems which have become latent in society. Their children were often taken care of by family members or friends, and most respondents lived with their children. Respondents were unable to afford after school care or nannies, therefore family members offered their assistance, or older siblings took care of their younger brothers and sisters until their mother got home from work.

Nine of the respondents interviewed lived with their children or saw their children regularly. Their priorities for the day centred on getting their children to school, and then getting themselves to work on time. Domestic workers were proud of their children attending school, and pursued the accomplishment of good marks vicariously through their children. After work, respondents either picked their children up from a friend's house, or saw them at home, took care of domestic chores, and assisted children with their homework where possible.

Grandparents were willing caretakers of seven of the respondent's children. Domestic workers left their children in the care of their parents in the rural areas, while they sought and secured employment in the urban centres. Since it was too expensive to live alone with their children,

domestic workers lived with other family members or friends, and sent remittances home, or visited their families once weekly.

Children of domestic workers were gender socialized in almost the same way as their parents, although a few domestic workers expressed the importance of impressing on their sons and daughters, the values of respect and equality. Children were not spoilt, but were sometimes positively reinforced with gifts in the form of clothes, toys or money when they obtained good results in school.

The negativity of domestic work, and unemployment was regularly expressed to their children. Domestic workers refused to allow their children to end up in low paying jobs and encouraged them to have aspirations and nurture them.

Employment and career aspirations

"*He must go to school, become a doctor, be educated and get a nice good job."* According to respondents, there were no restrictions or barriers for their children. Education provided the key to a secure future with the job of their dreams. Unlike the parents of respondents domestic workers children were given the opportunity of education and the hope for better forms of employment than their parents.

Children of domestic workers aspired to be police, nurses and teachers. They had dreams of protecting, helping and teaching other people. It is important to note that most of these children would not have the opportunity at a university education. Even though their parents were desperate to provide a tertiary education for them, their financial situation made this impossible. Therefore, their aspirations were structured around this.

A few children aspired to be different – a presenter, a taxi driver and a soldier. Their parents fostered these as long as they were tangible. Two children aspired to be doctors and lawyers, but their parents were wary of these choices, since these aspirations might only become dreams, as theirs have.

Domestic workers aspirations for their children were aligned with their children's aspirations. They hoped that they would be able to complete school, and even a tertiary education, to then secure good employment. Unlike their parents, domestic workers and their children have had aspirations. It is important to understand domestic workers lives and aspirations in the context of their parents and children's lives. Their aspirations are expressed in their perceptions of their bodies and how they expressed themselves.

Domestic workers

Domestic workers have been socialized through the lives and experiences of their parents, and they continued to have aspirations through their children. This has been described in the previous two sections. The most important sections of this chapter is on the aspirations of domestic workers, both how they had come to aspire in these ways, and what has become of their aspirations.

Respondents interviewed for this study came from relatively different backgrounds. It is important to understand the respondent's lives against the backgrounds of their parents, and a better understanding can also been grasped through domestic worker aspirations for their children. Additionally, for a more holistic comprehension of domestic worker aspirations, there must be a historical contextualization of their lives.

The ages of domestic workers in this study, vary between twenty and fifty years. They lived in different political, economic and even social eras, as even though the gaps between their ages are a decade apart, the political and social climate in South Africa during late 1900's was extremely temperamental. Respondents' lives are analyzed across three issues – education, lifestyle and career aspirations in each of the three age ranges.

<u>*Education*</u>

Twenty-thirty years of age: The mid 1980's to early 1990's signalled the end of the apartheid era. South Africa and the apartheid regime attracted negative international attention and those against the regime breathed a sigh of relief as apartheid finally collapsed under international pressure. This era was an important politically juncture with South Africa.

Ten respondents were born during this era, and as bans on education, political and social life was lifted, the children were expected to experience more freedom in their lives. Unfortunately, new legislation was still in the making and many restrictive laws remained. Additionally, their parents were unskilled employees and without proper education or training could not secure better employment to improve the conditions that they were exposed to. Fortunately, all respondents between twenty and thirty years of age attended school, despite some not having had the chance to complete school for various reasons.

Financial difficulties: Seven respondents were not able to complete their studies (both secondary and tertiary) because their parents could no longer afford to. There are vast differences when domestic workers lives are compared to their parents and children lives. Most of their parents had simple primary school education and thereafter had to take care of their family through financial support. On the other hand, children of domestic workers are almost guaranteed, by their mothers, that they will complete high school, and receive further training if financially possible. The younger respondents (twenty-thirty years of age) in this study had educational opportunities available to them, but this was not possible in the face of their parents' financial situation.

„Pregnant and unmarried': In low income rural homes, young men still find it difficult to pay lobola for potential brides, never mind support a family. This problem, which has been faced by their parents, posed difficulties for men during the 1990's. Two domestic workers fell pregnant before their last year of high school and since neither their family, nor their boyfriends could support them, the respondents had to leave school to support themselves, entering into unskilled labour, much like their parents, and vowing that their children would never have to endure the same experience.

The 1970's: was an era known for the political intensification within South Africa. Nine respondents aged between thirty and forty one years of age experienced the climax of anti-apartheid struggles. These struggles and political strife they were exposed to helped inform and understand the type of education they were able to receive.

Legislations against the education of Black people within South Africa were strongly opposed by students. This opposition reached its height during the 1976 Soweto Uprising, paving the way for better educational opportunities. Respondent's parents, however, were still not able to rise above their socio-economic positions. Financial security and survival continued to be a daily struggle, and none of the respondents were able to complete their secondary education for three main reasons.

Firstly, financial constraints played a major role in domestic workers lack of education. Four domestic workers experienced these difficulties as it prevented them from achieving a higher class status through education and a regular income. Three respondents had the opportunity of entering high school, but their parents had financial obligations to their other children as well, therefore not every child could attend school. One of the domestic workers was not able to attend school because she was one of the younger female siblings and since her parents were poor, they were only able to send the eldest daughter and son to school.

Secondly, the conditions surrounding their childhoods indicated phases of poverty, low education and illness. A domestic worker fell pregnant during her second year at high school and consequently entered unskilled employment to support her child. Her boyfriend, like many other young men, was involved with multiple partners. The absence of lobola signals promiscuity among men with a lack of commitment. With no support from her parents or child's father, the respondent was forced to drop out of school to support her family. Such conditions of near poverty breeds illness and another domestic worker fell ill during her first year of high school. An illness that could easily be cured by doctors in urban areas became problematic when one does not have finances. Without the medical care required, the respondent had to leave school and take care of herself.

Thirdly, respondents between thirty and forty-one years of age often lived in large families as their parents had migrated to urban areas leaving them in the care of grandparents or older aunts and uncles. Their family may not have been able to support them therefore two respondents worked for their survival. One of the domestic workers had a minimal primary school education

but was forced to drop out of school when finances became unavailable. Supporting her family through the sale of vegetables on the roadside ensured the education of her elder siblings. Another respondent had familial responsibilities to her younger siblings as she was "*the first one. Have to look after my brother and sister all, my mother was working.*"

The three respondents in the forty-one to fifty age range shared similar experiences as their parents. The 1960's marked an era of segregation based on the tensions surrounding world war two, the height of colonialism and the emergence of apartheid. African (Black) families were ostracized from most aspects of social life. A minimal education was therefore both a privilege and an honour. All three respondents had some form of primary school education, but the dual factors of legislation and socio-economic position within society prevented a complete education.

During the early 1960's, family life was still somewhat entrenched in tradition. The males hold rank over females as per patriarchal customs. Therefore, financial constraints coupled with duty to her family, prevented a domestic worker from going further than a standard two education.

The major problem of money, which has prevented most domestic workers in this study from becoming educated, had again prevented domestic workers from completing their primary school education. With parents struggling against poverty, it was evident that education was not a feasible option to be chosen over survival.

Education analysed across three „generation' has provided a glimpse into the lives of domestic workers. Their childhoods wrought with problems proved their inability to lead better lifestyles. Lack of education impacts on the lives lead by domestic workers and their parents. Equally, lifestyles or conditions of domestic workers upbringing indicated the education possible for them, as well as the aspirations they yield.

Lifestyles and domestic socialization

Traditional Zulu homes in the rural areas socialize their children along gender lines. Females are taught domestic skills, while their brothers learn gardening and construction skills. These customs have stubbornly remained, and have been passed on from domestic workers

grandparents, to their parents therefore domestic have been gender socialized into indoor domestic duties.

Education played an important role in the lives of domestic workers; their parents had encouraged and supported them when financially possible. Respondents either lived with their parents or grandparents and up to six siblings. When conditions became too difficult for their parents to sustain their families, respondents were obliged to assist. In other cases, respondents fell pregnant at a young age (whilst at high school), and apart from their families, had their children to support.

Domestic workers, during their childhoods, hardly spent time with their parents, who were always away working. They socialized with friends during school hours, and carried out domestic duties in the evening. All but three respondents had interacted with domestic workers when they were children, the domestic workers either being their grandmother, mother, aunt or neighbour. They were taught by grandmothers and or mothers to be responsible in the domestic sphere and therefore easily acquired the skills for their job.

"Not married, have a boyfriend, had children" – the issue of lobola persists across generations. All but two domestic workers had children out of wedlock, two domestic works had subsequently married according to Christian traditions, but most others did not have the financial support of their partners. Therefore, the probability of the respondents ending up in domestic employment was high – they had been socialized in domestic duties, they had families to support and they were in low income homes with families that struggled to support them. Despite this, and probably because of these reasons, domestic workers have always aspired (for themselves and their children) to rise above their situation.

Domestic workers' aspirations

The minimal educations of domestic workers as well as their experiences during childhood have influenced their career aspirations. Each of the domestic workers interviewed had aspirations about a possible career path, which soon became intangible when placed in difficult conditions.

It was unfortunate that respondent's parents were not readily available to attend to their children. Respondents at times received encouragement from the parents in pursuing their goals but their parents were not always able to be involved in their child's lives. Lack of education and practised customs led to many domestic workers falling pregnant during their high school years. As responsibilities increased, parents of the respondents were satisfied with any form of employment available to their children and aspirations were forced aside.

Despite obstacles faced, aspirations remained as a talisman for respondents against trying times. Faced with more pressing concerns, their parents did little to nurture their children's aspirations, and financing their education illustrated their concern for their children's future. The lack of expectations, rather than dampen domestic workers aspirations, fuelled them on. A few respondents continued with studying and continued to hope for a better future.

Career aspirations

Most children are asked at a young age – „What do you want to be when you grow up?' the answer to this may change several times during an individual's life, and sometimes even remain the same. Domestic workers did not escape this question, and all respondents aspired to be skilled employees and even business owners. Against the background of their lives, domestic workers always aspired to be more than their parents and attempted to strive toward it. The younger domestic workers in the sample (twenty to thirty years of age) still wanted to achieve their goals. The middle group of respondents had begun to feel „too old' to fulfil their dreams and the other domestic workers believe that a better way of life was possible.

Twenty to thirty years of age: the younger domestic workers had various career aspirations during their school years and these had changed over time. They had replaced them with more realistic and achievable goals in relation to the type of education that they were able to afford.

Five of the younger respondents have plans to revisit their final year of high school, and then proceed to get some tertiary qualification. Most of their proposed careers were chosen because of the desire to help other people. Nurses, teachers and police assist people in health, education and safety, respectively, and the respondents aspired to fulfil these roles, if financially possible. One

domestic worker was attending night school to complete her Matric, and then had plans to attend business school.

Domestic workers aspired to rise above their class and social situation. Accounting, law, medicine and journalism were some of the fields that they aspired to occupy, despite having had no interaction with anyone from these fields. The domestic workers lived in low cost homes in townships, or on farms in rural areas, they may not have come into contact with professional people to the extent that it may ignite an interest in that profession. Their parents were truck drivers and domestic workers, and they wanted to be more than this. Domestic workers aspired to be experts in a field and still did despite having children and being domestic workers.

Penny was a vibrant young domestic worker. She was the youngest out of the respondents. For most interviews, Penny wore a cotton scarf on her head, a t-shirt and denim shorts. She was twenty-one years of age (at the time of the interviews) and was born in Isipingo. She lived with her mother, stepfather, two sisters and two brothers. Her mother was a housewife and her stepfather worked on an assembly line. Penny matriculated in 2007 but was unable to study further because of financial constraints. After Matric, Penny briefly worked as a waitress but the job proved too stressful and she left. When her brother came to her with a job offer, she was sceptical, thinking "Oh me, I'm still young, I'm not a domestic but I need the money." *Penny took the job to support herself and her son, as well as to save up for school. She planned on attending university in a year to study accounting. She believed that she could fulfil her aspirations. She hoped that her son would attend school and become a doctor. Domestic work was not meant for her, it was merely a temporary form of income.*

Thirty-one to forty years of age: The older generation of domestic workers have had their share of aspirations, but believe that the time has surpassed them. Jobs such as nursing and teaching are generic options chosen by domestic workers. They came into close contact with people in this profession at school, and while travelling. They aspired to join these professions because it was viable as a college diploma was sufficient and an expensive university education might not have been required.

Their aspirations remained unfulfilled as untimed pregnancies and incomplete secondary education held them back. As the years passed, their goals became dreams, as their aspirations became increasingly intangible. Their age began to prevent them from achieving their dream jobs, and the hopes of getting a good education had been placed upon their children.

"Me, I just say when I grow up I want to get married, and walk tall. But my parents had divorce so it was hard for me. No one sent me to high school but I wanted to. I wanted to get married and maybe be a teacher, but you can't be a teacher if you don't go to school" – Thirty-seven year old domestic worker.

Respondents allowed the lack of education to affect their aspirations. They hoped to become nurses or teachers, but also never quite believed that they would achieve this. Their gender socialisation impacted on their choice of employment as well as on the importance of the role of the mother. Their children became more important than aspirations, and with a family to support, and their age an issue, none of the domestic workers in the thirty-one to forty age range had any plans in place to complete their education and pursue the goals they had when in school.

Unlike the women in the previous generation, domestic workers between forty-one to fifty years of age held on to their aspirations. During their younger, school going years, the respondents dreamed of earning a comfortable living working as doctors or nurses. As the years passed the reality of the situation prompted a dismissal of their dreams. Much like the other domestic workers, their children and families were important and had to be supported.

The respondents began to believe in improving their lives as their children got older. The children continued to be supported through school and were encouraged to study and achieve high marks so that they may get good jobs. Domestic workers would later be dependent on their children's support. In the meantime, domestic workers pursued hobbies that would provide an added income, as in the case of one domestic worker who was going for sewing classes. Domestic workers also mentally pursued their dreams through dress.

Aspirations through dress: Desirability of the 'uniform'

Domestic work is an undesirable form of employment according to respondents who refused to be seen in public with the „maid's uniform'. The undesirability of the uniform was socially constructed by the domestic workers perception of the lowly paid category of work that she is involved in. Domestic workers would rather wear a nurse's or police uniform. Therefore the uniform itself was not important, but the type of uniform and its association with a form of employment. This created a disparity between domestic work and other types of jobs through the use of the uniform. "*It's a difference, nurse is something to learn. You learned to do it and it's a nice job".*

Joyce is a pleasant and friendly woman who worked in the house around the corner. She was a short, slim built woman and wore a uniform complete with doek and apron to do her work. Joyce was a thirty-two year old mother of one. She was born in Umzinto and lived with her mother and older sister. She attended school until standard 7 when she fell pregnant. Joyce thereafter became a domestic worker to support her child. The father of her child was unable to marry her because of lobola and he was still paying toward it. Joyce dreamed of being a nurse, but believed that she can longer achieve this as "I am too old now". Her aspirations were expressed through dress. She never aspired to become a domestic worker, and did not want to be seen as one. Joyce took her daughter shopping to choose fashionable clothes that she could make a statement in. If she could convince other people that she was an inspirational woman, then her status and esteem would increase. She also had aspirations for her daughter, as all domestic workers did, since they were not successful in achieving theirs. "Doctor is a nice job, it better job, people must look at you in a nice job".

Conclusion:

Aspirations, in this study, have taken the form of future employment prospects, conditions of living and success for one's children. This chapter provided an analysis across three generations, a time span of hundred years, revealing important historical junctures and their impact on respondent's lives.

Colonialism and apartheid had restricted their parent's lives, and coupled with Zulu traditions, ensured their turn to unskilled employment and rural living. Domestic worker's parents had no

aspirations beyond survival and consequently did not overly encourage their children to aspire to enter the types of employment that involved expensive studies.

South Africa's current situation indicates a shift in class status as more women of colour have the opportunity to further their education and join the skilled workforce. This shift has not provided even a modicum of change for those living on a „hand to mouth' basis. Domestic workers are often children of domestic workers or of people that worked in low income employment. The domestic workers then, in working in the same or similar employment as their parents, also find it difficult to provide for the educational needs of their children.

Economic and class level have an impact on the way members of society portray themselves. Status is usually considered in a hierarchical manner; that is to say, in degrees of superiority. This chapter focuses on the importance of status to domestic workers interviewed, and how this status was expressed through career aspirations. Class and status are two sides of the same coin and income and wealth are indicative of class as well as symbols of status.

Lack of education results in a lack of wealth, but not necessarily in a lack of status. Domestic workers attempted to increase their rank and status by masquerading as wealthier members of the public. According to Beteille (1997: 514) an enviable status is unobtainable because "class and status are opposed as two different and mutually irreducible forms or dimensions of inequality: here the stress is on distinctions of status expressing honour, dignity, worth, and so on."

Domestic workers were attributed a low status because of their socio-economic position and had to dress „wealthy' to climb the social ladder. Class is dependent on income, which is dependent on education, and if ones parents were in low income employment, there was a high probability that their children would meet the same fate.

Domestic workers, on the other hand, had not been pessimistic about their future. The western ideal of placing emphasis on possible career paths from a young age impacted on domestic workers. They fell in with this ideal and each set a goal that they hoped to reach. But they were later unable to achieve them.

The education, lifestyles and aspirations of domestic workers, parents, and children were discussed in this chapter to provide a complete understanding of domestic workers aspirations and where they might have stemmed from. Domestic workers aspirations though not achieved were still manifested in their imagined status. The people that domestic workers aspired to be – successful, rich doctor, lawyer or journalist – are expressed in the way domestic workers imagine successful people would dress. Therefore domestic workers aspirations are still „alive' and expressed through their dress – not in a „maids uniform' but in impressionable, fashionable clothes.

The uniform was unequivocally associated with domestic work and was therefore undesirable. Wearing smart clothes was therefore important as a status marker. Fashionable clothes served to elevate the status of the domestic worker and prove to others that she is an accomplished woman.

Conclusion

Domestic work has vast meanings for people around the world. For those who are employers, domestic workers provide a range of functions which the employer's household cannot do without. For domestic workers, their employment provides both a means to an end, as well as hardships which they are forced to endure to ensure their families survival.

Domestic work constitutes work in and around a household, involving basic domestic chores such as cooking and cleaning and providing care to employer's children and sometimes their dogs. Most literature – studies, articles, books – detail the exploitation, oppression and abuse that domestic workers suffer at the hand of their employers. Domestic work, internationally, has no definite beginnings. It is likely situated in middle to upper class homes during industrialization of countries, and the movement of women out of the home and into employment. These women found it difficult to juggle work and domestic chores and therefore employed domestic workers to carry out these chores.

This study explored the area of domestic work within South Africa. South Africa, a country first colonized by the Dutch, then taken over by the British and later held ransom by apartheid, has only recently (1994) acquired political emancipation[37]. Most writers sensationalize the issue of domestic work within South Africa, emphasizing the problems of racism, gender oppression and human rights violations. According to authors like Cock (1980) and Gaitskell et al (1983), South Africa is unlikely to emerge from the restraints of racism and oppression under apartheid until domestic workers and other lowly paid labourers transcend the plight they live in.

Domestic workers have been known to suffer extreme human rights violations, treated as lesser people by their employers – White, Indians, Coloureds and Africans alike. Employers have made their domestic workers work long hours, for less pay, and sometimes without food. The government has only recently begun to give this much needed area of employment some attention. Legislation has been passed on conditions of employment, minimum wage and minimum hours of work. Despite this however, government cannot intervene in the privacy of employers homes to ensure that policy is being carried out.

Domestic work within the context of this study may be defined as work done by African women in middle-class Indian homes. Work done for their female employers involves domestic chores such as cleaning the various rooms in the house, scrubbing carpets, minding the children and catering to their needs, taking care of their employers pets and occasionally helping with cooking when the employer is unable to.

Domestic workers as individuals are rarely considered when research is done on domestic work. Issues surrounding domestic work are investigated, but rarely are the domestic workers given a forum to discuss their issues and problems important to them. When this is done, research still focuses on legal issues impacting on the domestic worker (Gordon (1985), Naidoo (1986)). This study was an attempt to turn away from these types of research, exploring instead the domestic worker as a woman, experiencing insecurities about her body. The insecurities were investigated in relation to the domestic worker's experience and perception of her body in uniform, and then

[37] I say 'political emancipation' because democracy is too broad and all embracing

compared to her experience and perception of her body when dressed in smart clothes that she found admirable and acceptable to wear in public.

Thirty-five domestic workers were interviewed for this study over a time span of three months. The feminist anthropological approach guided the methodology and research approach. Focusing on women in work, feminist anthropology illuminated the importance of taking into account all aspects of the respondents' lives and the importance of contextualizing the study against the background of their lives. Seeing as this dissertation also focused on the relationship between employer and employee, feminist anthropology provided the researcher with moral and ethical considerations during sample collection and the process of interviewing.

The research was carried out entirely in Durban, Kwazulu Natal. Additionally, all respondents worked in the Malvern and surrounding areas. Domestic work is a sensitive area of study. It involves interviewing and investigating a previously disadvantaged group within South Africa. These women, some of whom are barely articulate in English, often found it difficult to articulate themselves. Another problematic issue is the high turnover of domestic work. Domestic workers and their employers often clash and this causes the domestic worker to leave that job, or the employer to ask the domestic worker to leave her employ. It was more likely that employers asked their employees to leave, therefore, domestic workers sometimes refused to speak of their jobs, or simply refused to be interviewed. Despite the various limitations faced, interviews with thirty-five domestic workers were successfully carried out.

Domestic workers were interviewed mainly at their workplace. Aligned with feminist anthropology, a reflexive position was taken by the researcher. Respondents were made to feel entirely comfortable with no definitive researcher-respondent boundaries affecting the interview. Interviews following an interview schedule were casually undertaken in a relaxed environment. Questions surrounding domestic workers biological information, childhood and background, employment and body image were asked. Interviews with ten employers were also carried out to elicit a more holistic understanding of the domestic worker as an individual and as a woman in a relationship with another woman who employs her.

Domestic workers and their employers are often under conflict (Naidoo, Cock). Essentially, and at the core of this conflict is the fact that domestic workers do not want to be domestic workers under the power and authority of their employer. They are forced into this form of employment because they have no other alternative. They become submissive and subservient within their employer's homes, even though they are sometimes treated as one of the family. Domestic workers, on the other hand, do not truly feel as though they „belong' in their employers' homes because, as employer and employee, these two women are from two completely different worlds.

On the other hand, their employers are faced with the dual problem of requiring a domestic worker to carry out the chores that they are unable to do. They are reliant on the skills of their domestic worker but are often loath to admit it, not wanting to seem dependent on women who are „inferior' to them within society. Their domestic workers come from a low socio-economic class and have to appear both reliant and dependent upon them. But actually, there is a mutual dependence between these women, domestic workers depend on their employers for a job so that they may support themselves and their families, and employer's depend on their domestic workers to take care of the household and children so that they may go to work and support their families.

These women are involved in one of the most intimate employer-employee relationships across racial, socio-economic, ethnic and religious backgrounds. Most domestic workers live in rural areas, only visiting the urban areas for their work or shopping. They have no social time between their work and families. Employers on the other hand have lived in urban areas all their lives, they have achieved higher education's and have gone on to work in fields ranging from administration to psychology. Domestic workers have had to leave school, or their tertiary studies to help support their families. The relationship between employer and employee may seem friendly and easygoing, but there were definite undercurrents of resentment and uneasiness when relating to one another.

Domestic workers often felt that they were inferior to their employer and other people. To compensate for this perceived inferiority, domestic workers preferred to wear smart clothes both to impress others, and to fit in with the general crowd when travelling to work. Their perceived

inferiority stemmed from their childhoods. Respondents lived in rural areas, in tin or mud homes. Their parent's jobs brought in an income that barely supported the family. Domestic workers often wore hand-me downs or clothes given to them by other people. They did not experience any luxury, therefore when these women found employment, they revelled in shopping. Visiting shops such as Edgars, Woolworths and Mr Price, domestic workers chose fashionable, often uncomfortable clothes that followed the latest trends.

Clothing symbolized a transcendence of socio-economic boundaries; they rose above their inferiority and felt as if they were on the same level as their employers. There is a negativity attached to domestic work. Women working as domestic workers are compliant workers, yielding to their employer's demands, and later to their family's demands, rarely given time to cater to their own needs. The uniform, or old clothes used as the uniform, carries with it the negativity of domestic work. The uniform is inherently linked to domestic work. Semiotics highlighted the meaning of the uniform and what is represented to the domestic worker. The uniform being associated with domestic work therefore connected the domestic workers to the job that they do. In response to this, respondents created separate selves, one who was distinctly a domestic worker, wearing the uniform at work, and one who was a regular woman, both mysterious but stylish.

Domestic workers wore smart clothes in public because they could not imagine wearing their uniforms. They were afraid of the stigma attached to the uniform through their lowly paid and undesirable employment. They therefore „dressed up' to impress themselves and other people around them that they were worthy of compliments and envy. They created for themselves an „imagined status' through which they could elevate themselves above their situations. The social construction of their bodies was a result of the perceived „gaze' of the public, the domestic workers felt inferior to others when in uniform, but when „dressed up' they felt socially confident.

Domestic workers were in constant competition with other domestic workers. The only time that domestic workers went out and masqueraded in the „good' clothes was when they were travelling to and from work. The domestic workers barely had free, social time. The uniform connotes

negativity and stigma, while their smart clothes signify good, fresh and clean. Their clothes gave them a sense of freedom and made them feel as if anything was possible. When dressed up, domestic workers could pretend to be teachers, nurses, or secretaries, anything but domestic workers.

Domestic workers did not imagine being domestic workers when they were younger. Most hoped to be educated and secure good employment in law, or education. Parents of domestic workers often lived away from their homes while they worked in the urban areas. Their (domestic workers') fathers were employed in construction and other manual labour, while their mothers were most often domestic workers. Parents of domestic workers hardly spend time with their children because survival was of utmost importance; therefore the domestic workers lived with their grandparents throughout their childhoods. Growing up, the respondents hoped to have better lives than their parents, lives that were not a constant struggle. Therefore they aspired to become educated and be professionals. But unfortunately their dreams were not realized, and their goals have become aspirations for their children's futures.

Most of these women entered into domestic employment to help support their families, and most importantly their own children. Some fell pregnant during school, and consequently left school to support their children. Many fell pregnant out of wedlock, and became sole supporters of their children. Some domestic workers are resigned to being domestic workers until they are no longer needed to support their families, others intend on saving up and returning to school, but all domestic workers with children emphasize the importance of a good education for their children.

Domestic work is a multidimensional area of study. Studies have been done on the history of domestic work, on legal issues, on issues related to race and gender, and mostly on exploitation within domestic work. This study, though it accepts the importance of and has taken into account these other issues, also allows for the understanding that domestic work is more than just a form of employment. It is filled with women who travel to work daily, change their clothes, work the entire day and rush home to spend time with their families. These women have a history and a past which must be taken into account. Domestic workers want to be acknowledged as women, and not simply for the work that they do. They are more than a domestic worker in uniform, and

as most other women they like to be admired and be feminine. These are important issues that should be considered when researching domestic work, and the women that carried out that work, and these women should not be treated as a universal, invisible category situated only within the work they do.

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Appendix

Appendix A