

Questioning Intimacy:
Muslim „Madams“ and their „Maids“

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Supervisor's Approval

As the candidate's Supervisor I approve this thesis for submission.

Dr. D.R Bonnin

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A Million Waves

*Why do we live as if
The earth and the sea do not touch.
Have we not seen them shake hands
And disappear into each other
Through rage and reason*

*Why do we live as if
We have never left our footprints
Along this colourless course
In the wake of a thousand hopes before us
and the countless to come.*

*When we may dine together
Like the sand and the sea
Why do we tie our hands
behind our backs
And turn our eyes to the ground.*

*For yesterday's deference
And today's indifference
How can we call what we do living
When there are a million waves to wish on
And lessons from our land to learn*

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Abstract

Relationships between „madams“ and „maids“ have been the subject of various South African works, detailing the lives of domestic workers and their daily struggles. This study however aims to turn the focus on the madam and questions the complex intimacy at work between her and her maid. It is this intricate association between „madam“ and „maid,“ as well as the context of the home, which creates a site for a unique personal relationship that extends beyond the constraints of the working contract. In order to investigate this relationship, I explore the preconceived notions Muslim madams¹ of North Beach have when recruiting the ideal domestic worker as well as the way everyday life between madams and maids shapes their relationship. In demonstrating the types of relationships and levels of intimacy between them, this thesis focuses on three aspects of everyday life between Muslim madams and maid.

Firstly, I explore the „home“ as a contradictory location – being both a private space for the employer and a workspace for the maid, paying particular attention to the creation of boundaries and negotiations of space within the home. The second key aspect I examine is the extent to which religion influences the relationship between madam and maid. Religion is a thread running through this thesis as a determining factor in the recruitment of a domestic

¹ The dissertation is specific to Muslim madams of North Beach, Durban, most of whom are of Indian descent. It must be noted that ‘Muslims’ do not refer to a homogenous group, but incorporate degrees of religiosity. Similarly, the term ‘Indian’ when used, relates to origin or culture and not a component of racial difference.

worker and a way in which space is produced. Thirdly, I discuss the sharing of gender between madam and maid and the question of „sisterhood“ between them. These are underlying elements of the types of relationships between madam and maid which, I argue are characterised by levels of cultivated intimacy.

The project is based on the qualitative results gathered from 20 in-depth interviews with Muslim madams, two focus groups and five key informant interviews with domestic workers. My thesis contributes to the existing research exploring the relationships between madams and maids and opens further avenues for research. It demonstrates that there are key elements besides race and class that shape the relationships between madam and maid, which contribute to levels of cultivated intimacy between them.

Chapter One

Introduction

This thesis focuses on Muslim madams from North Beach, Durban, and explores their relationships with domestic workers. It questions the intimacy within the relationships between madam and maid. By looking beyond the strict parameters of the working contract and focusing on preconceived notions of the madam as well as the fluid social interactions between the two, this thesis interrogates the complex nature of their relationships.

Domestic work in South Africa has been theorised in two principal ways. Firstly, domestic work is investigated for its informal nature and the legal framework which attempts to formalise it. More controversially, much research centres on the construction of difference between madam and maid based on race in the pre- and post-apartheid context (Preston-Whyte 1969; Cock, 1980; King, 2007; Seedat, 2006). The power imbalances embedded in domestic work have often been attributed to racial differences, which arise as a central point of contention between madam and maid, focusing much of the attention on the domestic worker's point of view (Cock, 1980).

While I acknowledge these inevitable facets of domestic work in South Africa, my experience with domestic workers has led me to question other aspects which may influence the relationships between madams and maids, rather than race and class alone. In turning my

attention to the madams, specifically Muslim madams in North Beach Durban, my observations pointed to the notion that while race and class are the most visible differences between madam and maid, these may not be the only determinants of the types of relationships madams and maids share. This is evident in the fact that some have relationships which are quite formal and distant, while others share intimate bonds with each other that seem almost familial.

A review of South African literature (see chapter two) around the subject of domestic work however, shows that these aspects of the domestic work relationship have not been thoroughly investigated. Emphasis has largely been placed on racial and social differences between employer and employee. Groundbreaking work such as Cock's (1980) *Maids and Madams* highlighted racial stereotypes, frustration and the everyday struggles of maids in the homes of their madams, specifically in the context of apartheid. More recently, Ally's (2010) *From Servants to Workers South African Domestic Workers and the Democratic State* and King's (2007) *Domestic Service in Post- Apartheid South Africa: Deference and Disdain* extend this into the current South African social and legal climate, exploring the power relationships at play in the domestic work environment. Although the concepts of the home environment and intimacy between maids and madams are touched on in both King (2007) and Ally (2010)'s work, they attribute „intimacy“ to the setting and the nature of the work. This dissertation however, exposes how intimacy does not issue naturally from either of these contexts, but is instead cultivated through other dynamics that relate in part to the setting, but takes into account religion, gender and negotiation of space.

Thus, my thesis identifies this relationship as a lacuna in the literature on domestic work. The question I am asking is; what is the level of intimacy between madam and maid? In order to answer this question, I will explore the following sub-questions:

1. What preconceived ideas about maids do madams bring into the working relationship and how do these ideas influence the relationship?
2. What are the key elements of everyday life that influence the relationship?
3. How do madams negotiate the relationship with their maids?
4. What types of relationships emerge?

I engage with these questions in order to unearth the important underlying elements of the relationships between madam and maid which contribute to their intimate or distant relationships. My argument is that ultimately, the relationship that emerges is one of „cultivated intimacy“ between the madam and her maid. This cultivated intimacy is a fluid relationship that encompasses elements of both intimacy and distance. In order to understand how the relationship arrives at this end point, I argue that we need to go back to the recruitment process and that madams recruit their domestic workers based on preconceived notions of an ideal worker. For the Muslim madams interviewed, Islamic values and beliefs are central in the construction of these preconceived notions as well as embedded ideas about class, gender and racial differences.

However, I suggest that once the maid begins working, the relationship is then reconstructed through the social relations of everyday life. I argue that there are three key elements to this reconstruction. These are firstly, the negotiation and production of space and boundaries in the household; secondly, religious beliefs; and thirdly, the gender that is shared between the

madam and the maid. Interactions based on these elements are central in demonstrating my main argument that intimacy between madams and maids is cultivated or questionable.

My argument is constructed in four parts. Firstly, I suggest that the recruitment of a domestic worker is not merely based on the ability of the worker and the working contract. Rather, I show that it is in fact based on the preconceived ideas held by madams about domestic workers. Madams enter the recruitment phase with a preconceived idea of an ideal domestic worker. They look for a maid who fulfils this ideal. Madams follow a calculated method of finding this ideal worker through trusted sources and select the maid who reflects aspects of their Muslim identity as well as their personality and specific requirements. Islam therefore heavily influences the construction of this ideal and the recruitment of a domestic worker.

The second part of my argument focuses on the space of the home as an element of the everyday social interactions between madam and maid. While I have established that preconceived ideas held by the Muslim madam influence her selection of the domestic worker, my discussion on the negotiation of space and boundaries within the home, shows how everyday social life experienced by madam and maid in the home shapes their relationship. I argue that the home is a contradictory space as it is both a work space for the maid and a private space for the madam. In determining the maid's place in the madams' space, I argue that space is produced in three ways within the home. Firstly, space is produced through religion, which dictates the maid's work environment. I suggest that Islam has a profound impact on the spatiality of the maid's body as well. Secondly, some spaces are produced as more private than others within the home. Thirdly, space is produced through power, which is evident in the living arrangements of live-in maids. In line with this, I suggest that there exist emotional and physical boundaries within the home. These are

influenced by power relations and religion. These boundaries may be created by both madam and maid and they may be movable or fixed. The regular negotiation of these boundaries between madam and maid allows their relationship to be reconstructed is a key indicator of intimacy and distance within their relationship.

Based on these preconceived notions surrounding the recruitment of the ideal worker and how the sharing of space reconstructs their relationship, I begin to discuss the types of relationships that emerge between madams and maids. I suggest that there are three main types of relationships at work. These include those which are quite formal, those which seem familial and of most interest to this thesis, those which are ambiguous and are characterised by simultaneous intimacy and distance. By pointing out similarities between Muslim madams and their maids, which mainly relate to the experience of being female, I suggest the possibility of sisterhood between employer and employee. However, I argue that there exist preconceived ideas about differences between madam and maid as well as the imbalanced power relations within their relationship which incur elements of distance between them. Thus, intimacy between madam and maid is questioned in these terms.

My fourth and final argument unearths the complexity of intimacy between madam and maid. In employing an outsider in the private space of the home, I argue that despite maids being referred to as „one of the family,“ intimacy between madam and maid is not a natural development. Rather, I suggest that it is consciously constructed based on preconceived notions of difference as well as the benefits madam and maid may each gain from constructing this intimate relationship. By extracting and analysing displays of intimacy and the strangeness embedded in being a paid „member of the family,“ I argue that there are levels

of intimacy between madam and maid and that ultimately intimacy between madam and maid is questionable due to the ambiguous degrees of distance between them.

The main argument of this thesis therefore, is that the types of relationships between madams and maids extend beyond the working contact as relations within domestic service are highly personalised. They depend on the key indicators of religion, the creation and negotiation of spatial boundaries and shared experiences of being female. I suggest that the types of relationships that emerge are characterised by levels of cultivated intimacy and distance, due to the complexities the domestic work environment presents.

This thesis contributes significantly to a largely neglected area of literature in this field, as it sparks debate around influential factors such as religion, space and gender, which have otherwise been overlooked. It aims to unravel the complex and often contradictory relationships between Muslim madams and their maids and questions the intimacy or distance at work between the two.

1.1 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is structured into nine chapters. The second chapter comprises a discussion of South African literature on domestic work. I draw on the work of Preston-Whyte (1969), Cock (1980) and the more recent works of King (2007), Seedat (2006) and Ally (2010) to identify aspects of domestic work, which have been investigated. By highlighting areas which have been neglected, I identify themes which I aim to explore further. Locating my research

within a theoretical context, the second part of this chapter provides a framework for the elements of shared gender, the negotiation of space and intimacy and distance.

The third chapter of the thesis broadly defines domestic work in South Africa, taking into account the history of domestic work, demographics over time and the legal framework within which domestic work operates. Through these aspects of domestic work, I will argue that domestic work is a resilient sector, which is unlike other forms of employment which are strictly based on the working contract. I also identify the racialised and gendered nature of domestic work in South Africa which has implications for the argument of my thesis.

Chapter four highlights the qualitative methodological approach to the project. Here, I will briefly explain the research area, which is one of the most influential aspects of my research, the sampling process and structure of the focus groups. I also consider ethical factors as well as some limitations of the study.

Chapter five is the first to touch on the key questions imperative to my research and is the first contributing chapter towards my main argument. It seeks to identify the preconceived notions Muslim madams hold of domestic workers and their recruitment strategies in finding their „ideal maid.“ It investigates the qualities Muslim madams require of the „ideal“ maid and the process of selection of a domestic worker. In this chapter, I firstly investigate the markers of a Muslim madam’s identity by focusing on modesty, her collective identity, „Indianness,“ the importance of her home and of culinary culture. I then examine the influence of this complex identity on the selection process of a domestic worker. I argue that just as domestic work itself is unlike any other occupation, the selection of a domestic worker relies more on

personality traits and the madam's perception of the maid, rather than just the working contract.

Following this argument, I suggest in chapter six that just as the working contract in the case of domestic employment is not merely a working contract, the location of employment is not merely a work space. In answering one of the key questions relating to the home as an influential factor on the relationship between madam and maid, I firstly theorise the home in Goffman's (1959) terms as the „backstage area,“ in which the domestic worker is employed. In assessing the domestic worker's role in the home, I detail their key responsibilities within this space. Furthermore, I explore the home and the sharing of space between madam and maid and the negotiation between public and private spaces, showing that some spaces in the home are more private than others. It is these manifestations of power through space which construct intimate or distant relationships between madam and maid. Due to the religion of the madams, the production of space in the home is highly influenced by Islam. I argue that while this may appear to be an external factor to the domestic worker, she soon absorbs the influence of Islam into her personal space as well. It becomes clear that religion is a key catalyst for togetherness, between madam and maid. Loyalty and suspicion are also explored in terms of the apartment block as a space for the „poaching“ of good maids and the issue of ownership over domestic workers. These aspects of everyday social interactions between madam and maid are key indicators of the types of relationships between them.

These relationships are categorised into three types in chapter seven. In order to define the limits of intimacy and distance, I explore relationships based on a formal working contract, those which border on the familial as well as those which balance on the ambivalence of intimacy and distance. Here, I argue that while there are markers of togetherness between

madam and maid, the markers of difference between them often facilitate distance within their relationship. These, I suggest, pose a threat to identification with each other based on shared gender and the notion of sisterhood based on gender rather than experiences.

Finally, I explore the ambivalent relationships between madam and maid by focusing specifically on intimacy and distance. Chapter eight looks at intimacy as a cultivated concept rather than a natural one, based on limited information between madam and maid. It then challenges the notion of the domestic worker being „one of the family,“ showing how displays of intimacy may simultaneously distance madam from maid. This chapter concludes with the argument that while some relationships between madams and maids may be characterised by intimacy, madam and maid will always be distant companions due to the inequalities of power within the domestic working relationship.

Chapter Two

A Review of South African Literature and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Introduction

This first section of this chapter critically engages with the existing literature surrounding the subject area by highlighting themes which arise from the key texts of Preston- Whyte (1969), Cock (1980), Seedat (2006), King (2007) and Ally (2010). I will show that most South African literature deals with the construction of race and class as the main factors that divide madams and maids in the pre- and post-apartheid context. Through identifying lacuna in the literature, I will argue that there are other elements in the domestic work relationship that need to be considered when analysing the intimate or distant relationships between madam and maid. These elements include the preconceptions madams have when entering the recruitment process of finding the ideal maid, as well as the social relations of everyday life such as negotiation of space, shared gender and religion, which shape their relationship. I aim to link my research to pertinent theoretical questions raised by these works and more importantly, locate my research in areas which have been overlooked or avoided. In line with this, the second section of this chapter aims to contextualise the thesis within a theoretical framework. It does this by viewing the key concepts of gender, space and religion through a sociological lens and linking them to the purpose of this thesis.

2.2 A Review of South African Literature

My discussion of South African literature surrounding domestic work is largely dominated by the groundbreaking work of Preston-Whyte's *Between Two Worlds* (1969) and Cock's *Maids and Madams* (1980). Many of the questions raised through their research are still pertinent today and subsequent authors such as Seedat (2006), King (2007) and most recently Ally (2010) have drawn on and built on these themes. These authors' works will be referred to throughout the study, while other authors who speak to specific concepts will be referred to in later chapters. The aim of this section is to identify themes which relate to my research; gaps within the literature which my thesis aims to fill and to contextualise this thesis in light of the literature that exists.

Writing in 1969, Preston-Whyte unearthed many significant questions surrounding domestic work which remain relevant to this type of employment in contemporary South Africa. These included racial differences between maids and madams and the social lives of maids after working hours. While her work suggested that most maids were black (1969: 18) and that their reasons for entering domestic employment ranged from coercion to choice, the crux of her thesis focused on the social ties and contradictions existent within the maid/madam relationship, which is of relevance to this study. She examines relationships between madams and maids through racial categories, much like subsequent researchers; however her exploration of the impact of religion on this dynamic stands out. According to Preston-Whyte (1969: 50), the majority of maids who entered the city to look for employment were Christian. This was due to the individualistic nature of the religion, as opposed to the collective nature of „pagans“ who resided in rural areas. This brought a religious aspect into

the relationship between madam and maid. It is the relationship between the black Christian maid and the Indian Muslim madam which held the most interest for Preston-Whyte at the time, as well as for my thesis. The maids in her study were found to be highly superstitious. They were afraid of their Muslim employers and felt that „they (the Muslim madams) are like Catholics – they go to church a lot and their religion is powerful. They can curse you at the mosque“ (Preston-Whyte: 1969: 162). As a result, the maids would refuse to eat food prepared by their employers.

The preparation of food arose as a bone of contention between maids and their Indian employers as black maids were never allowed to cook, while Indian maids were. This was especially pronounced in homes where both were employed. As Preston-Whyte (1969: 168) notes, „when an Indian and African are employed in the same home, the heavy cleaning tasks fell to the latter, while the former was responsible for the laundry, dusting and kitchen work.“ Despite this, Indian madams tended to trust their Indian maids less than their black maids as Indian maids were viewed as thieves due to their cultural knowledge that Indian women had „wedding jewellery“ in their homes. Black maids were unaware of this cultural tradition and would not be tempted to look for the jewellery. It is these contradictions which led Preston-Whyte (1969: 169) to conclude that the most tension between madam and maid existed in the relationship between Indian madams and their maids, which is crucial to this thesis. She noted that the size of the house and the language barrier did influence the relationship, as well as the bond that children brought to the relationship, but this was not thoroughly explored. This leaves room for an investigation of the current relationships between Muslim madams and black maids and whether this tension still exists, as well as the negotiation of space between madam and maid.

Although Cock's (1980) study was not the first to examine the lives of domestic workers, the results of her research, as well as the impeccable timing of the study at the height of Apartheid held much weight in revealing the inner workings of the relationships between white madams and black maids. The key theme revealed through Cock's work was the power relations evident in the domestic work environment. Within the master/ servant dynamic, race and gender proved to be the tools through which power was exercised. Race, therefore is a crucial factor that threads through her work to which Cock (1980) attributes much of the reasoning behind the nature of these employment relationships. Cock (1980: 103) observes that it hampers communication between master and servant and ultimately results in the „non-committal ant-like way in which blacks serve whites.“ Workers, who were quite aware of themselves being black, internalised the fact that they were powerless due to their skin colour and ultimately became passive. Such subliminal tones in the relationship, according to Cock (1980: 102) often resulted in the maid acquiring a „child-like status,“ allowing the employer to take on the role of a parent and thus facilitating an unequal relationship between maid and madam, centering on punishment or praise. Twenty seven years later King (2007) found that this type of unequal relationship was still quite prevalent.

Despite their shared gender, one of Cock's (1980: 90) interviewees talking about her white employer stated that „she does not treat me as a woman. She looks down on me.“ Another stated that „a white woman can tell you to move a wardrobe. Because you are black, she does not think you are a woman“ (Cock, 1980: 115). Thus, their shared gender was overshadowed by racial differences. Her research touched on the subject of the workers' perceptions of themselves as women and the overarching relationships between maids and their madams. She showed that „the structure of the relationship is hierarchical and unequal in terms of content and it is often coloured for the employer with emotions of kindness and generosity“

(Cock, 1980: 132). Her work poignantly showed that while there existed a general assumption of sisterhood between women, the structural inequalities based on race and class between madam and maid hampered this notion of togetherness between women. Racial discrimination seems to dominate her work above all else. While the theme of gender was strong, it was dealt with secondarily and separately on the part of the madam and the maid, rather than being viewed as a common factor. It is this question of whether shared gender has any influence on the relationship between maid and madam that my research explores further.

Seedat (2006)'s thesis on, *—A sociological investigation into the socialisation process of the female African domestic worker in the Durban Metro region,*” relies heavily on Cock's (1980) findings regarding the lives of young black women and builds on them. The socialisation process, according to Seedat (2006: 58), stems from childhood where many young black girls are taught to look after the home, while men are considered „free“ to do as they please. These norms are engrained in the framework of patriarchal society, paving the way for a gendered society which influences careers and patterns of obedience in the home as well as in the public sphere (Seedat, 2006: 74). Such cycles of culturally acceptable behaviour results in black women being conditioned to be obedient and tend to the home. In essence,

„she moves from unpaid labour in her home or the home of her husband to paid labour in the home of her employer, where she applies her training that she received in her childhood“ (Seedat, 2006: 194).

While Seedat (2006) finds much to research in terms of the gendered nature of paid domestic work and patriarchal culture, her thesis provides an account of the predicament of black female domestic workers at that point in time. Furthermore, the aspect of gendered norms

could have been investigated further in terms of emphasising similarities between women. Yet the research seemed to highlight race and gender as catalysts for division.

King (2007) also focuses on race as a key aspect in *Domestic Service in Post- Apartheid South Africa*. Her research is located in a post- apartheid framework, examining domestic service in South Africa in light of the political economy and global experiences. Her work is based mainly on theory, finding „hidden meanings“ in domestic work and substantiating the notion that domestic workers will always be viewed with disdain. Much like Cock (1980), King notes the apparent parent-child dynamic ingrained in this relationship and finds that it is what she calls „pseudo-maternalistic,“ due to the employer often taking on the role of a mother. She does not explore the gender dynamics in the relationship between the madam and maid and attributes the unequal distribution of power to „perceived racial differences“ (King, 2007: 23). This she theorises as „chains of otherness.“ These, she explain relate to the perceptions of the madam and the maid herself who view each other as different than themselves, which follows through to other members of the employers family and creates links or chains.

King (2007) was the first to begin to examine the theme of intimacy present within the maid and madam relationship, although she does not accord it much weight in her analysis. She concludes that emotional dependency on the part of the madam (King: 2007: 118) is a key contributor to intimacy. However, most maids are oblivious to this. Friendships between the two were prevalent and her work revealed a poignant point that these friendships would often overshadow payment. When she asked one of her interviewees what she would do if her madam could not pay her, the maid replied that she would still stay with her madam (King,

2007: 115). The blurring of the employment contract allows for exploitation as a result of the almost familial emotional attachment between maid and madam.

King (2007) also examined the influence of religion on the relationship between madam and maid. Unfortunately, she does not seem to accord it much importance and only touches lightly on it. Only one out of her nine case studies dealt with a Christian employer and a Xhosa maid (they were extremely close). She found that religion attached philosophies and attributes of being kind and charitable to the madam's behaviour towards her maid. For example, at Christmas time the madam gave a large Christmas hamper to the maid. According to King (2007: 120- 130) this allowed the madam to fulfil her religious values. She contrasts this with the relationship between a Xhosa madam and a Xhosa maid. In this example, she found that this relationship was less dependent and more importantly, the maid acted as an equal, rather than assuming the role of a child. This was not the case with most of her case studies.

The giving of gifts is viewed by King as superficially kind, yet drenched in underlying tones of condescension such that the employer decides what gifts are given when. Despite the friendships evident between madam and maid, King (2007) questions, why kindness is so effective as an instrument of power. This is most apparent in the statement made by many domestic workers, „madam is my friend,“ which is „used simultaneously to promote a sense of intimacy and yet maximise social difference“ (King, 2007: 179). Thus, for King (2007) power remains the strongest theme within the madam - maid relationship.

While King (2007) does allude to religion and intimacy and their influence on the maid/madam relationship, I feel that she does not explore these dynamics to their full extent.

In each case study, she describes the homes of the madams which she contrasts with the home of the maid in order to demonstrate the differences in their standards of living. Yet, she does not investigate the mutual space in which maid and madam interact and how the private home of the employer becomes a work space for the maid. My research aims to explore religious beliefs, specifically those of Muslim employers as well as the contradictory concept of private and public space and how this shapes the relationship between madam and maid.

In the most recent publication focusing on domestic work, Ally (2010) details the journey of domestic work through South Africa's history. At its core, *From Servants to Workers* examines the shift from the oppressive exploitative legislation regarding domestic work in the pre-1994 period to the protective laws of post-apartheid South Africa. She questions the effectiveness of the current legislation as maids are seemingly still under the authority of the state and their employers. Thus, again power rises as a perennial theme and in this case is described as the „tenacious theoretical problem at the core of paid domestic work“ (Ally, 2010: 17). Power in these terms incorporates issues of dominance and resistance within the maid-madam relationship.

Through this, Ally (2010) depicts this type of employment as one which is different from any other line of work as „their work, especially child care, involves as a requirement of the work – the development of intimate emotional bonds“ (Ally, 2010: 13). She explores intimacy more thoroughly than previous research. My research builds upon this framework. The dual-care regime is one which emerges as the fundamental paradox of domestic work, where the domestic worker cares for her employer's children while being distanced from her own (Ally, 2010: 119). Due to the unequal power relationships, maids often resist silently, or as Ally (2010: 166) points out, turn to Christian prayer groups called *manyanos* to cope with their problems. Ally (2010: 166) likens these South African groups of domestic workers who use

religion and the church as coping mechanisms to Filipina maids in Hong Kong who use religion to „aid in controlling negative feelings toward their employers.“

While the use of religion by domestic workers is investigated by Ally (2010), much like King (2007) there is little discussion of the religion of their madams and whether faith plays any part in the relationship between madam and maid. Religion of the employer seems to be an area which has been largely overlooked, despite the arguments of the early work of Preston-Whyte (1969) and work by Deborah Gaitskell (2010) on the use of Christianity to discipline „native“ girls in order to deem them more acceptable in urban areas. Yet as religion is produced through the space of the home, which is the context of the maid-madam relationship, it is one of the key themes that require examination.

2.2.1 Conclusion

My discussion of South African literature has highlighted areas of domestic work which have been thoroughly explored. In particular, the construction of race as a major point of difference between madam and maid has been investigated by Cock (1980) and King (2007) in both the pre- and post-apartheid eras. Both have explored the concept of power relations between madam and maid on the basis of race and class. However, areas such as the sharing of space and the influence of religious beliefs and values have been neglected. Despite Preston-Whyte's (1969) groundbreaking discussion of the tensions between Indian madams and black maids, this has not been taken further by later authors, nor has the analysis of space negotiation between madams and maids.

More importantly, while most South African literature begins from standpoint of the maid, not much literature focuses on the madam, asking the key question, „how does the madam view her relationship with the domestic worker?“ The literature review has shown that there exist many unanswered questions surrounding the complex nature of the relationship between maids and madams, which emerge from this unique home-based context. My research therefore locates itself within the gaps in the current literature surrounding domestic work in South Africa. It argues that madams enter the recruitment process with preconceived ideas about the ideal maid. Their relationship is then reconstructed based on their social interactions in their everyday lives. One of the underlying elements of this are religious beliefs and values, the negotiation of space and the sharing of gender. These contribute to the types of relationships which emerge between madam and maid and the levels of intimacy between them.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This section of the chapter locates my thesis within a theoretical framework. It provides a background for the questions I will be exploring in the thesis. I will do this by outlining various sociological conceptualisations of each theme and show how I will be using it to substantiate my argument. Firstly, I will focus on gender and the sociological development of the concept. This will consider gender as an ordering principle of society and a catalyst for divisions between male and female. This is carried through to the socialisation process and finally to the notion of intersectionality, with which this thesis is most concerned.

The examination of the negotiation of space is imperative for this thesis. Following the theoretical investigation of gender, the concept of space as theorised by Lefebvre (1991) and Massey (2005) is explored to emphasise meanings of space, the production of it and the boundaries within it. Linking these to power, I use Foucault's concepts of supervision and spatial arrangements of power in relation to the home environment. While domestic space is often viewed internally as private and externally as public, this study views the home as a space in which some areas are more private or public than others, and explores the nature of these boundaries, as well as the sharing of space between madam and maid. Furthermore, the concept of religion is explored as the thesis focuses on Muslim madams due to the every day practices and religious stipulations dictated by Islam. Seen as identity, ideology and a moral code, religion for the purpose of this thesis will be explained in terms of sacred and profane spaces in the home as well as the incorporation of Islam into every practice. I will use these concepts to show how the domestic worker becomes absorbed in the dominant ideology of the space.

Finally, the theoretical framework touches on intimacy and distance. I will define these concepts as well as sketch the reward-cost dynamics of intimacy, which is especially relevant to the madam-maid relationship.

2.3.1 The shared experience of being female

Gender, which is „one of the most powerful classifications“ of society (Krais, 2006:2), arises as a key concept of this study. In the relationship between madam and maid, both may identify with being female. This similarity, I argue, is influential in understanding the nature of their relationship. I provide a general discussion of the concept and then show how I aim to use the concept to substantiate my main argument. Gender has been analysed in three main ways. Firstly, it has been thoroughly explored as a biological difference between men and women. Secondly, theorists have investigated gender as a socialisation process and more recently, the concept has been viewed critically in terms of a universal sisterhood between women.

Focusing on gender as a key difference between men and women, gender has been defined as the „psychological, social and cultural aspects of maleness and femaleness“ (Kessler and McKenna, 1978:7 cited in Wharton, 2005:6). The concept of gender is seen as an „organising principle“ (Wharton, 2005: 9) of the social world and has been a subject of interest both on the individual and social level. As a „multilayered system of practices and relations“ (Wharton, 2005: 69), it concerns itself with shaping identities of masculinity and femininity as well as the dispositions of people within these realms. As Wood (2009) explains, these

expectations begin from birth based on biological classification and carry themselves through the process of socialisation. Thus, socialisation is based on the concept of gender as a differentiation between male and female. From the developmental years, boys and girls are taught what the acceptable behaviours are for their respective gender – reinforced by their schooling, lives and various artefacts such as toy cars for boys and dolls for girls or pink dresses for girls and blue shirts for boys. Through absorbing socially acceptable traits as masculine and feminine, personalities are also shaped according to this classification; for example, masculine is associated with toughness and femininity with emotion. On the social level, the individual may find a sense of belonging by being part of a larger group that shares similar traits.

The socialisation process of masculine and feminine carries itself through into the working world and has a profound impact on types of work, which are categorised as masculine and feminine. As mentioned through my analysis of South African literature, the category of domestic work has found itself engrained in the feminine domain, as it seems natural for women to be associated with cleaning and caring due to their presumed passive and nurturing nature. Gallotti (2009) observes that domestic work is indeed a „women issue“ (Gallotti, 2009: 2) which is substantiated by the history of socially reproductive work in the home as far back as the early 19th century. According to Women’s History Online (2010) it was during this period that men and women were associated with separate domains – the men being connected to the ruthless, impure public spaces such as the workplace, while women were seen to be „guardians of the domestic haven“ due to their apparent pure and submissive nature, which would complement the private capacity of the home.

Frosh and others (2001) note that gender appropriate behaviour is learnt – pointing to the fact that gender may not be innate, but rather, is a process where masculinity and femininity are „acquired“ (Evans, 2003: 17). A clear example is Seedat’s (2006) research, which found that domestic workers had been taught housework at a young age in order to prepare them for their role as carers of the home, while boys had the freedom to choose their path in life. This allowed domestic work to constantly be associated with the feminine gender. While Seedat’s assumptions that the dominance of African women in domestic work can essentially be attributed to socialisation is highly generalised, I note here that most of the key informants interviewed admitted to being taught to clean homes from a young age. The home, which is a site for gender practices (Morgan, 1999: 29) thus lays the „foundation for a deeply divided and unequal social world“ (Evans, 2003: 17). In effect, as Evans (2003: 32) points out, the home takes on a Marxian appearance, where the wife becomes the proletariat and the husband the bourgeoisie. It is assumed that all women share this universal common denominator of being of an inferior status to men as well as their association with domestic work.

Gaitskell *et al* (1983) reinforce the notion of domestic work being women’s work, noting that the „supervision of domestic servants by madams also fulfils the expectation that domestic work is essentially part of the women’s sphere.“ It is within this „sphere“ that the expectation of sisterhood arises. The idea of „shared gender“ between women, or as I refer to it, the shared experience of being female, has come under much criticism as feminist approaches to research have come to the fore. Due to experiences of oppression and motherhood, as well as the assumed universal fears, worries and responsibilities shared by women, there exists a generalisation which claims that a sisterhood can be built on a supposed „sharing of gender (Fouche 1994: 78; Mohanty, 1995: 68- 72 and Moore 1994). This sharing of gender will be

explored in my thesis as one of the elements of the maid-madam relationship, which may present the possibility of sisterhood between the two. However, when class differences between madam and maid are acknowledged, the question is whether a sisterhood can truly arise, despite the differences of power and class.

Gaitskell *et al* (1983: 92) point out the challenges posed to sisterhood between madam and maid as the housewife and the domestic worker will never hold the same status. The madam or housewife is not directly remunerated for domestic chores and does so due to her familial ties with members of the household, yet she holds the power to hire and fire domestic workers. The domestic worker on the other hand is „subject to control and supervision (Gaitskell *et al*, 1983: 92) and is paid a wage in exchange for a service. Thus, despite their common roles as women and the doers of domestic work, sisterhood between them is questionable due to these class and power differences.

Deeper than the just the classification of domestic work as women's work, the domain is racialised and is associated mainly with poor, black women in South Africa. Most of these women are uneducated and poor, due to the racial discrimination of the apartheid era. These experiences of being poor, black women further challenge the notion of sisterhood as their experience in comparison to their madams are vastly different. The feminist theory of intersectionality takes these differences of experience into account. Writing in 1985, Maconachie (1985: 80) related that in South Africa, women's subordination is „clearly interwoven with race and class difference,“ based on the country's past, which reproduces „racialised logics of apartheid and constructs blacks as a servant class“ (Ally, 2010: 2).

Due to the „triple jeopardy“ (King, 1988 cited in Davis, 2008: 70) of being triply disadvantaged based on race, class and gender, the theory of „intersectionality“ (Crenshaw, 2001) seeks to explain the constant vulnerability of poor black women.

Largely a feminist theory, an intersectional approach emphasises the „cross-cutting nature of race, class and gender“ and admits that people live their lives not according to just one of these characteristics, but all three simultaneously. As Davis (2008: 71) explains, with the culmination of varying levels of inequality, the individual becomes more vulnerable. Along the same lines, oppression and discrimination may take on a multi-layered approach. Often, black women are said to carry the burden of a „double bind“ (Pillay, 1985: 22), where discrimination is based on race, gender and class. Thus, identities are constructed through the intersection of these multiple experiences, tied in with power structures, social relations and history. While this approach is not new, it is indeed poignant in explaining South Africa’s current social climate, where race is „gendered“ and gender is „racialised“ (Davis, 2008: 72) resulting in challenges to social mobility. Those who are disadvantaged may always remain so. This may explain the reason domestic work is constantly associated with disadvantaged black women who find themselves discriminated against despite their shared gender with other women due to their race, and who are simultaneously discriminated against by men of the same race, due to their gender. Thus, while women may universally share the experience of being female, their life experience may differ vastly based on race, class and gender. Internationally, migrants face a similar fate. As Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2002) note, the cleaner is often a woman of colour who speaks broken English, which reproduces the ideology that those who fit these criteria hold an inferior status. Ultimately, „dirt“ is associated with those who remove it.

While the conceptualisation of gender both as a factor of differentiation between male and female as well as its continuation into the socialisation process is relevant to the South African context, I use the concept of gender as a catalyst for togetherness or difference between madam and maid. Wharton (2005: 23) argues that „less attention is paid to the differences among women than the differences between men and women,” thus; when gender is debated it is often viewed as a divergent force between men and women, rather than an active force among women. This is where I aim to locate my argument. Intersectionality which admits differences and varying experiences between women, speaks to this thesis, rather than the divide between men and women based on gender. As both madam and maid share the experience of being female, I argue that gender may act as a unifying principle between them or, in light of the nature of intersectionality, emphasise the differences between them. I also question the possibility of sisterhood between madam and maid with particular reference to the imbalances in power within the paid employment relationship.

2.2.2 The Negotiation of Space

My concern with space in this thesis refers to the space of the home as the context for the relationship between madam and maid. As this concept is open to interpretation, I have chosen to base my theoretical discussion on the work of Lefebvre (1991) and Massey (2005). The notion of space being empty or neutral has been severely criticised, especially by these theorists. Lefebvre’s main argument rests on the notion that spaces are in fact, filled with meaning. They can be modified, negotiated and they have the ability to exclude and include others. He writes:

„social space thus remains the space of society, of social life. Man does not live by words alone; all „subjects” are situated in a space in which they must

either recognise themselves or lose themselves, a space in which they must both enjoy and modify" (Lefebvre, 1991: 35).

Thus space, as a concept is socially constructed and can be interpreted by those in it in a positive or negative light. Massey (2005: 9) takes this concept of space being modified further by suggesting that space is constantly under construction. She makes three propositions. Firstly, she states that space is a product of interrelations; secondly she mentions that space comprises a sphere of possibility of the existence of multiplicity and thirdly, space is constantly changing and being „renegotiated.“ This thesis is mainly concerned with her third proposition in terms of boundaries. It considers the mobility of boundaries and the erection of new ones as well as the fracturing of old ones. Furthermore, I base my argument on Lefebvre's (1991: 35) central argument that space is produced. I look at this in terms of the spaces produced and how employer and employee negotiate this space.

In line with Lefebvre's assertion that there are demarcated spaces which „embrace some things and excludes others" (1991: 99), I pay particular attention to boundaries within space. Massey (2005: 179) states that boundaries are constantly being dismantled, renegotiated and new ones being erected. Yet she asks the question, „against what are boundaries erected?" While she asks this in a socio-political light, I will use this concept in terms of the space of the home, how spaces and boundaries are negotiated between madam and maid and if these boundaries are permeable. It is within the home that these boundaries contribute to the production of space. „Space," according to Lefebvre (1991: 143) „implies a certain order," and in doing so, defines disorder. Thus space „regulates" life (Lefebvre, 1991: 358) and while it has no inherent power, power is often produced through space. Mills (2003: 45) links this idea to Foucault's idea of a modern panopticon society. She aptly cites Smart (1985: 86) who undertook research in the installation of CCTV cameras in central Britain to deter petty

criminals and showed that while the streets and the cameras themselves are not holders of power, power is exercised and produced through them. Similarly, religion or the dominant ideology of those within the space may be produced through the space.

When exploring the links between space and power, I found Michel Foucault's work most relevant to this thesis. While he was concerned with various aspects of the self and society including knowledge, discourse, sexuality and discipline, it is his idea of the panopticon which this thesis identifies with. Mills (2003: 45) suggests that Foucault's „spatial arrangement of power“ rests on the notion of supervision. The panopticon is an architectural metaphor that suggests that instead of using brutality to coerce deviants into becoming model citizens, the power of observation (knowing one is being watched) would be more effective, as in the case of CCTV's in Britain. Knowing that they were being watched, deviants would conform to acceptable rules and behaviours and the one in authority would gain power from observation.

However, Foucault emphasises that power is not merely performed – rather, it circulates (Mills, 2003: 34) and is not fixed. It works as a strategy and not as a possession. This is relevant to my thesis as domestic workers, although not in a position of power; do exercise power of their own. This is reinforced by Foucault who argues that the „individual should not simply be seen as the recipients of power, but the “place” where power takes place.“ Thus, he speaks of „power relations“ as they operate between people in every day life.

One cannot escape though, the power that still lies within the position of „madam.“ In line with the panopticon, which facilitates a „controlling system of power“ (Dechavez, 2010), the domestic worker is under constant surveillance by the employer. This, according to Athar and

Hussain (1984: 101) enforces the disciplining component of power relations, which if violated may result in punishment. Through the knowledge of the whereabouts and behaviours of one's domestic worker, the madam gains knowledge and ultimately power over the „maid,“ despite their interaction. The effects of such visibility may be vast, especially if the domestic worker lives with the employer's family and such surveillance continues into her personal space and time. Thus, „visibility is a trap,“ (Dechavez, 2010) and while Foucault emphasises the positive elements of gaining knowledge from observation, it may be deemed invasive and exploitative by the subject of such observation. The domestic worker however is not powerless. She may erect her own boundaries within her employer's space.

Considering these arguments by Massey (2005), Lefebvre (1991) and Foucault's theory, it is clear that the production of space as well as negotiated boundaries within it, are relevant to society. However, I have chosen to use these concepts in terms of the space of the home and the relationships between madams and maids. My thesis questions how religion and power are produced through space as well as how physical boundaries in the private space of the home allow some spaces to be more private than others. I am also concerned with emotional boundaries between madam and maid and whether power is central to erecting boundaries, or if those who are not in power are capable of doing so.

The use of space is further explored in gendered terms by McKie *et al* (1999: 29) within the home, as some spaces are regarded as feminine while others are seen as masculine. This is of particular importance to my thesis as Islam requires the separation of unmarried men and women, which will be explored later. For McKie *et al* (1999), the home remains a private space. This thesis extends this concept, as I argue that within the private space of the home, there are some spaces which are more private than others. While the home itself is viewed as

a private domain, I argue that within the home there are varying levels of private and public space, which my research aims to explore further. The home, a sanctuary and the most private place for the employer and her family, becomes an employment environment for the worker, thus blurring the lines between the private and public domains of society.

As a shared space, the home facilitates internal activities which may be carried out together, such as caring for children or decision making regarding living arrangements as well as eating meals together (McKie *et al*, 1999: 7). The home also links to external activities, which are „often undertaken with other members of the household, for other members of the household or in order to escape other members of the household“ (McKie *et al*, 1999: 9). Essentially, the dwelling is ingrained in the daily lives of those who live or work in it and as McKie *et al* (1999: 5) point out, the „location, design and internal arrangement of this space is both a product of and an influence on these social activities.“ This is reflected in the one who controls the space. For madams and maids therefore, the experiences and movement within this space are quite different.

Cock (1980, 68) observes that paid domestic work results in a „set of frustrations due to exposure to others“ standards of living,” implying that the home presents the contradiction between „work space“ and „private space,” (Ory, 2005) a context unique to domestic work. The constant comparisons on the part of the domestic worker results in feelings of inadequacy, substantiated by one domestic worker interviewed by Cock (1980: 69) who wished her madam could see the squalid conditions in which she lived. Thus, the stark inequality in status gives rise to a plethora of perceptions and emotions which shape their relationship.

Spain (1992) further illustrates that the home becomes the site for the production of social relations which are reproduced outside the home. Cock (1980) in fact states that the home represents a „hidden site“ for inequality. Despite the inclusion of domestic workers as an integral part of the home, many are still given a separate set of utensils with which to eat and furthermore, confined to their rooms in the cases of live-in maids, whose time and freedom are controlled by the employer even after working hours. This, according to Parreñas (2008) results in live-in domestic workers experiencing „placelessness“ or a feeling of not really belonging anywhere as the home presents a private space, yet they remain outsiders. This relates aptly to McDowell’s argument on gender and space (1999: 166), that there exist „explicit and implicit rules and regulations about whose bodies are permitted in which spaces between them and their internal divisions.“ My thesis aims to use the notion of private and public space within the „private“ domain of the home to investigate how this physically plays out in the home and how the sharing or compartmentalisation of space shapes the relationships between madam and maid.

2.3.3 Religion

Religion permeates through every community which subscribes to the belief in a power greater than themselves. According to McGuire (1992: 10-14), religion may be understood substantively, which focuses on what religion is, or functionally which speaks to what religion does. Functionally, religion can be viewed as an identity. As an individual, one may locate oneself within a larger group of believers, which facilitates belonging and meaning or points of reference. Due to the process of socialisation, the „interpretations that seem most plausible to a person are likely to be those that are familiar and held by others who are important to that individual“ (McGuire, 1992: 31). Thus, the individual locates his or herself

within a larger group and may define his or herself in relation to society. Various rituals which are carried out together reinforce this sense of identity, such as going to the church, mosque, synagogue or temple on holy days. Furthermore, these rituals are legitimised by religion – they explain why believers do what they do such that one goes to church because one is Christian and so forth. It is essentially a process of rationalisation, with which Weber (McGuire, 1992: 261-263) was primarily concerned. These actions, like gender, are not innate, but learned over time in accordance with one's family and the norms and values taught by the particular faith.

Religion also distinguishes between the sacred and the profane. As Durkheim (cited in McGuire, 1992: 13) states „the realm of the sacred refers to that which a group of believers sets apart as holy and protects from the profane by special rites and rules.“ In this regard, the concept of religion will be used in this thesis as a demarcation of space as well as for its practice in every day life in the home. Religion makes space though this distinction of what is sacred and profane. For example in Islam, the place where the Quraan is, is holy and may not be touched by a person who is not in a pure state. Furthermore, the separation of men and women who are not married is imperative, facilitating the demarcation of space for males and females. As mentioned in the previous section, space is produced by religion, allowing some spaces to be more sacred than others in the home. Thus, there may be boundaries between the sacred and profane, or boundaries between the masculine and feminine within the home.

Within the private space of the home, the religious practices of the employer, in this case Islam, are inescapable. As Turner (1991: 9) points out, despite the secular nature of the general population, „religion may continue within the private space of the body of individuals,“ which operates within the private domain of the home. According to James and

Kalisperis (1999), „the ritual use of the house distinguishes it from the profane outside space.“ The home is also a site for religious practice, the values and beliefs of which may underlie the inner workings of the home and more specifically, determine the domestic worker’s responsibilities.

In Islam, the ideal home symbolises a place of worship. It is required to be so clean that angels will bless the home (Al- Inaam Online 2009). „Evils,“ such as smoking, drinking pictures of people, dogs, the television and excessive noise or decoration are avoided in Muslim homes. Due to the five daily prayers, the prayer area and religious texts in the home are not to be contaminated or touched by those who have not performed the proper ablution. As mentioned earlier, men and women who are not married are forbidden to interact and spaces in the home accommodate men and women separately (Al-Inaam Online, 2009 b). If not communicated to the maid well, this may prove offensive to her. In light of these stipulations, domestic workers in Muslim homes are to adapt to these requirements and if looking after children, are obliged to ensure Islamic practices are instilled.

Drawing a parallel between feudal society and religion Turner (1991: 76) states that „because the ideology of the ruling class had a religious character, the whole ideological system of society was also religious.“ This concept relates aptly to the Muslim home, in which the domestic worker has to take on certain Islamic characteristics in order to ensure the smooth running of the home in line with Islamic rules as understood by the respondents². The theoretical perspectives of religion as ideology, identity and a divide between sacred and profane are sociologically relevant, but the focus of this thesis highlights religion’s influence

² There are a variety of rules to which different sects of Muslims ascribe to. For example, many in Saudi Arabia believe in the seclusion of women, while some Muslims in Durban support women entering the workforce. Thus, ‘Islamic rules’ may vary according to context.

on space and lifestyle which is carried out through everyday practices in the home – ultimately influencing the relationship between madam and maid. These „binding rules“ (Turner, 1991: 47) of religion cement social relationships between those of similar faiths, yet may highlight the differences between madam and maid, who are often of different faiths. My research aims to use the concepts of religion in order to assess its role as a catalyst for understanding between maids and madams, or as a divergent force within the relationship.

2.3.4 Intimacy and Distance

Due to the nature of the home, the strict boundaries of the working space are influenced by the psychological contract between madam and domestic worker. Erber (2001: 5) states that there exists a need for affiliation or intimacy in all relationships in order to reduce uncertainty and gain rewarding relationships from it. According to Winstead et al (1997: 118), friendships or relationships often emerge between two people of the same gender, and it is friendship between women which is more likely to bloom due to the element of „self disclosure“ inherent in the nature of women. Women were also found to be more communal, expressive and emotional, resulting in a more intimate relationship than cross-sex friendships. Common bonds such as being a wife and mother also add to the similarities between women, allowing their bond to be „affectively richer“ than other relationships (Winstead et al, 1997: 118). I choose to use this concept of intimacy and question the levels of intimacy between madam and maid, based on similarities and conversations they share.

Given the maid-madam relationships and the „sharing“ of gender between the two, one may initially view their relationship as female friends. However, due to the disparities in power imbued in this unique relationship, I choose to view the concept of intimacy more critically.

Relying on Hansen's (1989) study on Zambian servants and employers, it is her argument of the dialectic of intimacy and distance between madam and maid that bears relevance for this thesis. While my research does indicate levels of friendship between madam and maid, Hansen (1989) reminds us that due to the power imbalance within the madam and maid dynamic, kinship is imbued with differences as well. Coining the term „distant companions,“ Hansen (1989: 170) shows how white employers had their chief contact with „Africans“ during their master-servant relationship. While they had employed their servants for many years, they did not know them personally. Yet they claimed to „know them“ and their personality traits. Her research further shows that while their employers had this paradoxical familiarity with them, servants still referred to them as their „owners“ (Hansen, 1989: 248). This distant companionship presented an awkward predicament to the servant, who knew that their employers did not want to become involved in their problems, even when they asked intrusive questions (Hansen, 1989: 249) and made to feel child-like. Taking this beyond race, Hansen (1989:249) notes that:

„even in Zambian households, where employers sometimes are addresses in the idiom of kinship, inequality is recreated everyday in household interaction. Even if they treat you nice, say servants, you are still a servant....Zambians forget, servants say, that you are a fellow black- or rather that they are black themselves.“

Thus, kinship is imbued with power differences and distance despite racial similarities. Intimacy and distance operate in conjunction with each other in these terms.

Intimacy is „managed“ in Murrey's (1998) words. Defining intimacy as a „non-sexual familiarity and closeness, both physical and emotional, that may give rise to affection, warmth and deep feelings,“ Murrey states that intimacy progresses after private information about family life is shared. Yet in the relationship between madam and maid, intimacy is

managed to the extent that this information is limited to what the madam feels she wants to share. Therefore, there exists an element of distance even within a maid-madam relationship which is „family-like.“

This type of relationships, in Rollins (1987 cited by Ostrander) is uniquely personal and may exist only „between women.“ In the case of domestic work, she states that the domestic worker becomes an extension of or a surrogate for the woman of the house – making their relationship „uniquely personal.“ However, one cannot overlook the financial element of intimacy. Writing in 2000, Zelizer emphasises the need for affection and intimacy. She claims that in the purchase of intimacy, people use money or gifts to buy intimate relations. In this way, intimacy can be an expression of cultural values or, if analysed further, of coercive power structures. Thus, domestic workers are paid for their „kinship.“

Furthermore, intimacy may balance on the reward-cost dynamic which benefits both parties, depending on the extent of self-disclosure and trust between the two. This applies to the relationship between madam and maid as well. For example the employee exchanges labour (cost) for resources or money (reward), while the employer exchanges money (cost) for friendship (reward). Ally (2010: 103) has shown that domestic workers who engage in emotional work practice compassion towards their madams who often manipulate their working contracts. Thus the role of the psychological contract cannot be underestimated as it determines the intimate or distant nature of the relationship that emerges from such a dynamic. Ultimately, Boris and Parreñas (2010:1-9) argue that domestic workers are „intimate labourers,“ having access to the intimate space of the home and knowledge of its inhabitants,“ yet intimacy is also dependent on social factors of race, gender and class. They

admit that intimacy is varied in each situation, however the notion of being paid to care never truly recedes.

Ally (2010: 96) takes this theme further by investigating the emotional links between employers and domestic workers in the home environment, stating that „the nature and setting of their work intimately bind them to the families that employed them.“

Her findings suggest that often domestic workers know more about the employer's family members than the employer due to the nature of the work (ironing, washing clothes, Cleaning rooms) and grow to „love“ them. However Ally (2010: 98) clarifies that this is rather a „dialectic of intimacy and distance.“ She suggests that the notion of intimacy is ambiguous, often ranging from being treated like a stranger or one of the family, according to convenience. It is ultimately the fact that domestic work is paid that allows the employer a „practice of power“ (Ally, 2010: 98) which is inescapable, sometimes reducing the worker to a „child-like status“ (Cock, 1980: 102). This paradox will be explored through my research in order to explain the nature of the relationship between madam and maid.

2.3.5 Conclusion

The theoretical framework provided in this chapter bears relevance to my overall argument. I have outlined firstly, the sociological conceptualisation of gender. Theorists have viewed gender as a construction of difference between male and female. Based on this, gender has been analysed as a key catalyst for the socialisation process as Seedat (2006) and Frosh et al (2001) have shown. However, I have chosen to explore shared gender and the possibility of

sisterhood between madam and maid especially in light of the debates surrounding intersectionality and difference between women.

As one of the key themes of my work, I have based much of my theoretical considerations around space on the work of Lefebvre (1991) and Massey (2005). Their arguments relate to the meaning and production of space. This of particular importance in terms of boundaries within the home which differentiate between public and private space, within the private space of the home. While their work is largely based on societies at large, I use their conceptualisation of space in terms of the home and link this to Foucault's idea of power and how power is produced through space. Religion is similarly produced through space. While I have shown that religion may relate to ideology and socialisation, my thesis is based on religion and identity. Islam not only has an influence on the home and the domestic worker's environment, but also on the Muslim madam's idea of the ideal maid. These preconceived notions underlie her identity and her perception of the ideal maid. Thus, the concept of religion is a thread running through my thesis.

Intimacy and distance is a recurring theme throughout this thesis. I have chosen Erber's (2001) work to conceptualise it. His work views intimacy between women friends and the reward-cost dynamics at work within these relationships. I take this concept further in analysing the intimacy between female employer and employee and how this works in paid domestic employment. I show how both may benefit from having a more intimate relationship. By analysing the concepts of gender, space, religion and intimacy and distance, it is clear that relationships between madam and maid may not merely operate on the surface of the working contract. Rather, they are filled with meanings and everyday social interactions, which determine the intimate or distant nature of interactions between madam

and maid. These literary and theoretical considerations are key to understanding the nature of domestic employment in South Africa which I will discuss in chapter three.

Chapter Three

Understanding Domestic Work in South Africa:

An Overview

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the highly racialised and gendered characteristics of domestic work in South Africa. By exploring the history of domestic work from the 1930's I will show that racial and gendered dynamics of the past have contributed to the present dynamics of domestic work, which remain significantly racial and gendered. As noted in chapter two, domestic work in South Africa is deeply engrained in power imbalances based on race and class (Gaitskell et al 1983; Ally 2010). My aim in the first part of this chapter is to contextualise and define domestic work in the country. I do this through identifying historical shifts in the legislative and demographic framework that have produced current circumstances. By depicting the patterns of employment through gender and race over time, this section will point to the racialised and gendered trends in the domestic labour market.

These aspects form the basis of domestic work as it presents the context for an occupation, which is deemed to be different from any other (Ally, 2010). I critically engage with the history of domestic work in order to highlight its unpredictable yet resilient nature as well as government's attempts to regulate this form of employment. These labour law matters are carried through in later chapters in order to assess their implementation. In illustrating the face of domestic employment, trends in the labour market are emphasised in this chapter in order to substantiate the notion that domestic work is located in the feminine domain. This chapter bears relevance for my overall argument as it points to the changeable nature of domestic work. This affects the working contract, remuneration and conditions of employment. It also highlights the significance of the gendered dynamics domestic work presents, which is explored further in a later chapter.

3.2 Understanding Domestic Work

Domestic work in South Africa is a flexible, largely unregulated type of employment which contributes to the labour market. It provides low skilled, uneducated women with opportunities for employment. However, Durrheim *et al* (2011) take this further by stating that domestic work is highly racialised, stating that black women are the face of domestic work in the country. Thus, domestic work is racialised and gendered. To understand the nature of such distinct employment, I will briefly outline the general definitions and tasks associated with domestic work. This is followed by my discussion of the history of domestic work, which has resulted in its current characteristics.

The International Labour Organisation has defined a domestic worker as, „wage earner working in a [private] household, under whatever method and period of remuneration, who may be employed by one or several employers” (Gallotti, 2009: 1). While this seems to provide an umbrella definition of all domestic workers, Gallotti (2009:1) admits that there is „no universally agreed definition of domestic work,” due to its adaptable nature, private environment and varying cultural expectations. While this chapter will highlight some global trends in domestic work, the focus will be on South Africa. According to South Africa’s Basic Conditions of Employment Act 137, a domestic worker is a gardener, driver or person who looks after children, the aged, sick, frail or disabled in a private household, but not on a farm (Basic Conditions of Employment Act cited in Seedat, 2006: 28). This aspect of South African law aims to regulate domestic work and to outline the parameters of the domestic employment contract such as minimum wages, conditions of employment and Unemployment Insurance (SA Department of Labour Online 2010).

For the purpose of this research, „domestic worker” refers specifically to a worker in the home who is paid to perform household tasks. These household tasks may range from washing and ironing to taking care of the employers’ children. In my view, it is these tasks and not the strict definitions of domestic work, which define this form of employment throughout the world.

3.3 Domestic Work: A Brief History

South African legislation has travelled an arduous journey to provide domestic workers with legal protection. Much of the historical legislation surrounding domestic employment has

been stained by the racist ideology of apartheid, which had a particular effect on the lives of black women who were coerced directly or indirectly into a future of subservience through legislation and patriarchy. In this section I present a historical background of domestic work in the country in order to contextualise the sector and show how it has developed racialised and gendered characteristics over time.

Looking back to the 19th century, Ally (2010) notes that the state assumed control over servants through registration offices which selected domestic workers, many of whom were European immigrants, for particular homes. In Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg, these registry offices - one of which was named the South African Employment Bureau, „connected employers with employees“ (Ally, 2010: 27). In 1856, the Masters and Servants Act (Zegeye and Maxted, 2002: 24-27) took effect, which offered „servants“ few benefits, but allowed employers to severely punish domestic workers who breached their contracts. Despite numerous amendments to the Act, as Ally (2010) points out, servants continued to be at the mercy of their „masters“ as well as the state. Due to the limited supply of poor European immigrants, demand for domestic help turned to local white female and African male domestic workers or „houseboys“ at the beginning of the 20th century. However, the significant demand for African males in the mining industry „together with African women’s greater willingness to enter the urban labour market“ in the 1930’s „restructured the conditions of supply and demand for domestic labour“ (Ally, 2010: 33).

However, black women bore the brunt of racial and gender discrimination, finding themselves „at the very bottom layer of society“ (Walker, 1990: 192). Under the Masters and Servants Act of 1911, women were not recognised as employees and were traditionally tied

to the homestead. The increased demand for black female domestic servants put pressure on the state to allow women into urban areas to find work in the 1930's.

I emphasise that the state ensured the supply of black women into urban areas and thereafter to employment in domestic service. As Guy in Walker (1990: 40) highlights, „this control and appropriation of the productive and reproductive capacity of women was central to the structure of southern African pre-capitalist societies. In an effort to „civilise“ Africans, the South African government, later in 1913 extended pass laws to African women. These laws permitted black people to enter towns for work, but they had to leave the white urban areas after working hours unless they had permission to stay. Essentially, space was divided along racial lines. I draw a parallel here to geographical marginalisation, which, according to Segal (1992: 197) „mirrored their political marginalisation,” where blacks lived on the „edge“ of society.

Despite the state's attempts to control the influx of Africans into urban areas, the increased demand for and subsequent supply of African female domestic workers resulted in a drop in their income. Referred to as „natives,” it had become socially acceptable through the state and the church for an African woman to work as a domestic worker in an urban area, yet those who sought other types of employment in towns were viewed as immoral (Ally, 2010). In order to curb the entry of „immoral“ women into towns, the state enforced the Urban Areas Act of 1923, which ensured that African women could only enter the urban areas under the supervision of a husband or father and if they had accommodation. This further enforced patriarchal bonds – from which many black women were trying to flee. From the homestead to the world of work, women were „transferred from one system of subordination to another“

(Walker, 1990: 196). Thus, many black women turned to illicit relationships with men in towns in order to acquire entry and housing. As Ally (2010: 30), citing Cock (1980: 73) points out, „because of the low wages, and poor working conditions it involved, whites escaped it and blacks were increasingly coerced into it,” such that the state mediated racialised and capitalist demands.

Such measures persisted into the 1950“s and were enforced by the state to such an extent that African women were banned from other forms of work such as beer brewing and prostitution and „the only alternative for most women was domestic service“ (Ally, 2010: 37). Furthermore, African domestic workers were compelled to register with the Bantu Affairs Administration Board in order to control the supply of workers to employers. In conjunction with pass laws and procedures regulating domestic work, black women were coerced into what Ally (2010) terms „modern servitude.“

By the 1970“s, the process of employing or becoming a domestic worker became so onerous that as Cock (1980) notes, *„they had to seek permission to work in a city from the _tribal‘ labour bureau, and for a married women, from her husband; to obtain a permit to live in the white area of the city and a permit to sleep on the employers premises; and to be confirmed a legal resident of the area in which they worked before their employer could register them.‘* A local newspaper at the time called such procedures a „bewildering bureaucracy,” and soon, employers began hiring workers „off the street“ despite the regulations in place. Ally (2010) notes that by the late 1970“s, the state retaliated by prosecuting those employers who did not comply with legislation, however the informal nature of domestic employment began to take shape.

While the abolishment of pass laws in the 1980's saw black workers enjoying more freedom and reformed labour legislation enhanced the protection of workers, domestic workers were still not given any formal recognition (SADSAWU Online 2010). Through years of struggling against the ideology of apartheid, the democratic dispensation ushered in, in 1994 sought to redress the inequalities of the past, including those surrounding labour law. In particular, the Labour Relations Act of 1995 which recognised domestic workers and provided them with basic protection and eventually the Unemployment Insurance Fund Act which came into effect to protect and regulate the employment of domestic workers.

The Act stipulates that all domestic workers must be registered and have a written contract with their employer, detailing their conditions of employment. The legislation stipulates:

- The minimum rates of pay of domestic workers working in urban areas
- The maximum hours of work
- Overtime and the rates of pay on Sundays and public holidays
- The deduction of accommodation charges from a domestic worker's salary.
- The process of dismissal
- Severance pay and maternity leave.

More importantly, the Act allows for Unemployment Insurance, which will cushion the worker if retrenched or dismissed for a short period. Writing in 1980, Cock noted that domestic workers operated in a „legal vacuum,“ due to their low levels of protection. However the new legislation has been an area on contention for many like Ally (2010: 16) who claims that „the rights granted to individual domestic workers to improve labour relations in their workplaces remained potentially unable to change the structural logics of paid domestic work in South Africa.“

It is imperative to note overall that state control through the legislative framework had a major role to play in the skewed racial and gendered demographics presented by the domestic labour force from the beginnings of this category of employment – not only through laws governing employment, but through social and educational legislation as well. Despite recent efforts to improve conditions of employment and equalise the provision of resources to all citizens, the black female continues to be the core demographic engaged in domestic service.

3.4 From housework to working in the home

It is clear from the previous section that domestic work is gendered. Women have undoubtedly been the central force behind domestic work in the labour market, since the 1800's. While the domain was largely dominated by white South African women, their limited labour capacity along with the state intervention saw a shift towards black males being employed in domestic work in the early 1900's. Despite this digression, domestic work returned to the feminine domain (Ally, 2010, 29). By the 1930's, the „dominant demographic pattern of domestic work in South Africa had been established“ (Ally, 2010: 28), such that black women became the core workforce behind domestic work. Even though black women were the last to become urbanised, their rate of urbanisation presented a dramatic increase of 254.3% between 1921 and 1936 in comparison with black males, at 44.9% (Ally, 2010: 29).

As previously mentioned, the increasing need to flee patriarchal homes and communities is one of the reasons attributed to this influx of African women into urban areas and ultimately, an increase of women in the labour market at the time. Yet as Ally (2010) points out, this

period, including the 1940's cemented an ideology of „apartheid servitude,“ as legislation was instrumental in producing this cohort of female servants. This continued into the 1950's. Table 1 depicts the steady influx of females into the labour market in South Africa from 1951 to 1980.

Table 1: Percentage of Females in the South African Labour Force: 1951- 1980

| Year | Percentage |
|------|------------|
| 1951 | 19.8 |
| 1960 | 23.1 |
| 1970 | 32.3 |
| 1980 | 32.9 |

Source: Pillay (1985: 23)

As illustrated in Table 1, the percentage of women in the labour force increased by 3.3% between 1951 and 1960 with an even greater increase between 1960 and 1970 of 9.2%. Overall, the increase of women in the labour market reached 13.1% in a space of 29 years. This trend indicates a general increase in independent economic activity of women and points to the rise of females in the workplace, as opposed to the cultural expectation of tending to the home.

However, considering the political climate of the period, it is evident from Table 2 that this increase in female labour market participation is racially divided.

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Economically Active Women by Race from 1960 - 1980

| Year | Africans | Whites | Coloureds | Asians | Total |
|------|----------|--------|-----------|--------|-------|
| 1960 | 63.3 | 22.3 | 13.5 | 0.9 | 100.0 |
| 1970 | 64.5 | 21.2 | 12.1 | 2.2 | 100.0 |
| 1980 | 65.5 | 20.7 | 11.6 | 2.2 | 100.0 |

Source: Pillay (1985: 23)

It is clear from Table 2 that the proportion of women in the labour market has grown between 1960 and 1980 and it is important to note that the increase of women in the labour market is racially segmented. Of the 23.1 % of women in the labour market in 1960. Table 1 shows that 63.3% were Africans, followed by whites who comprised 22.3% followed by Coloureds and Indians who comprised 13.5% and 0.9% respectively. Similarly, the percentage of women in the labour market in 1970 increased to 32.3% and the proportion of women by race is divided along the same lines, with Africans still in the majority, revealing a key trend that as the participation of women in the labour force grows, it does so along racial lines.

Table 3: Racial Distribution of Occupations against Women: 1980

| Occupation | White | African | Coloured | Asian | Total |
|--|--------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
| Professional | 50.8 | 35.5 | 10.8 | 2.9 | 100.0 |
| Administrative and Managerial | 91.9 | 2.6 | 3.4 | 2.1 | 100.0 |
| Clerical | 79.5 | 9.9 | 7.3 | 3.3 | 100.0 |
| Sales | 38.8 | 46.3 | 10.6 | 4.3 | 100.0 |
| Service | 4.0 | 82.8 | 12.7 | 0.5 | 100.0 |
| Agriculture | 1.3 | 88.8 | 9.8 | 0.1 | 100.0 |
| Production | 5.5 | 58.0 | 28.5 | 8.0 | 100.0 |

Source: Pillay (1985: 27)

Table 3 depicts that despite white women comprising only 20.7% of the labour market in 1980 (Table 2), they held skilled jobs as professionals and clerks, with 91.9% of administrative and managerial positions being occupied by them, followed by 79.5% of white

females being employed in clerical positions. In stark comparison, the largest share of jobs occupied by Africans existed in the low skilled sales, service, agriculture and production sectors. 88.8% of all jobs in agriculture and 82.8% of positions in the service industry were held by African women, with Coloureds following at 12.7% in the service industry and Asians comprising the least of all occupations. These large discrepancies by race are undoubtedly due to the laws and parameters of apartheid legislation and depicts the „double-burden“ (Pillay, 1985: 20) of black South African women who suffered the discrimination of being black and being women which shaped their access to the labour market.

Data from the South African census of 1991 revealed a further increase of black women in domestic work to 83.4% in comparison with the 82.8% of black domestic workers in 1980 (Table 3). White women comprised 5%, coloureds 11% and Asians 0.5% (Machonachie, 1985), similar to the 1980 statistics depicted in Table 3. Women, regardless of race, still dominated the category of domestic employment.

To trace the impact of the freeing up of the labour market, Table 4 compares employment by race and occupation between 1995 and 2000.

Table 4: Change in employment by occupation group and gender: 1995 and 2000

| | 1995 (000's) | | 2000 (000's) | |
|----------------------|-----------------|--------|-----------------|--------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| Managers | 389 | 111 | 606 | 248 |
| | 77.8% | 22.2% | 70.8% | 28.9% |
| Professionals | 692 | 694 | 891 | 894 |
| | 49.9% | 50% | 49.9% | 50.1% |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Service and Sales | 636 | 447 | 896 | 711 |
| | 58.7% | 41.3% | 55.8% | 44.2% |
| Domestic Workers | 137 | 938 | 29 | 831 |
| | 12.7% | 81.3% | 3.4% | 96.6% |

Source: OHS 1995, LFS 2005:2 (Statistics SA); Own Calculations

Much like earlier data, the weight of domestic work still rests on women's shoulders. Table 4 illustrates a definite growth of women's participation in managerial and professional positions, such that women and men seem to be equalising on these fronts, especially in the professional category. However, a stark contrast exists in the domestic work arena, where women continued to dominate in 1995 at 81.3% in comparison to the 12.7% of men working in domestic service. Five years on, the statistics show an even greater discrepancy between men and women in domestic employment. Women have increased by 15.3% to comprise 96.6% of domestic workers, while men have dwindled to 3.4%. Thus there has been a definite increase in the employment of women.

The increase of women in the labour market has seen employed women spending less time at home, enhancing the need for paid domestic help. South Africa experienced a rapid growth in female labour market participation from the 1960's and between 1995 and 2000 (Van Klaveren, 2009: 15) by which time female participation increased by 129%, 40% of which pertained to domestic workers. While housework is still categorised as her domain, the mother or wife now becomes an employer who delegates household tasks to the domestic worker. As Tomei (2010: 4) adds, the „reliance on domestic work has increased as a private strategy to counter mounting family-work tensions.“

The year 2008 saw the unemployment rate drop in South Africa. Employment in private households was a noteworthy contributor with 137000 newly employed domestic workers

(Mbola, 2008 Online). The following year (2009) saw a further increase in domestic workers (van Klaveren, 2009: 38), bringing to 1, 05 million the number of domestic workers in relation to the 13.23 million people employed in South Africa.

The most recent statistics depict similar trends, but further show the increase in females as employers.

Table 5: Change in Domestic Workers and Employers: 2009- 2010

| | Jul-Sept 2009 | Oct- Dec 2009 | Jan- March 2010 | Apr- Jun 2010 | Jul-Sept 2010 |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Domestic Workers (000's) | | | | | |
| Male | 31 | 33 | 29 | 38 | 29 |
| Female | 904 | 881 | 873 | 892 | 887 |
| Employers (000's) | | | | | |
| Male | 511 | 580 | 530 | 552 | 544 |
| Female | 130 | 140 | 155 | 136 | 167 |

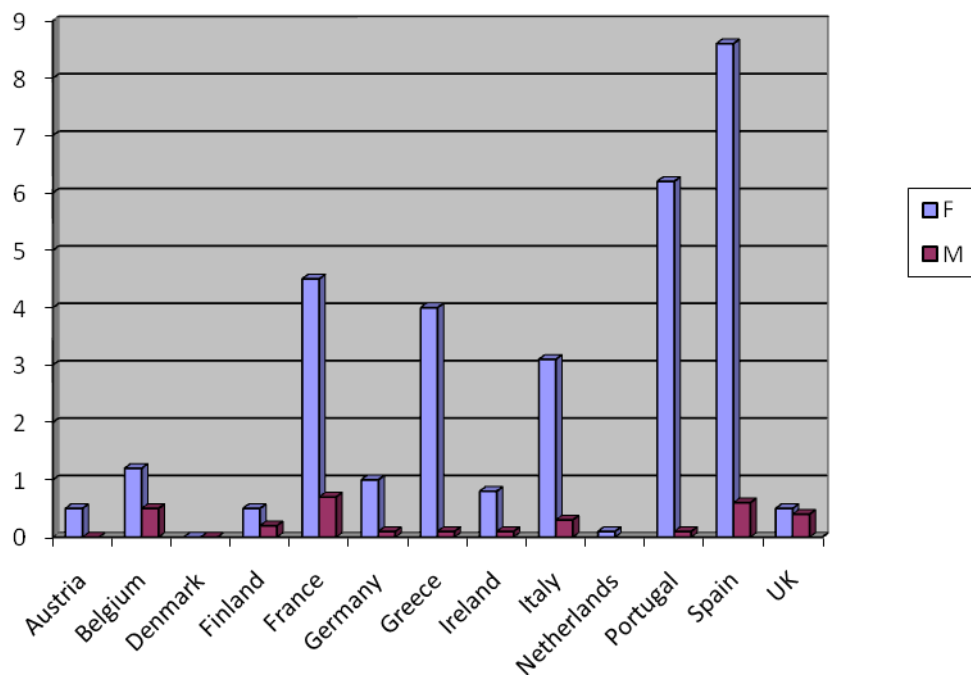
Source: Stats SA PO211 3rd Quarter 2010

The labour market has witnessed the rise of the female employer as shown in Table 5, where the rate of female employers has increased from 130 000 in 2009 to 167 000 in 2010 – an increase of 37 000 in the space of a year. An erratic year has been experienced by male employers, yet they have increased in number from 511 000 to 544 000 between 2009 and 2010 – an increase of 33 000. Both male and female domestic workers have declined in number, however females still dominate domestic work at 887 000 in 2010, compared to 29 000 men who are domestics. While housework is still categorised as her domain, the mother or wife now becomes an employer who delegates household tasks to the domestic

worker. King (2007: 147) asserts that as the black middle class grows, there will be an increase of non- white employers and domestic servants.

The graph below illustrates that South Africa is not isolated in its large base of female domestic workers. These trends depicting the domestic work as a feminine domain are apparent in developed countries as well. As illustrated, women far outnumber males in the sphere of domestic work even in First World countries such as Germany. Even though women have increased their participation in the workforce, domestic work still absorbs many of them, reinforcing the links between women and domestic chores.

Fig1. European Domestic Workers: Employment by Gender 2005-2006



Source: ILO, Key indicators of the labour market (KILM), 5th Edition (Geneva, 2007)

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the development of the racialised and gendered characteristics of domestic work over time in South Africa's labour market. Despite a turbulent political climate, it continues to thrive. This may be attributed to the increasing demand for domestic workers as well as the unregulated nature of this type of employment. However, I emphasise the data within this chapter as these demographics point to critical characteristics of domestic work in South Africa. Firstly, I have shown that the sector has become highly racialised and secondly, quite gendered. These trends have been evident since the 1930's as Ally (2010) mentions and continues to be so as the statistics from 1951 to 2010 have shown.

While my thesis pays particular attention to the South African context of domestic work, I have highlighted that these dynamics of the sector apply not only to this country, but globally as well. I suggest that this may be attributed to an overall rise of women in the workplace and the subsequent need for paid domestic work. This chapter has weighty implications for the argument of my thesis. It points to the flexible and largely unregulated nature of domestic work, which alludes to the unpredictable terms of the working contract. In addition, this chapter has heavily emphasised the categorisation of domestic work as women's work through evidence that women have dominated the sector since the 1930's. Gaitskell et al (1983) make a valid argument, stating that not only is it women's work as the domestic workers are women, but the madams are too. This holds much significance for my argument, which questions the possibilities of sisterhood between madam and maid, as both share the experience of being female.

Chapter Four

The Research Process

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of my study is to examine the relationships between Muslim madams and their domestic workers beyond the basic parameters of the working contract/ agreement. In order to assess the question of intimacy within this relationship, I have highlighted the notions of shared gender questions around sisterhood, the production of space in the home, the influence of religion, power relations, and intimacy and distance as the key variables at work within this dynamic. As discussed in chapter 1, this thesis asks; what is the level of intimacy between madam and maid? In order to answer this question, I explore the following sub-questions:

1. What preconceived ideas about maids do madams bring into the working relationship and how do these ideas influence the relationship?
2. What are the key elements of everyday life that influence the relationship?
3. How do madams negotiate the relationships with their maids?
4. What types of relationships emerge?

These central questions are investigated through an in-depth analysis of the relationship between Muslim employers and their maids in the North Beach area of Durban.

While a plethora of investigation techniques present the social researcher with much choice, it is imperative to select an appropriate research method which will interrogate the topic and yield the richest data. Various debates surround the positivist or quantitative research methods and their critique by feminist theorists as well as the qualitative approach and its pluralistic nature. The first part of this chapter focuses on the theoretical reasoning behind the chosen research method, while the latter explains the location of the study, the process of data collection, the study's limitations and ethical considerations.

4.2 Methodological Considerations

The positivist or quantitative approach is heavily focused on hard data, precise measurements of variables and the researcher's power to manipulate components to test causal relationships. Its benefits to the scientific arena are immeasurable as the results of quantitative methods such as surveys, questionnaires and experiments are highly generalisable. Crucial to the positivist view are concerns surrounding objectivity, validity and reliability, which leave no room for error in the results and if re-tested, would yield the same results. Despite these positive attributes of the positivist approach, these methods when applied to research undertaken in the natural, social context may provide the researcher with a limited worldview (Marshall and Rossman, 2011: 92), which leaves out important data such as emotions or natural behaviour due to its rigid, clinical structure.

Alternatively, the qualitative approach, which emphasises the social context, emotions and life stories of its subjects focuses on soft data, in-depth interviews, life stories and their natural setting (Newman and Benz, 1998). The method recognizes that various factors may

contribute to social phenomena and thus uses multiple methods of data collection to achieve a complete picture of the situation. Considering the nature of this thesis which is heavily focused on the emotional relationships between domestic workers and their employers, the appropriate method of enquiry would be qualitative. According to Cresswell (2009: 176), the interpretive disposition of qualitative research allows for a more „holistic account“ of participants“ understandings and experiences by considering multiple factors which contribute to the research problem. Due to the complexities of emotions and feelings between the two within a space, which is private for the madam yet a work space for the domestic worker, the natural context and values and beliefs which underlie this predicament are of utmost importance to this study.

In choosing qualitative methods of enquiry, it is important to take into account the benefits of these measures to this thesis. While the positivist view sees emotion as an interference to pure research and criticises the qualitative approach for its interpretive nature, Hockey (in Carter and Delamont, 1996: 12), states „when one does research, it is highly unlikely to ever be a “clean” experience.“ Thus, despite the best attempts of a researcher to be impartial and devoid of emotion, one cannot help not being entirely impartial about experience. Qualitative research therefore becomes a dialectic relationship between the researcher and the subject and while this may insult the definition of research held by positivists, the success of qualitative research lies in the very notion of gaining the trust of the subject. Maintaining good relations, showing genuine concern, upholding ethics and being a good listener contributes to the willingness of the participant who shares their true feelings freely (Marshall and Rossman, 2011: 118) – whereas positivists may only receive an isolated answer to close-ended questions via surveys.

According to feminists, the positivist approach has dominated most research in an oppressive, patriarchal and „male-centred“ way (Gray et al, 2007: 212) such that „conventional science claims to be universal, that is, to apply to both genders; however, positivist (allegedly value-neutral and truth producing) science has historically excluded, distorted and mis-measured women“s experience“ (Gray et al, 2007: 212). Essentially, feminists advocate that research should be emancipatory and challenge conventional science, recognising the differences between women through their individual experiences. As Bernard (1981) (cited in Powell, in Carter and Delamont, 1996: 5) aptly states, „males see variables and females see beings,“ resulting in masculine and feminine approaches to research. The purpose of feminist research and this study therefore, is to bring women to the fore and make them visible through documenting their lives, feelings and experiences. While a „good“ researcher in terms of the positivist approach is seen as one who is „semi-robotic, emotionless“ and who maintains a rapport with the subject only to gather information, feminists view this as highly exploitative and like Oakley (1981: 44, cited in Powell in Carter and Delamont, 1996: 6), compare this to the masculinist idea of a „once-off affair (exploitation disguised as collaboration)“ in contrast to the feminist one of a „long term relationship (authentic collaboration).“ Feminist research emphasises empathy, listening, and becoming attuned to the feelings of participants (Gray et al, 2007: 225) as well as making the usually invisible experiences of women such as domestic work visible, valuable and valid.

At the core of the debate between feminist and positivist approaches is the power relationship between the researcher and the participant. Positivists see the researcher as the point of control within the relationship. Much like a scientific experiment, the researcher guides the questions, the environment and the scope of data. While qualitatively, it is still in the researcher“s control to select participants and interpret the collected data, feminist methods

see the researcher as a „narrator“ (Gray *et al*, 2011) such that the participants“ stories are being told via the researcher. Thus, the participants do not lose ownership of their life histories and the power is less imbalanced than in the positivist approach, which is „characterised by an asymmetry in power between the researcher and the respondents“ (Bonnin, 2007:58). In order to do this, a researcher must be self reflexive and critical which according to Bonnin (2007: 58) is done through „acknowledging the location and positionality of the researcher.“

This is crucial to the ethnographic approach, which is described as the „hallmark of qualitative enquiry“ (Marshall and Rossman, 2011: 19) and focuses on the role of culture in society. The approach sees the researcher immersed in the subjects“ environment in order to experience an authentic reality, which centres on cultural norms, ceremonies and artefacts important to that culture. Through participant observation (and various methods of data collection), the researcher can see, hear and feel aspects of the chosen culture that would otherwise be overlooked during interviewing. While there are various ethnographic methods, I have selected participant observation as one of my methods of data collection in order to assess the interaction between maid and madam in an Islamic setting and their negotiation of space around each other.

4.3 Selecting the research topic

Living in South Africa, it is difficult not to interact with those working in the domestic work arena. Due to the history and nature of domestic work (discussed in chapter two), this category of employment has ingrained itself in many homes as well as the broader economy of South Africa. My interest in the area of domestic employment stems from the

subconscious battle I have always faced in the presence of a domestic worker. Growing up as an only child in a single-parent Muslim home has exposed me to countless hours alone with the „maid“, yet communicating with her other than a polite greeting and a reminder of her duties leaves me at an awkward loss for words, while others around me have been able to penetrate that wall, forging relationships with their domestic workers and even imparting aspects of Islam to them.

The source of my uneasiness lies in my anxiety of imposing on or offending her due to parts of my home she cannot access owing to religious stipulations as well as my inability to construct intimacy between us. This may be attributed to my introverted personality or the fact that I cannot help but feel guilty that someone else is cleaning my home. Over the years I consoled myself with the notion that perhaps when I had my own home and employed a domestic worker, that this would change. As a recently married woman and employer of a domestic worker, the awkwardness still presents itself and I now question my relationship with my „maid,“ and how intimacy or lack thereof defines our interactions. For me, there are two distinctions – some maids seem to become part of the Muslim family they are working for and others, as in my case, remain strangers who merely share the same space for a period of time. Therefore, intimacy and distance, space and gender and whether my being Muslim has had a positive or negative effect on this dynamic are pertinent questions this thesis aims to explore.

4.4 Selecting a Research Site

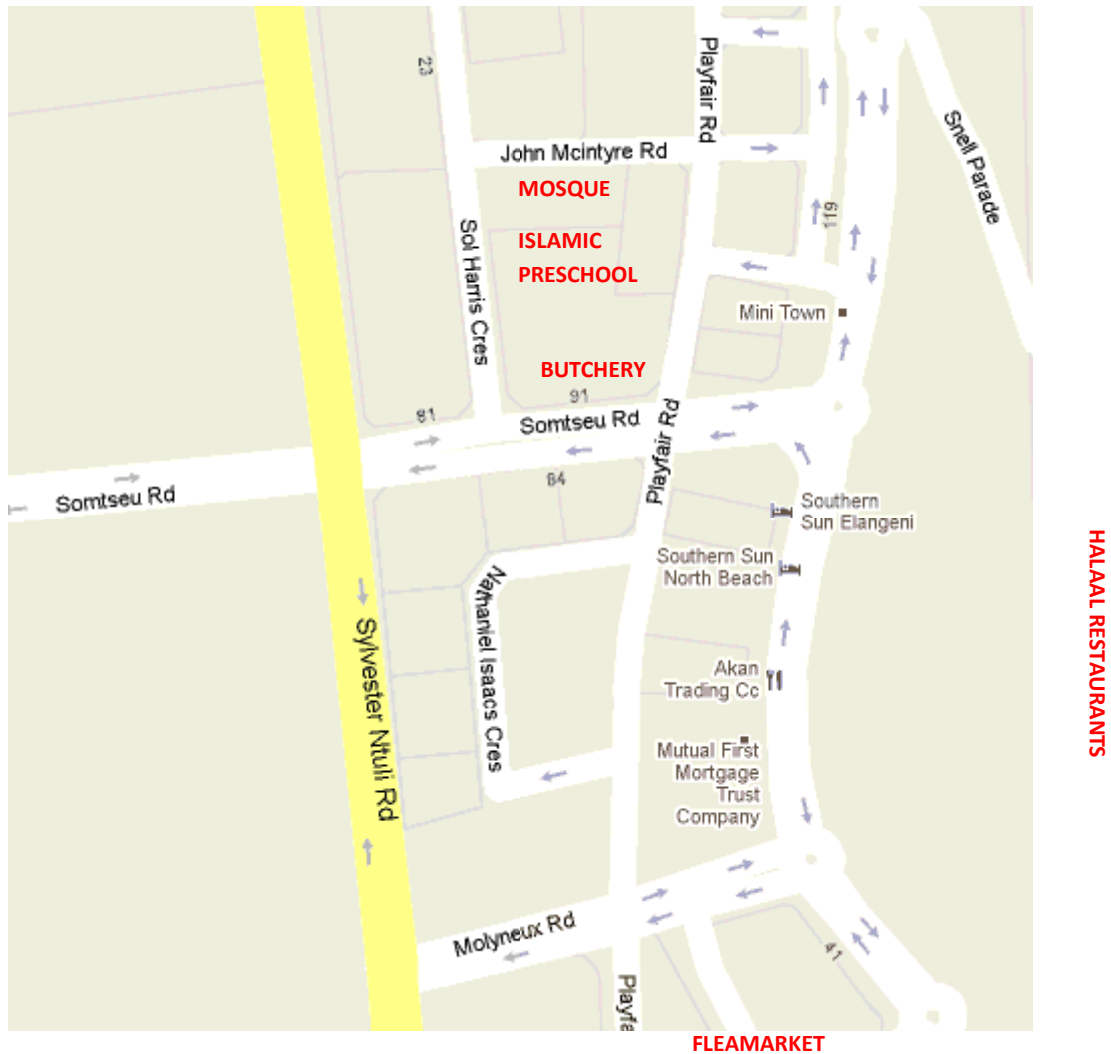


Fig 3: Map- North Beach

Selecting a research site appropriate to the thesis in terms of its potential for qualitative research and my accessibility was imperative. Due to the concentrated nature of the

residential area, its overall Muslim presence as well as my proximity to this region, North Beach became the location of my research for this study.

The beach has become a popular spot for Muslim walkers after Fajr (the early morning prayer) and since the construction of the Mosque, Masjid As-Siddique on John McIntyre Road, North beach has felt an increasingly Islamic presence. Next to the mosque is a women-only Muslim-owned beauty salon and within the complex is a hall which seats 300 guests – suitable for Muslim weddings. Within the same block is a women-only gym and hairdressing salon as well as eastern boutiques and a halaal butchery, Gourmet Meats. To the left of and above the butchery are halaal restaurants and just a block away is Nino's, a trendy and bustling halaal restaurant, which screens football matches and is known for its great food and atmosphere. On Sundays, the North Beach flea market attracts numerous visitors and many of the stall holders are Muslim or serve halaal food.



Fig4: North Beach Flea market

The uniqueness of the area is compounded by the fact that many extended families occupy flats either in the same building or within walking distance of one another, often gathering in the park for braai's etc. However, the main consequence of such living arrangements which is important for this study is that many families share their domestic workers, allowing the domestic worker to know not only her employer, but also her employer's family. Furthermore, maids and madams have much contact within these blocks of flats, leaving room for friendships or tensions between them within the limited amount of space.

4.5 Sample Selection

The sample consists of Muslim women from North Beach who have employed a domestic worker for more than a year and who have previously employed domestic workers. Subjects fitting these criteria were selected to saturation (Gray *et al*, 2007: 48). Due to the difficulty of obtaining a list of all the Muslim women in North Beach, snowball or reputational sampling was used (Gray *et al*, 2007: 117). This method identified one or more Muslim employers I was aware of, who then referred others fitting the description of the sample, until the sample number was achieved. According to Gray *et al* (2007), this particular sampling technique allows for the collection of in- depth information from informed people. In addition, five key informants were selected in a similar way in order to take the domestic workers' views into account.

4.6 Methods of Data Collection

In obtaining the information needed for this project, various methods of data collection were used. Firstly, semi-structured interviews were the primary method of obtaining qualitative

data. Secondly, observations were carried out to gauge the interactions between madams and maids. Focus groups were held in relation to the results gained from the semi-structured interviews and five key informants were also interviewed in order to balance responses from madams.

4.6.1 Semi- Structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were the key tenets of the primary data collection of the study. This method is beneficial as it provides a detailed account of participants' perceptions about a particular topic. Furthermore, researchers can gauge non-verbal reactions such as expressions when participants are being interviewed – a valuable source of information which is overlooked in quantitative methods such as surveys or questionnaires. One of the functions of face-to-face interviews is that participants may clarify certain questions if they don't understand them and more importantly, researchers may probe for additional information, rather than adhering to a strict questionnaire. This method proved successful in this study as it requires the personal accounts and feelings of employers about their maids, which can only be investigated through a one-on-one interview where I could ask for examples from their lives. The face-to-face interviews build trust between researcher and interviewer and I was very aware of the fact that due to my appearance and religious inclination (I am Indian and Muslim, so I wear a scarf), which reflected many of the participants' appearance, it was relatively easy for us to identify with each other. This is substantiated by Marshall and Rossman (2011: 104), who state that „the researcher's ability to gain access to a range of groups and activities is enhanced by their ability to blend in.“

Over a period of four months, I conducted 20 semi-structured interviews with women between the ages of 23 and 83, who had employed maids for a period of a year to 38 years

and all of whom fit the selection criteria. These one-on-one interviews, which took place in the homes of the participants, were recorded and lasted between 40- 60 minutes. While the questions were structured toward the various themes imperative to this study, participants were encouraged to talk freely and share examples from their life experiences which related to the topic. Although these oral accounts on the part of the participant may seem authentic, Bonnin (2007: 72) reminds us that „the material gathered in interviews and the meanings generated are moulded by the context of the interview the place where the interview takes place; the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee; and, in a focus group discussion the way the person wishes to present themselves to the groups. Furthermore, the memories are selective.“ Therefore by conducting the interviews in the participant’s home and blending in with their culture, my approach was to have a conversation with participants, rather than a rigid interview. By employing multiple methods of investigation (interviews, observation and focus groups), the responses of participants would substantiate one another.

4.6.2 Observation

In order to assess the complex nature of the relationship between maids and madams beyond the responses in a one on one interview, observation was chosen as a key method of qualitative research. According to Marshall and Rossman (2011: 140), „observation is used to discover complex interactions in natural social settings“ and is central to qualitative research. Taking into account the environment, body language, tone of speech as well as negotiation of space between maid and madam was crucial to this study. All events were recorded as field notes and while there were no predetermined guidelines, similarities and differences took

shape on their own. Observation took place in the homes of the participants while their maids were there and lasted an hour per session.

4.6.3 Focus Groups

Due to the nature of this thesis (qualitative) and for the generalisability of the concept of Muslim women, focus groups were an integral aspect of this study. While one-on-one interviews do elicit responses from participants, focus groups „replicate social interaction“ (Hennink2007: 7) which generates a level of comfort, especially if the focus group occurs in a relaxed setting – in the case of this study, my home. A group setting ensures that a range of views on a particular subject will be heard and new ideas, which may not have been covered during the one-on-one interviews may be brought to the fore. Hennink (2007: 8) highlights that participants in a group build on one another’s ideas which increases the quality of data collected due to the fact that the comments of one member in the group may trigger a series of responses from others in the group.

I conducted two focus groups for this study. Based on the responses from the one-on-one interviews, the 20 participants were categorised into two groups – those who felt distanced from their domestic workers and those who saw their maids as part of their families. Depending on availability, the women were invited to my home, where refreshments were provided. They were aware that their responses were being recorded. It was discovered that many of the women in fact knew each other from the area, creating an even more relaxing, safe environment in which to share their feelings and opinions. The focus groups lasted approximately 60 minutes each, with the first one of four women who felt distanced from their maids occurring on Monday, 24th January 2011, while the other, consisting of three

women taking place on Monday 14th February 2011. The focused groups were arranged according to Table 7.

Table 6: Focus Group Participants

| Focus Group 1 | Length of service | Focus Group 2 | Length of service |
|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Mrs Amod | 1 year | Mrs Abdullah | 15 years |
| Ms Karrim | 2 years | Ms Osman | 2 years |
| Mrs Desai | 3 years | Mrs Emam | 11 years |
| Mrs Meer | 2 years | | |

Table 6 depicts the arrangement of the focus groups. The first comprised of madams who did not feel positively towards their domestic workers, while the second felt very close to their maids. The focus groups allowed me to guide the discussion, but not ask very specific questions – preferring to let the groups direct the conversation. This yielded valuable results, although some women tended to dominate the discussion. In addition, I found that the group of four women may have been too large, as they sometimes engaged in their own conversations with the person they were sitting next to when they agreed on a viewpoint, instead of contributing to the whole group. Due to the ages of the first group of women which ranged between 50 and 56, they viewed me as a daughter and often used Indian terms, which we all understood, allowing it to feel like a relaxed conversation. The second group was fairly younger and saw me as a friend rather than a researcher, which contributed to an informal atmosphere and the ability to talk freely.

4.6.4 Key informants

Five key informants were chosen for this study in order to allow domestic workers a voice within the project, despite the thesis being quite madam- focused. These domestic workers were randomly selected but a proficiency in English was preferred. Their ages varied, but they all worked in North Beach for Muslim madams. Their details are tabulated in Table 2

Table 7: Key Informants

| Key informant | Age | Years of service |
|----------------------|------------|-------------------------|
| Grace | 32 | 6 |
| Thandi | 26 | 4 |
| Mavis | 62 | 8 |
| Moirira | 56 | 38 |
| Zinhle | 27 | 3 |

The semi-structured interviews with key informants were recorded. Two interviews took place in the home of the madam while the madam was at the neighbour's home, while three interviews took place at my home.

4.7 Limitations

- a) Observation: one of the earliest limitations that was found was that employers often left their maids alone at home for the day. In light of my research which focused on the interaction between madam and maid, it was important for both to be present at home at the same time. For many employers, this was not possible as they only returned home at the end of the day to pay their maids. While this did point to the lack of intimacy between them, it did limit the method of observation to only a few stay-at-home employers. Furthermore, many of the domestic workers were on leave due to the December holidays, which delayed some of my observation time.

- b) Scale of Research: due to the limited time (one year) and resources of the study as well as the absence of a list of Muslim employers in North Beach, the sample was limited to 20 people who were not randomly selected. Had there been more time, a larger study could have been conducted. However, in this instance, the smaller sample size suited the qualitative nature of the project. Room still remains though, for a comparative study between North Beach and other urban or suburban areas.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

- a) Informed consent

All participants were required to sign an informed consent form, which ensured confidentiality and anonymity. All names have been changed to ensure this. They

were aware of the purpose of this study, and the time it would take as well as their ability to remove themselves from this project at will. They were further informed that all information gathered from this process would be discarded after five years and that only my supervisor and myself would have access to the information. The form of informed consent included their participation in the focus group where confidentiality depended on the women themselves and they were made aware of this.

Chapter Five

Muslim Identity and the Recruitment of the ‘ideal’ Domestic Worker

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the way religion influences the Durban Muslim madams’ recruitment of a domestic worker. I argue that the Muslim madam enters the recruitment process with preconceived ideas about the ideal maid. These are dependent on the religious identity of the Muslim madam as well as embedded ideas about race, gender and class. These ideas are instrumental in the recruitment and selection of the „ideal“ domestic worker. I will show that through trusted networks, the Muslim madam actively seeks a domestic worker who fulfils these ideals and reflects her personality, values and one who will understand the Islamic requirements of a clean home. This has profound implications for the type of employment relationship between madam and maid. I demonstrate that even before the relationship between domestic worker and madam develops, the criteria to select a domestic worker extend beyond the parameters of a normal working contract – taking into account personalities and social backgrounds and ultimately moulding the conditions of employment to suit each madams’ needs.

I do this by firstly deconstructing the concept of „Muslim identity“ and the undercurrents that influence the lives, decisions and interactions with Muslim madams. These are reflected in the participants of the study who are introduced in this chapter. Secondly, in an analysis of the three avenues of finding domestic employment, this chapter substantiates the informal nature of domestic work and argues that such fluid forms of employment result in complex sets of relationships and hints at the tense relationships between madams – an issue which will be explored in the following chapter. I explore the madams“ previous experiences with domestic workers and show that these influence their preconceived ideas about domestic workers and current interactions between madam and maid. Reasons for hiring domestic help, qualities sought in maids as well as the difficulties madams face in finding the „right fit“ are examined in order to illustrate the highly subjective and calculated recruitment process of finding a domestic worker, building a strong link between Muslim identity and its influence on employing a compatible domestic worker. This analysis will demonstrate that domestic work is unlike other forms of employment which are strictly based on the working contract and more importantly show how religion is one of the instrumental factors in determining the nature of the relationships between Muslim madam and maid.

5.2 Muslim Identity

In analysing the „Muslim identity,“ I refer specifically to the Muslim women from North Beach, interviewed for this project, who are mainly of Indian descent³.

³ The Muslim population of South Africa is varied in their cultures and rituals, thus the ‘Muslim identity’ discussed in this thesis may not apply to all Muslims. The term ‘Muslim’ in this thesis refers to any person who practices Islam and believes in its tenets, who resides in Durban and is of Indian descent. I use the term ‘Indian’ to refer to those Muslims who are of Indian origin. This terms is not used to point to racial differences but more to indicate a cultural component of identity.

For the Muslim women interviewed for this project, religion is not merely a system of beliefs – Islam becomes a lifestyle and the rationale behind her actions and disposition. Beyond the visible marker of Muslim identity, the hijab, there are various components which contribute to the identity of the Muslim madam. I have identified these through my research as well as from the writings of Sadar (2008), Hassim (2007) and Vahed (2000). Identity for the purpose of my research refers to the way in which people define themselves individually as well as within society. While the Muslim madams have unique personal traits, I have focused on their Muslim identity and key characteristics, which they all share due to religion. These heavily influence their recruitment of a domestic worker.

These markers of identity are: her South African Indian identity, her role in being a keeper of the home, language, cooking and dressing. These need to be fully understood in order to explore her reasons for selecting a domestic worker who will adhere to her requirements. The purpose of this part of the chapter is to understand the Muslim madam – her individual and social identity, which heavily influences the relationship she has with her domestic worker.

5.2.1 The Ummah and South African ‘Indian’ identity.

Firstly, I focus on the identity of the madam as a Muslim and as a South African Indian. Identity, as defined by Simon (2004: 6- 12) is a multifaceted concept, balancing the spiritual, physical, social and emotional aspects of the individual’s personality. While each of these may take precedence over the other dependent on the situation, Simon (2004) emphasises that identity is fluid and ultimately „interactive.“ For him, identity serves five purposes: a) belonging b) distinctiveness c) esteem d) understanding e) agency.

Without delving into the details of each, in this study I look at the gendered, spiritual (religious), physical (dressing), social and racial components of identity as key factors in the South African context, especially in terms of the communal nature of the Muslim community. I attribute this to the theoretical concept of identity proposed by McGuire (1992) (see chapter two), who viewed religion as a functional facet of identity, allowing the individual to locate himself or herself within the larger group or society. In my discussion on identity through religion in chapter two, I agreed with McGuire (1992) who related religion to a sense of belonging to a group of people who share similar beliefs. I now link this to Simon (2004) who extends this concept into dressing as well. While an individual may find their own distinct quirks the markers of their uniqueness, it is in the shared identity of being Muslims that they may actively find belonging, exercise agency and create understanding.

To understand Muslims in Durban and their communal nature, I find it imperative to provide a descriptive account of their history in the country as well as the importance of togetherness in Islam. While there is evidence of Muslim presence in the Cape proper to Indian immigration to Natal, I focus specifically on the history of Muslims in Durban. Muslims have been in Durban for approximately 150 years since the majority of Indian Muslims arrived in Durban between 1860 and 1911 (Vahed, 2001: 306). They constitute 2% of South Africa's population (Jhazbhay, 2000: 3) and the presence of the Muslim community is „stamped over the fabric of South African life.“ From internationally renowned charitable organisations such as the Gift of the Givers, publications like the Al-Ummah newspaper and infrastructure such as the Jumma Musjid Mosque, the largest mosque in the southern hemisphere, Durban is at the heart of the Indian Muslim community in South Africa. The concept of community in Islam dates back to the 7th century, when Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) created the term „ummah“ which means a „community of believers.“ At the root of this is the nuclear family. Mernissi (1987: 18) goes on to define the ummah:

‘In its internal aspect, the ummah consists of the totality of the individuals bound to one another by ties, not by kinship or race, but of religion...in its external aspect, the ummah form a single indivisible organisation, charged to uphold the true faith...’

Muslims across the world still uphold the fundamental tenets of Islam. There are five prayer times: Fajr (just before sunrise), Zohr (after midday), Asr (mid afternoon), Maghrib (after sunset) and Esha (a few hours after sunset). Each prayer lasts a few minutes and Muslims carry out these prayers on a prayer mat called a Musallah. Ablution, called Wudhu is obligatory before each prayer. Reading the Quraan, a book of revelation from Allah Suhaanahu Wata‘ala (God) which has not been altered since, is also a core part of Islam, as well as fasting from dusk to dawn during the month of Ramadaan. Muslims celebrate two Eids – one after Ramadaan and another after the Hajj pilgrimage. The core values imparted through the teaching of Islam include being charitable, honest, patient and kindness to others especially ones parents. Thus, all Muslims are bound by these strong threads despite their differences due to the common acts and values instilled in their identities from a young age. Here I do not assume that all Muslims are devoted followers of faith – rather, I suggest that there are degrees of piety that exist within every society.

Socially and subjectively speaking, the concept of a Muslim South African identity is not easily achieved in South Africa, as Jhazbhay (2000: 3) relates due to the ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity in the country. As one of the respondents Naseema Osman explains:

‘Islam is a very protected religion which is steeped in tradition. The home and parental approval is valued above all else. In South Africa, Muslims are seen as Indians because we may have similar cultural traits. But we have multiple identities because we try and protect the Islamic moral code and still try to be independent and educated.’

Jhazbhay (2000) agrees with such opinions as he explains that living in a „secular democracy“ with a religion that has been carefully protected and handed down from generation to generation may result in a layered identity which is not easily definable. The notion of secularism was earlier discussed by Brenner (1993), who explained that „Muslims refer to secularism and all its alleged detriments to reinforce their own Islamic identity,“ thus defining themselves as different from the Other. Chakraborty (1993: 136) states that „religion is the most sensitive issue in the minds of Muslims. Generally all their thoughts and activities mainly move around their religious faith. Religion was the basis of their idea of a separate entity which turned into a characteristic feature of a Muslim community.“ Although Chakraborty does not refer specifically to South Africa, Indian Muslims in Durban struggle to uphold their own Islamic identity which is separate from the Indian identity.

Confusion surrounding Indians and Muslims is not uncommon due to the history of Indian Muslims in South Africa, common morals embedded in the Indian culture and the fact that most Muslims in Durban are Indian (Vahed, 2000). It must be noted that 19 out of the 20 Muslim madams interviewed were of Indian descent while one was white and married into an Indian Muslim family. Thus, the identity of Muslims in South Africa takes on a racial component of which I as a citizen am acutely aware. On a recent trip to Saudi Arabia, I recall an enlightening moment my mother had when taking in the plethora of Muslims of all nationalities in one city. She remarked that „as a South African, we think people who aren“t Indian cannot possibly be Muslim, unless they“re reverts.“ Her words made me uneasy – perhaps due to its stark truth or its racialised nature, but her statement encapsulated the crisis of the South African Muslim community. At a recent conference held in Durban in June 2010 by Ilm SA on „Racism in the Muslim community,“ an issue of concern was that many Indian Muslims immediately categorise black Muslims as beggars or see them as almost-Muslims. This shed light on the general preconceptions Muslims held about race and class. While this

heralds an entirely new social conversation, Vahed (cited in Taleb, 2005: 45) traces such lines of thinking to decades before 1994, when Muslims were categorised as „Asian Indians.“ As Taleb (2005: 45) goes on to explain, race shaped individual and communal life experiences and neutralised the impact of class and religion...consolidating the Indian community.“ Of course class and religion have been granted some room post 1994, yet the continuing shared cultural traits of Indians and Muslims in South Africa cannot be ignored. Similar culinary styles, wedding rituals and even entertainment bind together the Indian community in Durban – whether this overshadows or enhances the Muslim community within it is highly debatable, yet as an Indian Muslim woman, I am aware of these two identities and my ability to move effortlessly between the two.

Domestic workers may not understand the difference between an Indian and a Muslim madam, although one of my key informants, Grace, pointed out that she preferred working for Muslim madams than Indian employers. Working for an Indian madam and a Muslim one are two distinct experiences and Muslim madams preferred to employ those who had worked for Muslim madams previously because they „knew how a Muslim home is supposed to be run.“ This begins to expose the fact that Muslim women seek ideal maids who are familiar with the system of the Muslim home and its underlying values – the same values that she upholds.

5.2.2 The keepers of the home

Identity in Islam is overtly gendered. This I derive from my research, seeing that most of the Muslim madams see their Islamic duty as caretakers of the home, and literature also asserts

this. Women in Islam are seen as the keepers of the household or in Sadar's (2008) words, the „keepers of tradition in the home.“ I established the strong connection between tradition and Islam in the previous paragraph. Such ties no doubt have influence on gender roles which often come across as patriarchal as women are to be kept safe in their homes, away from the marketplace which is seen as profane and ruthless as discussed in chapter two. The home therefore, is sacred. Muslim women who were interviewed for this project, are serious about the neatness and cleanliness of their homes as it is believed that angels visit the Muslim home. Islamically, women are advised to pray in the „quietest corner of their homes“ (Vahed, 2000: 51). “The seclusion of women is a function of a family's worth, in an economic sense, but it also becomes indicative of their social worth or honour” (Jeffrey 1979 in Hassim, 2007: 49). Thus the responsibility to take care of or provide for the women in the home lies in the hands of the dominant male figure and the responsibility to clean the home lies in the hands of the wife or mother. Therefore who she employs to fulfil this role is of utmost importance as they must carry out their domestic duties with the same reverence as the Muslim madam would.

While many view this seclusion as oppressive one of the respondents in Sadar's (2008: 58) study viewed it differently:

„I'm not very good in the teachings of Islam and that sort of thing, but from the little that I do know is that you should be treated with, you should be as a Muslim female, be put on a pedestal. I mean imagine that Allah (SWT) has given you this, this, um, this advantage of sitting at home and letting your husband do everything for you ... that's not a deprivation, you know, that is a gift. But unfortunately we don't look at it at that way.‘

On the other hand, another respondent in the same study stated:

–If they had to stick with that old notion that women have to stay at home, then none of our Muslim girls would be going to school and when they grow up what kind of mothers are they going to be?” (Sadar: 2008: 58)

Nevertheless, all of the women interviewed in my research study have been the caretakers in their homes whether they are engaged in formal employment or not. Their daily concerns involved cooking, looking after their children, working and cleaning their homes. Groomed to be wives and mothers, these Muslim women are trained in the kitchen to cook and clean from a young age. „No mother would marry a daughter off without her knowing something about cooking,” Zuliekha Mayet, a prominent figure in the Women’s Cultural Group in Durban explained (Vahed and Weatjen, 2010: 32). During the interviews for this research study, many of the women said that they still preferred to cook for their families despite the employment of a domestic worker.

„Cleanliness is part of Imaan⁴” is one of the main teachings of Islam, and for these women Muslim homes are required to be an immaculate place of worship and calm. As Vahed (2000) states, „With the disintegration of traditional family, globalization and greater individuality, the “Islamic Family” is viewed as a shelter against the hostile impersonal world. The sanctity of marriage, the virtue of women, and the authority of men over women are all emphasized in this patriarchal “family”.“ In this way, I suggest that religion is produced through space and the religious practices within it, making the home a sacred space. Functions in the Muslim home automatically fall to the women, thus making the home her domain and those cleaning it – in this case the domestic worker, her responsibility – ultimately resulting in the Muslim madam. Thus, Muslim madams interviewed actively seek maids who understand the space or

⁴ Imaan : faith

who have had experiences in Muslim homes as they understand the importance of cleanliness in the home.

5.2.3 Linguistic hurdles

The third aspect of identity relates to language. Despite many common factors between Indian Muslims in Durban, I emphasise that they are not unified in terms of language. In fact, Indian Muslims are divided in terms of language, based on the villages older generations hail from in India. Based on this, class categorisations arose. According to the participants, the most dominant class denominations based on language groups are Memon, Surtee, Urdu and Khokni. Although these stratifications have weakened over the years, many arranged marriages were previously based on these class categorisations as Vahed (2000) notes that: „A generation ago it was taboo to marry outside of one’s village of origin in India; this later changed to marriage within one’s language group.” The criterion for marriage partners has widened. Most respondents (of Vahed’s) said that they did not care about ethnic and language considerations as long as the spouse was Muslim” (Vahed, 2000: 64). However, remnants of such thinking still exist as in the case of many of the older women I interviewed, especially one of the women who referred to another one of the respondents as „that Memon lady downstairs” and proceeded to ask into which language group I had married. I emphasise here that while Muslim women may belong to a large group identity, there is a social gap between younger and older Muslim women which was further reiterated by some of the interviewees.

However, I must also emphasise that these divisions based on language are fading. Younger Indian Muslims in Durban, according to Vahed’s (2000) study cannot speak these vernacular languages, identifying English as their first or home language – displaying that language barriers of the past are waning. Furthermore, Vahed (2000) finds that a new Muslim identity

is emerging, based on tolerance and submission to Islam as a whole rather than these divisions within the community. Arabic as the language of the Quraan is given precedence in Islamic schools in Durban and every Muslim is expected to be able to read Arabic. While Vahed (2000) admits that the attempt to forge a 'Muslim identity' is difficult because deep differences of tradition exist amongst Indian Muslims in Durban, there is a definite shift toward a broader identity of being Muslim. As a young Muslim woman, I find that my family is quite steeped in the language, culture and identity of being Memon Muslims. My identity however is detached from the Memon language as I do not speak it. Instead, I see myself just as a Muslim. In an excerpt from Vahed and Waetjen's (2010) most recent book which traces the lives of the Indian and Muslim women who formed the Women's Cultural Group in Durban between 1945 and 2010 and who produced the renowned Indian cookbook, *Indian Delights*, Kathija Vawda one of the oldest members reminds us that:

‘In the past, when you went to people's homes, whether they are Memon, Surti or Kokni, Gujarati, Hindu or Tamilian, they were very distinct tastes. They used different spices and methods and you could see and taste the difference – even the aroma was different. Nowadays they are all similar.’

In this regard, Muslim identity in some part is finding its way passed class and language. Already in the culinary world, the boundaries have become permeable.

Language in terms of Muslim identity and its influence on domestic work is in some cases used as a determinant of power. Madams tend to speak their own language around their maids so that the maids cannot understand, leaving many maids out of conversations, and creating division between madam and maid. This may apply to all madams who speak different languages than their maids. Yet, evidence from the focus group interview revealed that one of the madams mentioned that she uses the word ,kariah'(black) when referring to the maid.

Thus, language plays a powerful role in uniting or dividing madams and maids, and more specifically in terms of Muslim identity.

5.2.4 Culinary Culture

Given that the identity of Muslim women in Durban is quite ingrained in domesticity, cooking is the fourth integral part of Muslim female identity. In this light, food relates to my research in a three fold way – firstly as consumption guided by religion; secondly as social glue and finally as an integral part of how these Muslim women understood their role in the home.

Food is an integral part of Indian Muslim identity. I concur with Fischler (1988: 275) who reminds us that „food is central to our sense of identity,“ explaining that our relationship with food goes beyond practical „need“ and takes on a cultural and social dimension. It is correct that Muslims believe in moderate consumption of food but more importantly, consumption is guided by the distinction between halaal (permissible) and haraam (impure). Here the Indian Muslims I interviewed believe that Allah forbids Muslims from consuming alcohol and pork. Through identification and classification, Fischler (1988: 283) elaborates that pork is not poisonous and the eater knows this: it is simply impure. Thus, religious prescriptions, evident in many religions, guide consumption.

One cannot overlook the function of food as a signifier of togetherness, especially in the Muslim community. Those who eat halaal food find understanding in one another, reinforcing a shared identity, substantiated by Mennell *et al* (1992), who state that sharing food signifies that people are socially similar. Often I have witnessed and even engaged in

sharing food with Muslim neighbours during the month of Ramadaan (fasting) before breaking the fast – a tradition which never ages. Similarly on the day of Eid, Muslims celebrate and eat together and are encouraged to share the food. In Appadurai's (1981) words, „food in its varied guises, contexts and functions can signal rank and rivalry, solidarity and community, identity or exclusion and intimacy and distance.“ This is crucial to my research when focusing on the eating habits of maids and madams as well as the power relationships between the two.

As mentioned earlier with reference to Vahed and Waetjen's (2010) book, Indian and Muslim women are taught to cook at a young age, which prepares them for married life. From my experience, it is still an integral part of a Muslim woman's identity as a mother and wife that she is also an outstanding cook. For the women interviewed, it was tradition for a Muslim bride's mother to give her a copy of *Indian Delights* and provide her with a good grounding in managing a kitchen. Muslims and Indians in Durban have similar culinary styles, agreeing with Mennell's (1992) assertion that „taste is culturally shaped and socially controlled,“ showing that food feeds into the Muslim/ Indian identity debate. Muslim women continue to publish halaal recipe books and work from home asserting their own Islamic identity through food. The Muslim madam takes cooking personally and undoubtedly takes pride in cooking for her family – one of the only domestic responsibilities which I found in most cases, has not yet been outsourced to the maid. This point holds much significance, pointing back to Preston-Whyte's findings in 1969 where Indian madams did not allow their black maids to cook, but allowed their Indian maids to help in the kitchen. This poses questions surrounding the ideas of race, class and the preparation of food, which have not been analysed since her work, which this thesis will focus on in later chapters.

5.2.5 Women are diamonds

The fifth and overarching identifier of a Muslim woman, who is the subject of this research, is modesty. Hijab is the visible marker of Muslim women in Durban and specifically North Beach. Most of the women I interviewed valued modesty and wore scarves if they left their homes. Many wore long flowing kaftans in their homes, which covered their bodies and did not hint at their body shapes. I agree with Hassim (2007: 107) who notes from her research on Muslim women that there exist „degrees of religiosity“ which are apparent in their dressing. Some do not wear the scarf, while others wear hijab or purdah⁵. The degrees of covering depend on the women’s comfort, level of religiosity and often their husband’s or fathers’ guidelines.

The hijab, or covering is often analysed in the Muslim community in terms of the notion that women are like diamonds (Hassim, 2007). Due to their precious and beautiful nature, they are to be kept safe and should not be exposed to the world as their value will diminish. Their beauty must be shown only to a few, such as their husbands or close family.

The Quraan, states: *„And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display their adornment only that which is apparent and to draw their veils over their bosoms, and not to reveal their adornment save to their own husbands or fathers...‘* (Quraan, Surah 24).

⁵ Hijab refers to the covering of the head by a Muslim woman usually by a scarf, whereas purdah refers to the veil- a total covering of the face.

Debates surrounding whether this measure is oppressive or an act of freedom of choice are currently heated in France which recently imposed a burqah ban on Muslim women, but in South Africa, Muslim women are free to dress as they wish. Interestingly, Sader (2008) finds that the hijab allows Muslim women to „take control of their bodies by identifying themselves as part of the Muslim community and protecting themselves from the view of other men.“ Muslim women in Durban have traditionally covered their heads and sometimes their shoulders with a headscarf (Vahed, 2000: 9), however the Jamiat⁶ has emphasized the wearing of purdah due to the changing times (Sader, 2008: 25). A local maulana⁷ stated that ‘our mothers did not go to gym, university, shopping malls, beachfronts, discos and so on. They remained at home and today’s women go all over the place.’ On a more compelling note, Vahed (2000) reveals that in fact, Muslim women see the wearing of hijab as a „passport“ to freedom as they may visit malls and interact with the height of Western technology without compromising their modesty and izzat (honour). Muslim women are very aware of how others perceive them in order to keep their honour or reputation intact. One of the participants in the focus group study was visibly upset at her neighbour’s comments about her manner of dressing:

„She saw me leaving the house in this (a long knee length brown top, loose pants and a scarf), and she asked me where I was going dressed like this – all fancy and wearing a short top. I was so upset...who is she to tell me how to dress. I am completely covered even if I am not wearing a cloak.‘

She mentioned this a few times and others in the focus group reassured her that she was dressed modestly and that her neighbour’s accusations were baseless. The sense of

⁶ The Jamiat is a governing body in every region which deals with Islamic law and social opinions.

⁷ A maulana is a learned scholar of the Quraan in Islam who may officiate at ceremonies and lead prayers.

community, approval and belonging is thus crucial to the Muslim female identity. In fact, this is carried through into their maids' dressing as one of the madams interviewed explained that she will not let her maid into her home unless she has had a bath, worn a scarf on her head and covered her legs. This was to prevent her husband or sons from seeing parts of the maid's body, which are not permitted to be exposed in Islam other than the face, hands up to the wrists and feet up to the ankles. Religion therefore is not only a characteristic of the work environment of the domestic worker – it is one which transcends private spatial boundaries and may be imposed on or absorbed by the domestic worker. Ultimately, these tenets of Muslim identity are reflected in the Muslim madams interviewed for this research and play a significant role in selecting the ideal domestic worker.

5.3 An Overview: The Muslim Madam

Meeting the Muslim madams of North Beach reveals much about their personalities, priorities and family lives. While these, along with their life stories and experiences may be varied, it is their role as a „madam“ or female employer of a domestic worker as well as their religion which links them to a common thread for the purpose of this study. Through engaging with each one of the 20 participants involved in the research, the profile of each participant and their relationships with their domestic workers has elicited a rich collection of qualitative data and invaluable insight into the feelings and opinions of these madams on the subject. A brief overview of their details is illustrated in Table 8, however each woman is deserving of a more personal introduction. In this way it will become evident how identity works in the lives of these Muslim madams.

Table 8: Details of Participants

| Participant* | Age | Occupation | Flat size | Length of service | No days a week |
|-----------------------------|------------|----------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Salma Khan | 38 | Home business (biscuits) | 2.5 bedroom | 8 years | 6 |
| Naseema Osman | 22 | Student | 2 bedroom | 2 years | 1 |
| Farida Moosa | 50 | Home business (sweetmeats) | 3 bedroom | 38 years | 3 |
| Faheema Emam | 62 | Home executive | 3 bedroom | 11 years | 6 |
| Gori Seedat | 83 | Retired | 2 bedroom | 21 years | 2 |
| Kathija Moolla | 59 | Home executive | 2 bedroom | 3 years | 2 |
| Husna Ebrahim | 46 | Beautician | 3 bedroom | 8 years | Live in |
| Ayesha Aziz | 25 | Student | 1 bedroom | 1 year | 1 |
| Lutfiya Paruk | 34 | Accountant | 3 bedroom | 10 years | 6 |
| Tasneem Abdullah | 52 | Doctor | 1.5 bedroom | 15 years | 3 |
| Zarina Amod | 56 | Home executive | 2 bedroom | 1 year | 2 |
| Feroza Meer | 60 | Home executive | 1.5 bedroom | 2 years | 5 |
| Shaida Ismail | 57 | Invigilator | 2 bedroom | 1 year | 1 |
| Ruqayya Lockhat | 43 | Home business (health&beauty) | 1.5 bedroom | 3 years | 6 |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|----|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| Shameera Sayed | 55 | Home executive | 3 bedroom | 8 years | 3 |
| Rabia Karrim | 56 | Pharmacist | 1.5 bedroom | 2 years | 1 |
| Sumayya Desai | 52 | Home business (clothing) | 3 bedroom | 4 years | 3 (live in) |
| Zaakirah Ahmed | 38 | Teacher | 3 bedroom | 5 years | 6 |
| Fara Tarmohammed | 30 | Home executive | 3 bedroom | 4 and 2 years | 6 |
| Haseena Mia | 56 | Home executive | 3 bedroom | 3 years | 5 |

**All names have been changed the in the interest of protecting confidentiality*

As a single parent and health care professional, my first participant **Ms Rabia Karrim**, dispelled any notions of the stereotypical Muslim housewife⁸. She was quite self conscious at first, but opened up as the interview progressed, as did many of the participants. While her work was one of the main priorities in her life, she valued quality time with her family and generously gave of her time for our interview. Ms Karrim valued modest dressing and was very aware of keeping her home clean. She has one daughter who lives in the same building and employs a maid every Saturday or every alternate Saturday depending on her schedule.

Mrs Lutfiya Paruk also works full-time in an Islamic corporate environment. A 34 year old mother of two young boys, I managed to interview her just as she arrived home from work. She was very accommodating and her main priorities apart from her job were her Islamic prayers and most importantly time with her children. She lives with her mother-in-law,

⁸ Due to the often patriarchal nature of Muslim families, Muslim women seldom work full-time and are stereotypically viewed as „housewives,“ despite evidence that this is changing.

brother-in-law and husband. Her maid has been in her husband's family for ten years and in Mrs Paruk's life for five years.

Mrs Tasneem Abdullah held down a full-time job in the medical field and was so eager to participate in this research study that she offered to fetch me and take me to her home to be interviewed on a day when she finished work earlier than usual. During my time with her during the interview and the focus group, she came across as an independent and open minded woman who values education and female empowerment. As a mom of two grown children, she has employed her maid for fifteen years and shares the employment of her domestic worker with her children who also live in North Beach.

Interviewing **Mrs Zaakirah Ahmed** was an interesting experience. She spoke passionately about her love for children of which she has four, as well as her aversion to domestic work. She was friendly and met each question with a smile, which allowed the interview to feel like a comfortable conversation. At 35, she is a principal at an Islamic primary school and employs her maid of five years for five times a week.

I found that four of the participants who held down full-time jobs as professionals in their fields, balanced their lives between work and family. For them, employing a domestic worker is an essential component of their lives and allows them the ability to juggle their careers and the cleanliness of their homes, which is an integral aspect of the ideal Islamic home. While their employment of their domestic workers did reveal a mutually dependent relationship, these ladies did not spend much time with their maids due to their schedules and this has a definite impact on the relationship between madam and maid which will be investigated further on in this chapter.

Mrs Salma Khan is a hardworking mother of five. Her friendliness and tendency to keep her home open to everyone has allowed her to become quite well known in the Muslim

community and in North Beach, revealing the emphasis on communal identity. At 38 years old, she is a busy mom and also runs a successful homemade biscuit business, and most of her time is spent in the kitchen. She supplies Muslim gourmet butcheries and bakeries and despite her work being based in her home, it takes up much of her time. She has employed her maid for the past eight years and sees her six days a week.

My interview with **Mrs Farida Moosa** revealed that she has employed her maid for the last 38 years. In her words, they „grew up together“ and continue to share a close bond as she sees her three times a week. Mrs Moosa is easy going, with a witty sense of humour and runs her own catering business from home, specialising in Indian sweetmeats. She travels to Saudi Arabia very often and is a devout Muslim.

Despite her unpredictable schedule, **Mrs Husna Ebrahim** accommodated me in her home. She is a 48 year old beautician whose husband had passed away many years ago and who, in the week of our interview was planning to remarry. She has three grown children and often works flexible hours depending on the schedules of her clients. She has a zest for life and dedication to her faith. Mrs Ebrahim has employed a live in maid for the past 10 years and since getting married and moving to another city, has taken her maid with her.

Ms **Naseema Osman** is a dedicated full-time post graduate student. She is politically motivated, humorous and quite Islamically inclined. She resides in North Beach with her siblings although she is originally from Ladysmith, where her parents live. As the head of a Muslim political youth group on her campus while being dedicated to her studies, she is quite active in the community and prioritises her prayer times. Her maid has been employed by their family for many years and took care of her grandparents. She now employs her maid once a week.

Like Ms Osman, **Mrs Ayesha Aziz** is a full-time student. She is 25 years old and has been married for four years. She is quite reserved, although she gave of her time willingly for the interview. Her schedule balanced running a home, being a wife and avid cook and submitting university work on time, leaving her with no option but to employ a maid who she sees once a week. She shares the employment of her maid with a relative who lives in North Beach.

Mrs Shaida Ismail, a 58 year old part-time invigilator welcomed me into her home for the interview and it was clear from the Islamic artefacts and spotlessness of her home that she is very Islamic and values cleanliness. She lives with her husband and has three children who are working in Cape Town and who visit every holiday. She has employed her maid for a year and sees her once a week.

During my interview with **Mrs Sumayya Desai**, she explained that she has 3 sons and she had a daughter who passed away at 19. Despite the tragedy she has a positive outlook on life and at 50 years old, runs her own clothing business at the North Beach flea market on Sundays. She is passionate about cooking and her family and is very particular about modesty and respectable dressing. She has employed her maid, who lives in her buildings' maids' quarters, for the last four years and sees her three times a week.

Ms Ruqayya Lockhat is a 43 year old single mother of two girls who are in high school. She runs a part-time business from home specialising in health and beauty. She is passionate about renovating and interior design and is a feisty, fit and independent woman. She was easy to talk to and willing to share information. Her maid works in her home for 6 days a week and has been employed by her for three years.

Mrs Faheema Emam welcomed me into her home and introduced me to her maid who has been in her employ for the last 11 years. She was very open and honest, explaining that her

husband is an amputee and that they look after their grandchild during the day, which is why her maid is so important to her. She rarely leaves her home and willingly shares the chores with her maid who comes five times a week.

Interviewing **Ms Gori Seedat** was memorable. Despite her age of 83 years, she is vibrant, independent and open to sharing information. She lives alone in her two bedroom flat in North Beach and although she suffers from a few health conditions, she still cooks, drives and often takes the stairs instead of the lifts in her building. She employs a maid twice a week and has no children.

After some deliberation, **Mrs Kathija Moolla** allowed me to interview her in her home. She is 59 and lives alone with her husband in a two bedroom flat. She came across as a cautious, quiet lady who is dedicated to Islam and particular about cleanliness. Her children are married and living on their own and she employs a maid who has been working for her for three years twice a week.

Mrs Haseena Mia was referred to me by her sister who also participated in this study and who lived a floor above her in the same building. This particular family had other family members living in the same building and often shared a maid. Mrs Mia's home was clean and inviting and regularly maintained by her maid of three years who works in her home five times a week. Mrs Mia's children are married and she and her husband occupy their three bedroom flat when he is not away on Islamic pilgrimage.

The only madam in this study who employs two maids concurrently is **Mrs Fara Tarmohammed**. She is 30 years old and embraced Islam upon her marriage to her Muslim husband. They have four small children and live in a 3 bedroom apartment. Her husband's sister and father live in the same block. She is forthright and down to earth, allowing our

interview to be frank and honest. Her maids have been working for her for four and two years respectively and work in her home six days a week.

Mrs Shameera Sayed is a 55 year old mother of two. Her children are married and her daughter lives in the same building as she does. She enjoys cooking and loves to laugh. Mrs Sayed values her strong relationships with her Muslim neighbours and is quite spiritually focused. Her maid is in her 60's and has been working for her for eight years, seeing her three times a week.

Mrs Zarina Amod is 56 years old. She has two unmarried children in their twenties who live with her and her husband. She is an entertaining woman as she has a great sense of humour with a passion for travel and loves to relate stories to others of her experiences. She is a devout Muslim and values her faith above all else. Her maid has been employed by her for a year and works in her home twice a week.

I met **Mrs Feroza Meer** in the home of Mrs Amod as they are neighbours and close friends. At 60 years old, Mrs Meer is elegant and reserved. Her children are married and live on their own and she described how excited she gets to see her grandchildren during the holidays. She has employed a maid for the last two years who works in her home five times a week.

Madams who did not have full-time employment outside the home, did have more contact with their domestic workers. By this however, I do not imply that their levels of trust or intimacy are higher than those who work. Employers such as Mrs Shameera Sayed and Mrs Faheema Emam allowed me into their homes willingly and explained the intricacies of such arrangements as well as their feelings around the subject. In a similar light, madams who work from home like Mrs Salma Khan and Mrs Farida Moosa spoke of their dependence on their maids who assisted them during busy periods as well as Mrs Zaakira Ahmed and Mrs Fara Tarmohammed whose maids were an important part of their children's upbringing. Most

madams did feel the need to encourage Islamic values in their homes, which often infiltrated the space in which the maid worked and in some cases, dictated the private space of the maid as well. It is clear however, that Muslim identity is played out in terms of their activities within the Muslim community, strong relationships with their neighbours, emphasis on Islamic dressing, and their regard for cleanliness in their homes as well as their passion for cooking.

Despite the variances which set Muslim madams apart such as occupations, the focus group research revealed that due to the concentrated nature of the residential area of North Beach, many madams knew each other and often met in Spar or the local halaal butchery, Gourmet Meats. They frequented similar places such as the flea market and park, had similar routines due to their prayer times; and in many instances knew one another's maids. This in turn led to sharing of the employment maids between madams and complex relationships between the two, which will be explored in later chapters. Most significantly, however, is the influence of their Muslim identity on finding a domestic worker and the avenues through which they seek „good“ maids.

5.4 Employing a Domestic Worker

For the Muslim madam in North beach Durban, employing a domestic worker is not merely an exercise in finding someone who will clean her home. It extends beyond the working contract in that she seeks an employee who will value Islamic modesty, the sacredness of her home and maintain the standards of cleanliness expected from a Muslim woman. Thus she approaches the recruitment process with these preconceived ideas of the ideal maid. One of

the first areas of the madam- maid relationship that was investigated was the initial point of contact between both parties. It is key to this research study, to bring to light the various points at which madams and maids find each other and the levels of trust or suspicion at work even before the relationship formally begins. This entailed investigating the details of how the employers found their domestic workers, the reasons they searched for domestic help, the qualities they sought in their maids as well as the levels of difficulty experienced when finding domestic workers. This section begins to answer some of the questions about how employers recruit and select their maids.

Similar to the networked nature of the Muslim community, my research shows that Muslim madams in North Beach use three main avenues to find a domestic worker who reflects the qualities of her ideal maid. It is clear that she uses her Muslim networks to find domestic workers and in these women she seeks the same values she upholds.

In analysing the data, it was apparent that employers used a recruitment strategy to find their domestic workers through three main avenues:

- Through their own families
- Through their neighbours
- Through referrals from previous maids

5.4.1 Family Referrals

Firstly, due to the often close knit nature of Muslim families, most madams found their domestic workers through their families. Madams trusted their families as they shared the notions of what constituted the ideal maid and often shared the employment of a domestic

worker. The terms of the employment of the domestic worker balanced on the sharing of the domestic worker on alternate days of the week. An example was Mrs Shameera Sayed, whose maid was working for her sister-in-law and started working for her eight years ago. Her situation is mirrored by other participants:

*‘Christine was recommended by a relative when we were looking for a maid’
(Tasneem Abdullah)*

‘Well, she was working for my mother before I got married and after that, I employed her on Thursdays and my mother employed her on Saturdays.’ (Ayesha Aziz)

Some maids were recommended but the madam had already been warned about their deviant behaviour.

‘My cousin sent her, but she said that I must watch her all the time and not leave her alone because she tends to do her own thing.’ (Zarina Amod)

In such cases, the madam has a preconceived idea of the maid from a family member she trusts, causing the maid’s entry into her home to be bathed in a negative light, filled with suspicion – already setting the tone for the relationship. On the other hand, receiving a positive character assessment from a family member about a potential maid may encourage a relationship between madam and maid as in Mrs Emam’s case:

*‘Then my nephew brought this maid- she was working in Overport at the time but he said he knew I would like a maid like this and Alhumdulillah (praise be to Allah), she was ok. From that day onwards, she has been working very well for me for 11 years.’
(Faheema Emam)*

In addition, maids have been „passed down“ from one generation to the next as in Ms Osman“s case:

„She has been in my family for a while now. My grandparents passed away about seven years ago and she used to take care of them. When I moved to Durban, she agreed to help me once a week.‘ (Naseema Osman)

Her maid had initially been employed by her grandparents and who now works for her. In our interview it was apparent that her domestic worker had absorbed some of the key Islamic family values and due to her history with the family of her employer, had received much respect from Naseema Osman. However, it is apparent from her wording, „she has been in my family for a while now,“ that she may not entirely enjoy the status of „being family,“ rather, she has been „in“ one – somewhat reminiscent of an heirloom.

Similarly, Mrs Ebrahim has inherited her maid:

„Gloria worked for my late husband’s family for over 20 years and when my sister-in-law went overseas, I employed her.‘ (Husna Ebrahim)

Between casual referrals such as the cases of Mrs Amod and Mrs Abdullah, to long term family relationships such as Mrs Ebrahim, it is clear that maids in this area are familiar with the families of their madams and in effect take on multiple working relationships within these families. Thus, the domestic worker may become accustomed to the intimate intricacies and routines of family members and know them each more personally than their own families do, as Ally“s (2010: 96) research has found. In one of Ally“s interviews, the domestic worker explained that she washed their sheets, their underwear, took phone messages and watched family members argue. She added that she was „intimately connected“ to the family and

admitted to knowing more about each of the family members than they knew about each other.

Marriage arose as one of the key factors of the changing role of Muslim women to „madams“ as they take on the role of the home maker. This was evident when speaking to Mrs Paruk:

„She was working for my mother-in-law for about 10 years so she was not mine to begin with. But since I married her son, she has been in my life for the last 5 years.“
(Lutfiya Paruk)

Mrs Paruk lives with her mother-in-law, brother-in-law, husband and two children. She recognised that it would not be easy for her maid to work for two women who have different expectations of a maid. However, it was poignant in this case that the maid was already part of the family before she joined it – therefore she did not have the ability to actively choose a maid. Thus, madam and maid were decided for each other through marriage. This is not uncommon in the Muslim community, as young brides are brought to live in the groom’s family home, rather than live in their own due to the communal nature of families. The relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is explored by Hassim (2007: 95) who indicates that the relationship has the potential to be a necessary alliance or adversely affect the bride’s life and her relationship with her husband. In a similar vein, Mernissi (1987: 77) presents the argument that the relationship between a mother and her son is so strong in Muslim communities that it is considered antisocial for the husband and wife to be alone together and that the wife is often demoted to a child like figure in the household, without any decision making power (Hassim, 2007: 97). The complexity involved in such relationships makes Mrs Paruk’s case one of interest as she has become a co-madam with her mother-in-

law. In addition, the maid has witnessed these changes in the household, allowing her to perhaps know more about the family than Mrs Paruk.

In the case of Mrs Farida Moosa, marriage marked the beginning of her 38-year relationship with her domestic worker Moira. Mrs Moosa explained that 15-year old Moira began working for her when she got married and since then, they have „grown up together.“ *„I call her my Moira or Mama Moira,‘* she says, having never employed another domestic worker and absorbing Moira into their family. While interviewing her, Mrs Moosa’s neighbour entered the room and joked with her about the often heated arguments followed by joking that she witnessed between Mrs Moosa and Moira. *„She’s like your mother-in-law!“* laughed the neighbour. While Mernissi (1987: 121-133) describes the mother-in-law as the greatest threat to conjugal intimacy between husband and wife, he comments that this relationship ensures no privacy between man and wife due to the communal setting. Through the interview, I found that while Mrs Moosa did not perceive Moira in a threatening light, she did mention that Moira wakes her up shouting that she is sleeping in too late or that she has messed the kitchen that she just cleaned. Moira is also in charge of serving Mrs Moosa’s husband’s breakfast when she is away. Their level of comfort with each other allows them to fight with each other, then make up, however it is clear that Moira keeps her madam in check – similar to a mother-in-law – daughter-in-law relationship.

Upon meeting Moira as one of the key informants of this research study, I found her alone, cleaning her employer’s home while Mrs Moosa was in Johannesburg; and answering the phone with the Islamic greeting. She spoke fluent English and had little experience with other madams; but knew her employer’s family and home so intimately that Mrs Moosa warmly referred to her as the „madam of the house.“

5.4.2 Referrals from Neighbours

Secondly, Muslim madams relied on referrals from their neighbours to recruit „good“ maids. Living in a densely populated building such as those in North Beach, neighbours become an integral part of one another's daily lives and often come to employ the same maid. Maids may meet other madams in the building in the elevators, at the washing line areas or like Mrs Feroza Meer, in her neighbour's flat. Mrs Meer then asked the maid if she would like to work for her once a week and the maid agreed. Similarly, Mrs K Moolla explained:

„She was working on the 5th floor and I asked the security downstairs and he sent her to me.‘

One of the most striking cases during the research process was undoubtedly Mrs Salma Khan who related the story of how she employed her current maid who has been working for her for eight years:

„Well my neighbour Fatima employed her and at the time I had just had my fifth child and was not recovering well. So Fatima offered to lend me Precious for one day. Precious was quite excited to work for me. The day she walked into my home was the most blessed day, because I just showed her once what to do and till this day, she hasn't forgotten. I didn't know that she didn't enjoy working for Fatima. It so happened that Precious had another day extra so she begged me to give her a job for the day. But I didn't have the business at the time so I told her I couldn't afford to pay her. She started to cry and said she would work for free. But we agreed that I would make cupcakes and gave them to her to sell. From that money

I would pay her, I tell you, she started selling cupcakes like crazy! So that's how it started...'

Mrs Khan's account of recruiting her domestic worker displays two things. Firstly it points to the sharing of maids between neighbours. More importantly, it shows the active agency of the maid to choose one madam over another regardless of the payment in order to have a good natured relationship with her employer. Working for free or selling cupcakes in order to work for the madam of choice may point to desperation for employment as King (2007: 169) relates that often domestic workers are willing to work at exploitative rates because they know that there are others in townships worse off than themselves, and in turn consider themselves „lucky to have a job.“ Thus, most maids appear passive – however in the case of Precious, she sacrificed a stable wage in order to gain a suitable madam but even more so, better conditions of employment. Overall however, these situations may leave neighbours in tense predicaments with each other, as became apparent in the focus group, and potentially cause rifts between madams – an aspect which will be explored in depth in chapter six.

5.4.3 Referrals from Domestic Workers

The third main avenue of finding a domestic worker relates to referrals from previous or current maids. It must be highlighted that domestic workers themselves can influence the relationship between madams and maids with regards to who is employed by whom.

This applied to six out of 20 madams and the reasons varied:

„I had a previous worker who fell pregnant and brought me this one‘ (Rabia Karrim)

In Ms Karrim's case, her previous maid had found the current one and had trained her in Ms Karrim's home. Her previous maid knew the Islamic greetings and values and imparted these to the current domestic worker. This ensured that the madam would have her values and standards of cleanliness upheld despite the change in maid. This is a rare case as it is not the maid's obligation to find and train someone to take her place, but due to the bond between madam and maid, the previous maid took this on as her responsibility. It is important not to overlook though that here the power lies with the maid to ensure employment for another maid.

Other respondents mentioned:

‘She is my brother's maid's daughter.’ (Zarina Amod)

‘My sister's maid found her for me.’ (Gori Seedat)

‘My maid died of Aids so another girl brought this one to me.’ (Hasina Mia)

‘My maid's niece now works for my daughter who is in the building.’ (Shameera Sayed)

‘She is my friend's maid's sister and they live together, so that's how I found her.’ (Sumayya Desai)

These responses indicate that pregnancy and Aids are some of the reasons for the involuntary loss of domestic work in the home, however it is clear that domestic workers use these opportunities to ensure employment for their family members or friends such as the case of Mrs Sayed or Mrs Desai. In some instances, therefore, the family of the employer may also face the prospect of becoming familiar with one or more of the family members of the domestic worker. One of the participants even mentioned that if her current maid had to leave, she would like to employ one of the maid's relatives because she would be of similar

character. However, in the case of Ms Karrim, her previous maid who was pregnant returned and was out of work as she could not return to work for Ms Karrim who was happy with her current maid. The previous maid has since found domestic employment in a neighbouring block of flats. It is due to the informal nature of domestic work, discussed in chapter two that these arrangements are possible, such that employment contracts do not have to be formally cancelled or enforced.

5.5 Previous Experiences with Domestic Workers

The relationships between Muslim madams and their maids is indeed not a recent one. The oldest participant in this study, Ms Gori Seedat remembers her mother employing a maid when she was quite little. As Vahed and Waetjen (2010: 78) point out, while daughters and daughters-in-law in the 1940's were skilled in cooking and cleaning, the well-to-do families were able to hire domestic workers. Thus housewives were saved from the „drudgery“ (Vahed and Waetjen, 2010: 78) of laborious domestic chores. One of the key informants for their study, Zuliekha Mayat recalls her childhood memories of being honed to do domestic chores, however on some days, she would play sport with the boys in her family. If they were one player short, the domestic worker would join in, revealing a relationship between the maid and her employer's family which was not solely based on the working contract.

However, there were serious matters to take into account during that period as many Indian homes, like white households, could afford domestic workers while few African homes could. These economic disparities were revealed through racial categorisation (Vahed and Waetjen, 2010: 51). An article published in Indian Views in the 1950's read „The South

African housewife especially can do a great deal to make this world a better place since as a leisured class most of our work is done by servants.”

The dynamic of dependency and loyalty between Muslim madams and their maids is highlighted in the book, focusing on the first edition of *Indian Delights*, the cookbook which was published in 1961. In a revolutionary move, Mildred Mdladla, the domestic assistant of the founding members of the Women’s Cultural Group is the first to be thanked in the acknowledgements section. She was trained in cooking, tasting and estimating quantities in the years leading up to the publication of the book. A picture which appeared in the 2nd edition and many after it captures the labour relationship:



Source: Vahed and Waetjen (2010: 116)

This picture documents the employment of domestic workers by Indian and Muslim madams from the 1960's. The social differences between madam and maid are depicted here through the maid wearing a uniform at a picnic as well as her positioning. She is further away and sitting on the grass, while the madams sit nearer to the food on the picnic mat.

The need for domestic workers during the 1970's by Muslim madams is echoed by Ms Rabia Karrim, the first participant in this study:

“Growing up, we had a domestic worker in our home, we were a family of ten kids, so obviously my mum needed some help even though she was quite active in raising us and making sure we were all bathed, clothed and fed. (1960's – 1970's). I think most homes in our family did have a domestic worker at that time and at one stage we had a male maid. You didn't have appliances like vacuum cleaners and blenders, so mums had a lot to do in the kitchen and families were usually much bigger then.

Muslim madams have continued to hire domestic help as the Islamic home continues to hold fast to traditions and an emphasis on cleanliness. While many madams now work full time, their dependency on domestic work has remained, evident in the ease of accessing the sample for this study. Relationships between madams and maids may change however over time depending on the personalities and expectations of each party.

Many employers' perceptions of maids are shaped by their previous experiences with domestic workers. It is imperative to gauge firstly, if they interacted with maids while growing up and what this type of relationship was like. Most of the participants did have maids in their homes when they were young. Not all participants followed in the footsteps of their parents in the way they treated their maids:

‘When I was growing up we always had domestic workers, but my family treated them terribly. They used to tell them where to sleep and used to make them work overnight and long hours. It was pathetic the way my family treated them, so I never treat my maid that way’ (Husna Ebrahim)

While it is clear that Mrs Ebrahim’s treatment of maids has definitely been shaped by her previous experiences with them in her family, she has taken an active role in improving her relationship with her domestic worker. Turning a negative experience into a positive one and breaking the cycle of the ill treatment of domestic workers reveals her self reflexivity. While waiting to interview her, I observed that her maid cooked for herself and ate at the table. Upon leaving her apartment, I overheard Mrs Ebrahim excitedly telling her maid that she knew how much she enjoyed mielies from Nando’s so she had bought her some on the way home. The relationship, in Mrs Ebrahim’s words was maternal as she learnt much about keeping a home from her maid.

The concept of learning from the maid is very different to the way some madams mentioned that they learnt to live with maids:

*‘We always had a domestic worker growing up. We learnt to keep them in our family.’
(G. Seedat)*

‘We were brought up in a mixed race community and my dad was part of the ANC. He had a soccer club called the Hearts and so we were in contact with blacks, whites and Indians. He used to tell us that maids must be treated fairly. My grandmother used to be mortified at that, but we all learnt how to get along with each other. I know lots of Muslims who discriminate – we know that, but others are not brought up that way’ (Shameera Sayed)

Despite their positive feelings towards domestic workers, the use of the words „we learnt to keep them in our family“ and we „learnt to get along with each other“ does imply that the relationship between Mrs Sayed and Ms Seedat and their previous maids was not a natural one – it had to deliberately adapt over time. This is central to questioning the intimacy between madams and maids as it points to an intimate relationship between them which did not develop naturally, but was actively constructed. These relationships therefore required effort on their part - for Mrs Sayed’s grandmother in particular who did not believe in the fair treatment of domestic workers.

Not all domestic workers however were black women:

„Growing up, we always had domestic workers in our home. In fact when we were young, we had Indian women working for us. In those days our parents weren’t so focused on religion and the maids (who were not Muslim) used to bath us, change us and we used to go to their houses. They looked after us very nicely. After a while when we were still quite small, my mum had African maids and there wasn’t much difference. (Haseena Mia)

„We always had domestic workers in our home – not always women though, interestingly enough. And for the past 10 years now we’ve employed Malawian Muslim maids in our family and they live with us, which we prefer. It’s fun because we all pray at the same times and have similar routines.‘ (Naseema Osman)

While there has not been much difference in the change from Indian domestic workers to African maids, Ms Osman’s account reveals that there is a definite difference in employing Muslim domestic workers due to the religious commonality. She went on to state in the focus group that she trusts them more than South African maids who are not Muslim.

The history of domestic work in their families has impacted on some madams' lives in such a way that they feel incapable of cleaning their own homes:

„We always had two maids in our home when we were growing up – that's why I don't know how to clean! My mum used to bring maids from Potchefstroom, that's why we speak Afrikaans so fluently. In those days the same maid would stay for a long time and we got so used to them.‘ (Zaakira Ahmed)

In a similar vein, Mrs Salma Khan, who has only employed a maid for the past eight years mentioned:

„She has made me lazy because I am so lazy to do housework now – she has really taken a burden off my shoulders...I wouldn't manage without her.‘

Previous relationships with domestic workers have a definite influence on the current relationships between maid and madam. It was found during this research process that most of the participants, who had favourable relationships with their maids growing up, continued to have good relationships with their current domestic workers and this was quite apparent in the focus groups. However, some like Mrs Ebrahim have improved their treatment of domestic workers. It is clear that relationships between madams and maids have been „learned“ over time. Through identifying similar values in their domestic workers, the Muslim madam „learns“ what qualities to look for in her current domestic worker in order to set up a favourable relationship.

5.6 Reasons for employing domestic workers

In order to further explore how the Muslim identity influences the selection of a domestic worker, the reasons for hiring domestic help needed to be examined. This is of utmost importance to this study, as it details the root of the relationship between madam and maid and ultimately, the nature of their interaction. Most of the madams interviewed stated that they needed extra help after the birth of their children. In Mrs Khan's case, she was bedridden after the birth of the 5th child and could not cater for the running of her household and taking care of her other children. The services of a domestic worker in her case were a necessity.

The most common response to questions regarding their need for a maid was that madams could clean their homes, but needed domestic workers to do the „bigger jobs“ such as ironing, washing clothes and washing the floors. Like Mrs Mia, as madams got older, their need for domestic help increased.

„...especially if you get older, it doesn't get easier to do it yourself.‘

At 83 years of age, Ms Gori Seedat emphasised her dependency on her domestic worker, Veronica:

„I like keeping a maid because I need the help. Now I have a pacemaker and I have had a stent put in my heart.‘

She elaborated that she had strict instructions from the doctor not to bend to load the washing machine or do any strenuous activity, thus increasing her need for domestic help. Health problems are not an uncommon rationale behind the employment of a domestic worker as in

the case of Mrs Moolla who said that she had a spine problem and could not manage doing the housework. Mrs Emam also indicated health reasons for employing her maid, explaining:

„My husband is an amputee and we also look after our grandchild. I'm suffering with Arthritis, so I can't manage on my own.‘

Observing Mrs Emam and her domestic worker in her home, I noticed her maid was quite at ease and took good care of the grandchild while doing her chores. Children and their need for constant supervision also arose as one of the key reasons behind the employment of a domestic worker. One case of note was that of Mrs Fara Tarmohammed, who has four young children. Upon asking her what her reasons were for hiring two domestic workers who work concurrently, her immediate answer was, „Four children!“ Echoing her sentiments were Mrs Abdullah who mentioned that she needed help looking after her children when they were younger; and Mrs Desai who stated that she has three sons and that the washing and ironing are the most time consuming tasks in her home, which she needs help with.

Mrs Ebrahim explained that she needed a maid because she came home late from appointments and often, her maid shared her responsibilities in the home:

„I needed to work and so she helped me look after my children because I used to come home late. She was more a mother to my children than a maid.‘

This captures the intimate relationships outlined by Macdonald (1998 cited in Ally, 2010: 96-97) who demonstrated that „they (domestic workers, nannies and au pairs) are hired to act as proxies for mothers in their absence, but never to completely substitute their presence,“ coining the term „shadow mothering.“ For maids who are paid to care for the children in the household, they grow to „love“ the children as their own.

On the other hand, some madams interviewed recognised the employment of their maid in terms of the maid's need for a job, as was the case with Mrs Ismail:

„Firstly I felt that she needed the money for her own personal use. That was the main reason because I can actually do my own housework. So I employed her on that basis. It's a little extra help for me as well.’

While her response may be disputed due to the feedback received from the maid who explained that Mrs Ismail had in fact approached her, it is important to note that some madams see their employment of their maid as an act of good will – that by paying someone for a „little extra help,” they are contributing to the domestic worker's life, while minimising the benefits they receive by taking on a maid. However, King (2007: 179) reminds us, that these acts of kindness are an „effective instrument of power,” reinforcing the dominant position of the employer.

As Mrs Paruk mentions, *„It was also an assistance to her (the maid),’* however she went on to say that it became a necessity to have a maid after the birth of her first child.

Many madams stated that if they had to, they could do the housework on their own; however, one madam admitted that she wished she did not have to employ a maid:

„If I didn't have to, I wouldn't – if I had a robot, I would prefer it. With age, sometimes you can't do some things around the home. If something was programmed, like a robot, it would do what you wanted it to do, not find that it's doing something other than what you told it to.’

Ms Karrim's use of the word „robot” points to her disapproval of maids showing emotion but more importantly, „something that is programmed” would be void of any human qualities. She would rather have a robot in her home than a human being – revealing her concerns

about trust and lack of faith in the discretion of a domestic worker. When domestic workers do not follow exact instructions, madams become utterly frustrated, with one madam in the focus group stating „they are dom (dumb).“ Reminiscent of Cock’s (1980) findings discussed in chapter two, madams sometimes view domestic workers as something lower than human beings. Entwined in this complex relationship, Ally (2010: 103) speaks of emotional labour. Speaking to the key informants, their suppression of their true feelings is a vital part of their jobs, with one too afraid to reveal her opinions of her madam to me, despite her madam being out of earshot.

Mrs Amod and Mrs Desai explained that they don’t like maids asking too many questions or exclaiming how beautiful their homes were:

„That’s when you get worried, when they look around and are very quizzy.‘ (Mrs Amod)

„I like a maid that doesn’t talk to me too much, she must carry on and do her work. If she wants anything, she must ask me.‘ (Mrs. Desai).

It may be deduced that even compliments are viewed with suspicion by madams, who simultaneously depend on their maids to keep their homes clean and care for their children. This „ambivalent“ (Ally, 2010: 98) interaction results in a peculiar arrangement, full of intimacy and distance - aptly described by Hansen (1989 cited in Ally 2010) as „distant companions.“ Thus, the Muslim madam has boundaries between herself and the maid which are permeable only when she wishes, never truly revealing her identity to the maid and viewing the maid as the „other,” often viewing her with suspicion.

5.7 Qualities Sought in Domestic Workers

In choosing a maid, the madams interviewed did seek certain qualities in line with their preconceptions about their ideal maid. Generally, madams preferred domestic workers who possessed Islamic values so that they would be trusted to work with halaal food in the kitchen and raise their children in an Islamic way. There were specific attributes that madams searched for as well. In pinpointing these attributes, this research study identifies the variables at work when madams decide to take on their maids and highlights the different criteria that Muslim madams in North Beach base their decisions on.

The core qualities most of the madams looked for in domestic workers were honesty and reliability. Madams claimed that it is key to trust someone who is employed in their homes and these qualities were the basis of any good relationship between madam and maid.

Agreeing with this point, Grace, one of the key informants of this study said:

‘The main thing about being a domestic worker is – don’t steal.’

It is important to note here that while madams seek honest maids, domestic workers themselves know what is expected of them. Reliability as a highly revered trait referred in most cases to the punctuality of maids.

On the other hand, a few madams felt that qualities such as friendliness and a good attitude surpassed reliability, as Ms Tarmohammed mentions:

‘They must be happy, relaxed and smiling. They don’t have to be the best cleaner, they don’t have to be punctual. I just want them to be comfortable here.’

For Ms Tarmohammed, a love for children was another critical quality she looked for in a domestic worker. The same went for Mrs Paruk who elaborated:

„Anyone will want their maid to do a good job of the housework and look after their stuff, but the main thing for me especially because I am working again, is that she looks after my children – even if that means she needs to overlook certain things in the household to do that.’

Mrs Ahmed’s opinions followed a similar vein, mentioning that:

„They must love children...they mustn’t get irritated when they get in the way.’

Trusting their domestic workers to care for their children is an integral part of choosing a maid who „fits“ in their family. Mrs Ahmed explained that she had employed a maid prior to her current maid who worked for her who did not have a „maternal“ nature and did not communicate well with the children. She had to let that maid go and searched for three months before she found her current maid who is very fond of the children and who does basic housework. When asked about taking care of so many children however, Zinhle, a key informant did mention that while she loved children, it was her job to look after them at times they were too naughty and increased her work load.

The notion of „mothering“ did arise as a sought after quality for some madams, but interestingly, only three madams mentioned that cleanliness or neatness was a key quality they looked for in a domestic worker. Ms Osman and Mrs Aziz agreed that they cannot clean their homes as well as their domestic workers can, saying it was a „different kind of clean“ when their maids cleaned their homes. Relating to reasons mentioned earlier pertaining to the bigger jobs such as ironing and washing, all the participants mentioned that domestic workers

were an immense help to them. However, not all madams thought that their domestic workers themselves were clean:

Sumayya: _You know a black person...I don't know if you will agree with me, but they still have one leg in the bush'.

(Everyone laughs in agreement)

Sumayya: _No matter how educated they are, they still have that dirtiness about them – they aren't like us. They aren't hygienic. They mix the kitchen things with the bathroom things. '

Rabia: _I think sometimes, they don't know better. They grew up in the bush; there hasn't been much sanitation or hygiene. To learn it takes a long time. Only recently they had that advert telling people to wash their hands. '

Zarina: _oh I had a maid once and she finished in the loo without washing her hands. I asked her why she didn't wash her hands and she looked at me and said, _but I only made number 1!' I couldn't believe it and I told her she has to do it. She kept saying Hawbo! And she kept mumbling to herself like I was saying something wrong. I felt terrible. '

Sumayya: _I give my one her own soap. When she's going to the toilet downstairs, I give her a towel, soap and washing powder so she has everything she needs to keep herself and her clothes clean. Before she starts work, I tell her. '

I draw a strong parallel here to Ehrenreich and Hochschild's (2003) assertion that dirt attaches itself to those who clean it. These perceptions of maids are tied to negative ideas about race and class and differences between Muslim madams and black maids as the excerpt shows. Maids are seen as dirty due to preconceptions of their standards of living, despite their

jobs which require them to clean the most private areas of people's homes. Yet, maids are often made to use the communal bathroom downstairs rather than the one they are made to clean. This is offensive to domestic workers, as Thandi, one of the key informants explained. She could not understand why she could not use the toilet that she cleaned every day. Thandi used the building toilet in the maids' quarters and had to leave her employer's home when she needed to use it. Thus, the quality of cleanliness in a maid and her ability to clean are two very separate entities in the minds of madams. Due to the sacredness of cleanliness to the Muslim identity, madams often feel like „they are not like us,” as one of the respondents mentions, encapsulating the „us” and „them” identifiers at work between madams and maids. The Muslim madam therefore seeks a maid who has the ability to clean and uses her own standards of personal cleanliness to influence the personal cleanliness of the maid.

5.8 Difficulties experienced in finding a domestic worker

Approximately 13 madams stated that they had experienced no difficulty in finding a maid, but there was a general consensus that it was difficult to find a „good maid.”

„It's generally hard to find a good maid these days because you can't just take anybody off the street. You don't know if they're honest or what their backgrounds are or what type of girls they are.” (Mrs Ismail)

Her responses indicate that for these madams, in the past it was easier to find good maids. Looking back on the previous experiences of domestic workers, many stated that years ago,

maids worked for families for longer periods of time and did not have ambitions of studying like maids now. However, there are still a large number of women seeking employment as domestic workers, as Ms Karrim explained that it is not difficult to find a maid – many are looking for work for themselves or their friends. The difficulty lies in finding one who is committed, efficient and reliable.

Some madams take time to investigate the character and behaviour of their maids before they employ them, as Mrs Desai's case demonstrates:

‘When we employ a maid we always find out where she's from or who knows things about her. We don't just take someone we know nothing about.’

While a few madams had inherited their maids and thus had not had the experience of actively finding a maid, four madams explained that it is quite difficult to find a maid.

‘It is difficult to find a maid. I like to have a good relationship with them and laugh and talk. I want to be able to trust them with my children and feel comfortable with them. So it's not only about finding someone who can work well, it's also about the relationship.’ (Fara Tarmohammed).

Mrs Moolla mentioned that the difficulty in finding a good maid lies in finding one who will not be offended if you correct their work. In addition, she mentioned that it was hard to find a maid who would come on the days specified and do exactly what needed to be done in the home.

These two cases are quite different, despite their agreement that it is not an easy task to find a good domestic worker. However, Mrs Tarmohammed looked outside the basic working contract parameters and defined a good maid as one who has a personal connection to her and her children – emphasising the emotional aspect of their relationship, while Mrs Moolla

leaned more towards the practical aspects of the actual work. Thus, need and difficulty in finding domestic workers varies between madams.

One of the madams however, mentioned that „finding a maid depended on the madam,“ stating that maids are available but the standards of some madams are particularly high:

„Some of them (madams) are not easy going and some are very fussy. Well, I am easy going so it wasn't hard. I have had good luck with my maids.‘ (Mrs Mia)

The notion of „good luck“ arose quite strongly during my interviews as madams seemed to feel lucky or blessed to have a good maid as they have heard of numerous complaints from other madams about their maids. This was particularly interesting as Muslims do not believe in luck, rather in blessings from Allah (SWT). Many madams, after stating they were blessed or lucky, followed this with the words Alhumdulillah (praise be to Allah). They attribute their ease in finding good domestic workers to a Higher Power, once again reinforcing the link between religion and domestic work. As mentioned earlier, religion infiltrates every aspect of thinking in a Muslim's mind. The Muslim madam is no different as she sees her religious identity as a Muslim woman as the reason she has found a „good“ domestic worker.

5.9 Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that the recruitment and selection of a domestic worker is heavily dependent on the preconceptions of the „ideal“ maid and Muslim identity of the madam. Thus religion is an integral part of the selection of a domestic worker. In sketching the concept of Muslim identity, I have shown that it is complex and rests on a communal

identity of „South African Indians“ and „Muslims“ as well as individual traits such as dressing, maintaining a clean home, cooking and language. The Muslim madam values modesty, cleanliness and her role as a mother and cook. I argue throughout the chapter that it is these similar values which she seeks when recruiting and selecting a domestic worker to work in the sacred place of her home.

This chapter introduced the participants in this study. The values of Muslim identity are revealed in their dispositions, dressing and values. Most importantly, the recruitment strategy of Muslim madams in finding the ideal domestic worker is revealed. I have focused on three main avenues of recruiting domestic workers. Through the very networked nature of the Muslim community in Durban, madams relied on their families, neighbours and previous maids to recruit domestic workers who were known to value modesty and the values of Muslim women and had worked previously in Muslim homes. Of equal importance, the responsibilities of the worker would increase in the kitchen if the maid were Muslim, as explained by the participants. However, recruiting maids through their neighbours did result in tensions between madams who shared the employment of the same maid.

It was also found that madams preferred maids who had previously worked in Muslim homes, as they „knew how a Muslim home runs.“ Some preferred Muslim maids as this facilitated a level of trust between madam and maid through shared religion. This relates to McGuire’s (1992) assertion that those sharing similar beliefs identify with each other. In investigating the Muslim madam’s needs, I have shown in this chapter that madams value honesty and friendly personalities and found difficulty in recruiting such maids. Much of their relationships with their maids were based on previous experience and their perceptions

of domestic workers, yet despite employing their domestic workers for many years, there remained levels of mistrust and negative stereotyping between some madams and their maids.

As a foundation for the following chapters, this chapter has only begun to reveal the contradictory and complex nature of the relationships between madams and maids as it is the first to touch on the ambiguous nature of the relationship and Ally's (2010) reference to „distant companionship“ and begins to question the intimacy between madam and maid.

Chapter Six

The Maid's place in the Madam's space

6.1 Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, the employment of a domestic worker extends beyond the parameters of the „normal“ working contract as it is dependent on the personal requirements, perceptions and identity of the Muslim madam. This chapter focuses on the second contributing part of my argument, exploring the home of the Durban Muslim madam as a site of the frequent social interaction in the daily lives of madam and maid which shapes their relationship. Just as the working contract in the case of domestic employment is not merely a working contract, the location of employment is not merely a work space - similar to Ally's (2010: 97) observation that „the domestic workplace is a workplace saturated with intimate relations and the close, personal, affective dimensions of their employing families“ lives become intertwined with their work.“ I argue that the home presents a contradictory space as both a private space for the employer and a work space for the domestic worker. The negotiation of this space, I assert, sees some spaces being more private than others in the home, at times defining spatial boundaries between madam and maid. Through my discussion

on the production of space through religion, I argue that Islam not only influences the working environment of the maid, but her personal space as well. The concepts of the domestic worker being „one of the family“ or a „stranger“ are introduced in this chapter as I begin to determine the maid’s „place“ or „placelessness“ in the home. This plays an influential role in the overall intimate or distant relationship between madam and maid and poses questions around intimacy.

My analysis begins with detailing the responsibilities of each domestic worker and the amount of time spent in their employers’ homes in order to assess the primary role or place of the domestic worker in the home. This is then explored in terms of how madam and maid negotiate and share space between them. I highlight the Islamic influence of the home and its impact on space in and around the domestic worker’s space as well as the spatial boundaries within the home. Finally I focus on the apartment block as a space for the interaction between maids and madams and the tensions that emerge, concluding with the ownership and protection of the domestic worker in terms of the labour law.

6.2 Space and Meaning: the maid’s role in the madams’ home

Spaces, as noted earlier, are filled with meanings attributed to them by people who interact within them. Durrheim *et al* (2011: 116) explore this concept further and state that „meanings become quite significant to people as they start to identify with places and feel a sense of belonging or attachment to them.“ While the authors suggest this may be viewed in terms of a collective identity in a national sense of social and geographic „insiderness,“ this concept relates to this thesis firstly on an individual level and secondly, I suggest that the concept may

not always relate to feelings of belonging, but notions of not belonging or detachment as well. My discussion on space in chapter three is relevant here, especially as Lefebvre (1991) asserts that space includes some and excludes others. This is critical when assessing the maid's role as a paid employee in the private space of the employer's home.

The relationship between „madam“ and „maid“ is therefore largely dependent on their context and their frequent social interaction within this space. The home, a sanctuary and the most private place for the employer and her family, becomes an employment environment for the worker, presenting various meanings and roles for each within the space. Goffman (1959 cited in Lan, 2003: 527) analyses this predicament by viewing the home as a „backstage area that harbours secrets and behaviours only accessible to insiders.“ This has a direct impact on „employing outsiders in the homely backstage,“ as Lan (2003) suggests, and in the case of my research, the overall intimate or distant relationship between the two. The domestic worker's role in the home is firstly determined by her responsibilities in the space. These are dependent on the needs of the Muslim madam as established by the previous chapter which showed that domestic workers were required to do the „bigger jobs“ such as ironing and washing as well as looking after the children in the home. In addition, the time she spends in the employers' home is a contributing factor towards her intimate or distant relationship with the home and its inhabitants. Table 8 details the responsibilities of each madam's maid as well as their length of employment and hours spent in the home per day.

Table 8: Responsibilities of Domestic Workers

| Participant* | Responsibilities | Length of service | No days a week | Hours a day |
|-----------------------|---|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Salma Khan | Cleaning, protecting the home, looking after the children, sweeping, washing and helping with my business | 8 years | 6 | 7 |
| Naseema Osman | Ironing, making the beds, washing the floors, windows and curtains | 2 years | 1 | 5 |
| Farida Moosa | Everything- „runs the house“ | 38 years | 3 | 6 |
| Faheema Emam | Cleaning, washing and ironing | 11 years | 6 | 8 |
| Gori Seedat | Washing and ironing clothes, helping me in the kitchen (cooking), sweeping and dusting | 21 years | 2 | 7 |
| Kathija Moolla | Vacuuming, cleaning and ironing | 3 years | 2 | 7 |
| Husna Ebrahim | Everything – „runs the home“ | 8 years | Live in | Half the day |
| Ayesha Aziz | Cleaning the floors, kitchen, bathroom and ironing | 1 year | 1 | 5 |
| Lutfiya Paruk | Cleaning and washing, looking after the children | 10 years | 6 | 9 |
| Tasneem | Washing, ironing, cleaning the cupboards and | 15 years | 3 | 8 |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------|---|---------------|-------------|--------------|
| Abdullah | the fridge | | | |
| Zarina Amod | Cleaning and ironing | 1 year | 2 | 6 |
| Feroza Meer | Cleans the kitchen, sweeping the bedroom, cleaning the bathroom | 2 years | 1 | 6 |
| Shaida Ismail | Ironing, vacuuming cleaning the bathroom | 1 year | 1 | 7 |
| Ruqayya Lockhat | Cleaning and ironing | 3 years | 6 | 5 |
| Shameera Sayed | Ironing and basic cleaning | 8 years | 3 | 6 |
| Rabia Karrim | Washing clothes, ironing and cleaning the bathroom, kitchen, balcony and lounge | 2 years | 1 | 5 |
| Sumayya Desai | Washing clothes and the floors, ironing | 4 years | 3 (live in) | 5 |
| Zaakirah Ahmed | Washing, cleaning the bathroom, kitchen and bedrooms, ironing, looking after the children | 5 years | 6 | 7 |
| Fara Tarmohammed | Looking after the children, cleaning | 4 and 2 years | 6 | 5 hours each |
| Haseena Mia | Washing, ironing and cleaning | 3 years | 5 | 5 |

Table 8 depicts the responsibilities of maids in the homes of their madams – ranging from some who „run“ their madams“ home to those who are responsible for washing and ironing. Washing, ironing and cleaning the floors arose as the common threads of responsibilities

across all participants with four out of the 20 respondents citing childcare as one of the domestic workers' key tasks. The more uncommon responses included three madams who mentioned that their domestic worker cleans their bedrooms and makes their beds, one who stated that vacuuming was one of their domestic workers responsibilities, one who mentioned that their domestic workers cleans their cupboards and fridge and one madam who stated that it is her domestic workers' primary responsibility to „protect“ her home.

Thus, the responsibilities vary in certain cases, but the core responsibilities remain the same – washing, ironing and cleaning the floors. For madams who were interviewed in focus group one, their perceptions of domestic workers were resoundingly negative. However in light of taking on the „bigger jobs“ in the home such as washing, ironing and cleaning the floors, they highlighted positive aspects of having these responsibilities delegated to a paid domestic worker in the following excerpt:

Zarina: _You know it takes a load off your back, they do a lot, especially ironing ‘.

Rabia: _Especially when you have a bad back. ‘

*Sumayya: _I would say you can't do with them and you can't do without them (laughs)
– in that way she is like family!‘*

(Everyone laughs).

Sumayya: _..but it's very helpful having a maid. I have 4 men at home. So there is a lot of work to do. ‘

Rabia: _Things like washing the floors, washing the carpets, she is very handy. It's frustrating when you can't do it yourself. ‘

Zarina: _Yes, like the ironing and the floors. It allows me to relax. ‘

Rabia: _Yes, you have that peace of mind that your house is clean. ‘

Thus the role of the maid is one who is of help to the madam not only in terms of relieving the burden of housework, but also in allowing the employer peace of mind and time for relaxation – in line with Ehrenreich and Hochschild’s (2003) opinion that the use of paid domestic work allows employers to resume their feminine role of being maternal and having quality time with their families. Focus group two, who held a generally positive perception of domestic workers, concurred. One of the madams mentioned that her maid is a „different generation of clean,” emphasising the level of cleanliness her maid brings to her home. Tasneem Abdullah, another respondent interestingly remarked that:

_I think it’s like any job- she is a professional at what she does. I can clean but she is a professional and like any profession, you do it to the best of your ability. We can’t do it that way. She gets to corners that I didn’t see. ‘

It is this notion of „we can’t do it that way,” and a „different kind of clean,” which arose as a need for domestic work in the home. Ultimately the maid is viewed as „professional” by some who attempt to formalise her purpose as a job in the home. However, being a „professional” in a private space is not as clear-cut as a professional in a workplace where one has one’s own area. In the home, space is to be shared between the domestic worker and the employer who sees it as her private space. Table 9 illustrates the apartment size (the space that is to be shared) and the number of hours per week that it is shared between employer and employee.

Table 9: Working Hours and Flat Size

| Participant* | No of hours a week | Flat size |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| Salma Khan | 42 | 2.5 bedroom |
| Naseema Osman | 5 | 2 bedroom |
| Farida Moosa | 18 | 3 bedroom |
| Faheema Emam | 48 | 3 bedroom |
| Gori Seedat | 14 | 2 bedroom |
| Kathija Moolla | 14 | 2 bedroom |
| Husna Ebrahim | Live in | 3 bedroom |
| Ayesha Aziz | 5 | 1 bedroom |
| Lutfiya Paruk | 54 | 3 bedroom |
| Tasneem Abdullah | 16 | 1.5 bedroom |
| Zarina Amod | 12 | 2 bedroom |
| Feroza Meer | 6 | 1.5 bedroom |
| Shaida Ismail | 7 | 2 bedroom |
| Ruqayya Lockhat | 30 | 1.5 bedroom |
| Shameera Sayed | 18 | 3 bedroom |
| Rabia Karrim | 5 | 1.5 bedroom |
| Sumayya Desai | 15 | 3 bedroom |
| Zaakirah Ahmed | 42 | 3 bedroom |

| | | |
|-------------------------|---------|-----------|
| Fara Tarmohammed | 30 each | 3 bedroom |
| Haseena Mia | 25 | 3 bedroom |

It is clear from Table 9, that the sizes of the space or flat size is not large. The largest is a three-bedroom apartment with the smallest being the one-bedroom. However, 14 out of the 20 domestic workers spend more than 12 hours a week working in this space, the longest time being 54 hours a week, Mrs Paruk's domestic worker and the least time being five hours where the domestic worker cleans a one and half bedroom apartment once a week. Furthermore, the domestic worker not only shares the space with her employer, but other family members as well. Spending much time together in the contradictory space of the home presents challenges to privacy but more importantly as to how maid and madam negotiate sharing the space.

6.3 Privacy and the sharing of space

Negotiating or sharing a space is especially challenging when the space is restricted and the space holds different meanings for those sharing it. For the madam, it is a private space, while for the maid the home is a work space. This presents challenges to privacy and boundaries within the space which make some spaces more private than others. „Due to the modest living space in most households,“ as Lan (2003: 528) argues, „intrusion on privacy is almost unavoidable for both employers and domestic workers. Given that most of the respondents interviewed live in two or three bedroom apartments, intrusion on each other's

space or the sharing of space between madam and maid becomes an integral aspect of their relationship. By negotiating this space on a regular basis, the way they interact within the space is a key indicator of the type of relationship between madam and maid. This links to questions of intimacy and how comfortable madam and maid are with sharing the same space.

In order to assess the levels of comfort madams felt when their maids were in their private spaces of their homes, all 20 participants were asked how they felt when their maids were in their homes, how much supervision they gave their domestic workers, if they minded someone sharing their space and if any areas of their homes were off limits to their domestic worker.

Four out of the 20 madams expressed unease at having a domestic worker in their space. Mrs Amod revealed her anxiety when her maid arrives, saying, „I have to be on my toes all the time. I constantly have to watch her.“ While she tried to „stay out of the way,“ she had to supervise her maid all the time, explaining that:

She smashes everything (laughs). There's a new iron and the other day she broke my clothes dryer. She bangs things and then I have to run and see what happened. I'm nervous about everything. My pedal bin doesn't have a pedal anymore. And she doesn't realise that after she has ironed, she can't just pull the plug out and drop it on the floor. So I had to put a carpet under her. You have to do things to save your items.

While there were no areas of her home that were off limits to the maid, she mentioned that usually people sent their domestic workers downstairs to use the toilet, but she „let“ her maid use her toilet. It was found that some buildings had separate toilets for the domestic workers.

One of the key informants, Thandi, mentioned that she did not understand the reasoning behind this as she was the one cleaning the madam's toilet. Letting her maid use her toilet as Mrs Amod puts it, almost seems as if using the madam's toilet is a privilege. Once again this relates to the madam's notion of the maid's „dirtiness“ as discussed in chapter five.

Reflecting on how she felt having a maid in her home, Mrs Karrim said, *„I pay her so I put up with it. She is serving a purpose so it's ok, but I wish I could do everything myself.“* She further explained that she minded „a little“ when it came to having someone in her space, but said „I would rather have her than not.“ Her room was the only place that was off limits to the domestic worker. This she said was partly so that her maid would not be tempted to steal. Ultimately, she felt this was her private space that she should clean herself.

Mrs Desai mirrored these feelings, saying she is not comfortable having her domestic worker in her home as she cannot leave her alone and she has to check on her all the time. Her bedroom was off limits to her domestic worker, yet she still felt that her privacy was compromised when she was in her room and the domestic worker was cleaning her home as this excerpt from focus group one shows:

Researcher: 'How do you keep your privacy when your maid is around?'

Sumayya and Zarina: „There's no privacy.“

Sumayya: „Even if you are in your room with the door closed, they know you're doing something.“

Researcher: 'So even when you're in your private space, you still feel uncomfortable?'

Rabia: _Yeah, I usually keep the door open. ‘

Sumayya: _I only do something when they are gone. ‘

Zarina: _Ya, like cooking and things. My maid has a habit of looking into my pots and I don’t like it ‘.

Rabia: _Me too, I only cook when she is gone. ‘

Zarina: _I don’t sleep and that when they are around – you feel like someone is around and you need to see to them. And if there’s ironing, I feel like maybe I should put it away. ‘

The conversation reveals much about the feelings of madams who almost become estranged from their usual private space when their domestic workers are in their home. Even within their bedrooms, the most private space in their homes, „there is no privacy.“ This feeling of unease extends to not being able to sleep or cook, with the madam only doing these activities when the domestic worker has left. Thus, it is these „social boundaries and distance from one another“ in the home which sees the private household become a „microcosm of social inequality“ (Lan, 2003: 527). Often madams feel like they need to be doing some work while the domestic worker is in their homes and place much distance between themselves and their maids – which is indicative of the types of relationships they share. Mrs Aziz felt that her privacy was compromised while her domestic worker was around, but she further explained that she does not want to be in the same space with her domestic worker when she is cleaning because she felt „guilty to be relaxing when the domestic worker is working.“ This feeling of discomfort and feeling out of place in her own home led her to „count the minutes until the domestic worker leaves“ and stay in her room until the maid left. This is substantiated by Lan’s (2003: 527) assertion that „when the home becomes a workplace, both employers and

workers must redefine their private zones.” The employer whose private space is the home sees her private space reduced to her room when the domestic worker is in her home. The rest of her home becomes public or work space.

Coining the term „boundary work,” Lan (2003: 527) describes the home as a space which is differentiated into private and public space such that „the home is turned into contested terrain where employers and workers negotiate social boundaries and distance from one another on a daily basis.” This suggests that boundaries within the home do not have to be physical. They may be social or emotional. Referring to the recent film, *The Maid* (2009), the maid, Raquel, sat in the kitchen, while the party was in the dining room. Even though there were no real physical boundaries between the spaces, she felt socially different from them and therefore situated herself in another space. In this way, difference is produced through space. Similarly, Grace, one of the key informants mentioned that she is comfortable sitting on the floor of the madam’s home while eating or waiting to leave. In her words, „this is my madam’s house, I must respect it,” showing that she felt her rightful place was on the floor and that it would be a sign of pride to sit on the chair like her madam even though her madam insisted she sit on a chair. This is also significant as it shows that it is not only the madam who may erect boundaries, but the maid as well, as my discussion of Massey’s (2005) work showed in chapter three. These boundaries however, are not always fixed. This is quite apparent in the Muslim home, as will become clearer with the progression of this chapter. Some spaces in the home become sacred during prayer times and return to the profane state at other times. At prayer times, maids cannot enter the space, yet when the prayer is over, she is able to clean the space. Thus, boundaries may be movable.

Boundaries may also be emotional. Working in a home which is luxurious compared to the domestic worker's home may emphasise the differences between madam and maid. Cock (1980, 68) notes that paid domestic work results in a „set of frustrations due to exposure to others' standards of living," revealing that the home presents the contradiction between „work space" and „private space," (Ory, 2005) a context unique to domestic work. The constant comparisons on the part of the domestic worker results in feelings of inadequacy, substantiated by one domestic worker interviewed by Cock (1980: 69) who wished her madam could see the squalid conditions in which she lived. Thus, the stark inequality in status gives rise to a plethora of perceptions and emotions, which shape their relationship.

On the other hand, the majority of madams interviewed (16 out of 20) revealed that they were quite comfortable with their maids in their homes. Some, like Mrs Paruk said they „enjoyed" having their maids in their space. She mentioned she „loves her maid to bits." Similarly, Mrs Abdullah said, „she is part of my family. When she doesn't come we all are upset." Mrs Ebrahim concurred, saying „she is a mother to me so I am completely comfortable. This is our home." These responses were echoed by Mrs Moosa, whose maid of 38 years, Moira, was „wonderful to have around. She is my sister," and Mrs Salma Khan who said, „I feel absolutely wonderful. I feel like my best friend has come and lifted all the weight off my shoulders." These madams usually left their domestic workers unsupervised as they felt their domestic workers knew more about cleaning their homes than they did and respected their belongings as their own. The sharing of space here is indicative of the close relationships shared between madam and maid as these domestic workers and madams met almost every day for many years.

The sharing of space was a pleasant experience for madams like Mrs Emam, who said she and her domestic worker end up cleaning together when she is at home. They often shared kitchen space together when cleaning coriander and preparing savouries for Ramadaan. All 16 madams said there was no place that was off limits to their domestic workers except where the Quraan and musallah (prayer mat) were kept and that they did not have to remind their domestic workers what to clean as their maids were quite efficient and needed hardly any supervision. For some of these madams, their domestic workers were an integral source of assistance to them as they ran home businesses. They entrusted key responsibilities to their domestic workers, especially Mrs Salma Khan who said:

„Now, with my home-made biscuit business I am so dependent on her that I can't manage without her. She does everything according to the way I do it. I just tell her I need to decorate them and she just goes and melts the chocolate, the brown and white separately. Then she pours it into a packet for drizzling and without telling her to do all that, she tells me it's all ready for me. She's so super, I can't get a better girl than her. She isn't my maid, she's my help mate... She knows my finances, she knows how much is leaving or coming in. She even handles my books.‘

Mrs Khan's words, „she isn't my maid, she is my help-mate,“ shows that as the domestic worker has taken on more responsibility and allowed her madam to trust her to the extent of handling her finances, the domestic worker's role in the home has become more than an employee. Most of these domestic workers were left alone at home, revealing the trust their madams had in their maids. Two instances were Mrs Farida Moosa and Mrs Gori Seedat who left the keys to her flat with her domestic worker while she was away in Ladysmith. Her domestic worker let herself into the flat every few days to water her plants. Mrs Moosa's maid also had her own set of keys to her madam's apartment. While her madam is overseas, Moira lets herself into the flat in the mornings, prepares breakfast for Mr Moosa and cleans

the flat three times a week. Similarly, with live in maids like Mrs Ebrahim's, the relationship between madam and maid has become more than just a working relationship. Here the madams refer to their maids as a mother figure or a sister figure and as Mrs Ebrahim mentioned earlier, „this is our home.“ the madam's private space therefore becomes that for the maid as well, where she takes control of the running of the home, in comparison to just doing the „bigger jobs.“ In Mrs Ebrahim's words:

„She's the madam of the house, not me (laughs). Don't ask me about my house. If you need anything, you must ask her – she knows exactly where everything is kept.‘

The sharing of space becomes so effortless that the results of a long working relationship, increased time spent in the home and the dependence of the madam on the maid create an emotional bond between madam and maid which is almost familial. One of the madams, Ms Osman even mentioned that she would love to see her maid more often:

„I only see her once a week and she works in a few other places so I know it's not possible to have her here for more days. But I think about her and if she's being treated right in those places. If I could, I would want to see her more often.‘

Ms Osman worries about her domestic worker when she is not there. It is genuine concern, similar to that one would feel for a family member. The concepts of the maid being „one of the family“ or a „stranger“ in the home come to light. They will be further analysed in the following chapters. However, it became clear during my research that the domestic workers ability to embrace the Islamic qualities of the madam and her home facilitated a greater sharing of space and understanding between the two. Mrs Meer mentioned that she enjoyed

having her domestic worker around her home because „she is mindful because she knows how important cleanliness is for a Muslim.“ In a similar vein, Mrs Salma Khan said,

„I think we are so comfortable with her. In fact my husband and I speak about our own personal issues in front of her because she is part of this home. I know she won't go telling other people or my neighbours. She has that homely culture in her. She has a very fantastic family bond– that's why I love her so much. She has a lot of Islamic qualities in her, she would make a very good Muslim.‘

The value of Islam to the Muslim madam cannot be underestimated. I have established that Muslim madams seek maids who have these qualities and the sharing of space between madam and maid is a key determinant of their consequent relationship. While some domestic workers and madams may choose to steer clear of discussing religion and others embrace it, the undeniable Islamic ambiance in these homes has a direct impact on those living and working within the contradictory space of the home.

6.4 The Islamic influence on the Home

Intimacy between Muslim madam and maid largely depends on the domestic worker's understanding of the boundaries and requirements of the Muslim home. In my discussion on women as the keepers of the home in chapter five, I established strong links between Islam and the home. The Muslim home is essentially characterised by boundaries resting on the notions of „paak“ (clean) and „napaak“ (impure). Areas of praying are pure while those of

impurity such as the toilet are impure. These concepts apply to people within the space as well. Many Islamic artefacts such as the Quraan and other Arabic texts cannot be touched by one who is not in a pure state (one who has made „Wudhu“ or ablution). The responsibilities of the domestic worker are influenced by this and her ability to clean a Muslim home whilst keeping these rules in mind. I argue that the more the domestic worker crosses the boundaries separating her and the madam by embracing aspects of Islam, the more intimate their relationship becomes. I focus firstly on the madam’s approach to dealing with their domestic worker’s contact with these holy books in the work space of the maid. I then explore the use of Islamic audio and visual influences as the backdrop of the maids’ work space and the madams’ private space. Finally this section examines Islamic influences on the domestic workers’ personal space.

Purity or cleanliness is regarded with the utmost reverence in the Muslim community. If one, or the space one finds oneself in is not clean, prayer, the fundamental pillar of Islam, cannot be carried out. When cleaning the home, therefore, Muslim madams must not only show their domestic worker what needs to be done, but it is imperative that they explain to her the difference between paak and napaak:

„I have to teach her about paak and napaak (clean and dirty) so she doesn’t use the toilet cloth anywhere else and all the brushes, buckets and things must be kept separately. ‘ (Mrs K Moolla)

„I explained to her that in a Muslim home we use different cloths for the toilet and bathroom. ‘ (Mrs H Mia)

This separation of clean and dirty becomes integral to those maids who are „running their madams homes” as it defines sacred and profane spaces. The mixing of the two can be as innocent as a mistake of using the wrong cloth or the wrong brush, and it is the responsibility

of the madam to supervise the domestic worker until she is sure the concepts are clearly understood. As the domestic worker is not in a pure state, she is also not allowed to touch Islamic holy texts and in some cases, musallahs (prayer mats) as Mrs Desai explained, „in the beginning I told her she can’t touch my Quraan or musallah because it is a prayer thing. And if she sees a topi (prayer hat) or anything lying around, she tells me to please put it away.“

Due to the frequency of prayers offered in the Muslim home and the Islamic emphasis on reading the Quraan regularly, it is not uncommon to find the Quraan on the table or a musallah on the floor of a Muslim home. For the madam this is her private space where she is comfortable to pray when she is in a pure state, yet for the domestic worker in the home, these may present obstacles to her job, as she may not touch these objects. This may offend the maid as she is seen as „impure,“ or this may present an opportunity to educate the maid about the reasons why she cannot come into contact with the Quraan. This was the case with Mrs Salma Khan, who readily explained to her maid about the reasons why she cannot touch the Quraan and gave her domestic worker, who already had some Islamic qualities, the opportunity to read it if she wanted to:

„(But) with my Islamic kitaabs (books), she knows she can’t touch them – not because she is black, it’s because she is not a Muslim. She wanted a Quraan to read, she is interested and I taught her to make Wudhu before she touches it. I noticed she wasn’t touching the Quraan for days and I asked her why. She said she has been in such a rush that she hasn’t had time to make Wudhu. I really admired her for that. If it was another girl, she would’ve taken it and moved. But Precious doesn’t forget, she will actually remind you about things. She makes salaam, she says mashallah and ameen. I teach her the terms and what they mean. She reminds the children how to greet when I’m not around and they come home. ‘

On the other hand, the response of some madams is to avoid the domestic worker ever coming into contact with Islamic books or prayer mats, in order to keep the space clear for the domestic worker, or to prevent the maid from accidentally touching them and committing a sin. In many cases, such as Mrs Amod, madams „lock everything and put them away, so she doesn“t have to touch or move the Quraan and things.“

Madams see this as preparing the space for the worker before she begins her job. Thus, before the domestic worker enters the home of her employer, the Muslim madam often clears away religious texts which the maid is not pure enough to touch. Here the madam moves the boundaries so that the maid does not have to be challenged by them. I found that many of the domestic workers had worked for Muslim homes previously and had learned over time to avoid touching the Quraan. „They know how a Muslim home is supposed to be run,“ as many madams mentioned, stating that by being employed by a Muslim madam previously, these domestic workers had learned about these aspects of a Muslim home over time. However, I must note here that Grace, a key informant, explained that due to her own religious beliefs, she understood the difference between pure and impure as they were not allowed to cook while having their menstrual period. Therefore, she avoided touching the Quraan or musallahs as she knew these were sacred.

Mrs Paruk“s domestic worker, having worked for a Muslim madam previously, had learnt not to touch Islamic books. In a similar vein, Mrs Abdullah mentioned, „we make sure that the Quraan and things are put away. She knows that“s off limits. The musallahs tend to lie around so she puts those and the burqahs away.“ Mrs Ahmed interestingly explained, „things like my Quraan and musallah she is not allowed to touch, so I told her not to clean that area if those things are lying around. I suggest here that when the musallahs are around, there is a

boundary erected, which is temporary and the maid cannot clean the space. Yet when it is removed, the maid is allowed to clean the space. Thus, the boundary in this case is movable and not fixed. She went on to say, „But she does know why she can’t touch them and she is quite Islamically inclined.“ Mrs Ahmed’s domestic worker’s job in the space therefore is dictated by whether the Quraan or musallah is in the space or not. As a prayer mat, it is not necessary for someone to be in the state of Wudhu to touch it, yet many Muslims treat it with the similar regard, which is why some maids are allowed to touch it and others aren’t, based on the madams’ opinion.

For madams who only employ their domestic worker once a week for five hours, it may be easier to put the Islamic items away and take them out when the domestic worker leaves. However, for others whose maids spend more time in their homes and who need to pray while their maids are there, domestic workers must be informed of the rules regarding interacting with their madams during prayer times. Mrs Aziz mentioned that while her domestic worker only comes to her home once a week and she does put away her Quraan, her maid is aware that she prays and that she can’t disturb her. Mrs Mia, in addition, explained to her maid that while she is praying, her maid must not talk to her or stand in front of her.

The prayer time, which lasts at least 10 minutes, was the most vulnerable part of some madams’ day as they felt that maids waited for this time in order to steal from them. Mrs Desai elaborated, saying she was praying in the lounge and heard her maid going into the room, where she is not allowed, and she heard the cupboards opening. On the other hand, Mrs Feroza Meer was comfortable with praying in the home while her maid was present, on occasion asking her to check on the food she was cooking in the kitchen to make sure it didn’t burn. Mrs Sayed also related that her maid knows what to do in Ramadaan, „she knows

that she needs to set the table at a certain time and also if there's a phone call and I'm reading namaaz (prayer), she says „tandaza“ and she tells them that I am praying so she doesn't disturb me. One of the most striking cases in which Islam has influenced the work of the domestic worker was Mrs Emam's maid:

„She knows everything about a Muslim home. She knows to put radio Al Ansaar on in Ramadaan and when it's time to pray she says  go, enza lo tandaza' (go pray). Even when the phone rings, she answers with salaam and one of my friends, Rehana phoned and the maid answered and Rehana asked me who that was and couldn't believe it was the maid. She knows salaah, she knows that when Ramadaan is coming, she has to start cleaning the house and she reminds me that I need to start making the pies. She helps me with my spring rolls, the pies and she tells me that it's like three or four months left before Ramadaan and we better start preparing. In Ramadaan I pay her a little more because there's more work and she needs to stay later. And she sees to it that the haleem is made and the table is set and she asks  pi lo kajoor?' (where are the dates?) And she puts them on the table, along with the three chutneys. After iftaar she lays the table for Sehri.‘

The Islamic influence on the home undoubtedly influences the experience of the domestic worker and her duties in the home on an external level as she has worked for Mrs Emam for a long period of time. However, due to the private space of the home, the domestic worker's personal space within the home is also influenced by Islam and the religious regulations regarding the consumption of food, modest dressing and personal hygiene.

Space, specifically in the kitchen is characterised by halaal food. As mentioned in chapter five, food plays an integral part in the Muslim community and the distinction between halaal

(permissible) and haraam (impure) guides which foods Muslims are permissible to eat. Despite the domestic worker not necessarily being Muslim, she must adhere to this rule when she is in the home of the Muslim madam, which in some cases is every day. Mrs Tarmohammed states: „The maids are very understanding. I have explained to them that we eat halaal meat in this house and they can’t bring in any meat that isn’t halaal and they can’t warm up any meat that isn’t halaal in our microwave. Four madams agreed that if their maid was Muslim, they would allow them to cook for the family, saying as in the case of Mrs Aziz that right now, their culture is „totally different...I would be worried about cleanliness,” and Mrs Ahmed who said, „if she was Muslim I would trust her more in the kitchen.” This illustrates that the responsibilities of the maid would change if she were guided by halaal and haraam and further shows that the personal space and what the domestic worker eats is quite influenced by the religion of the Muslim madam. The following examples highlight this further:

„She picked up cleanliness and even body cleanliness like cleaning her underarms and privates – she’s very particular about that. And also she doesn’t eat meat from any butchery that isn’t halaal. ‘ (Farida Moosa)

„I made her wear a scarf all the time and when she comes she must wear respectful clothes, like an overall and scarf. When she goes to the loo she must wash her hands. I give her soap. The morning before she comes, she must have a bath and put her hair up. And her eating dishes I keep here, I don’t let her take it down to her room, so that I know she has only eaten halaal food in those dishes. I don’t let her bring her own food. ‘ (Mrs Sumayya Desai)

The Islamic influence of the home and the maid therefore become internalised by the maid, infiltrating her private space, including her own body to the extent that the domestic worker often reminds her Muslim madam of her Islamic duties as mentioned by Mrs Emam above as well as Mrs Ebrahim who explained, „she worked for Muslims for the past 20 years, so she knows a lot about Islam – she knows about Ramadaan, about Muharram and Fridays. I didn’t have to teach her anything, sometimes she teaches me. If I forget to do something on holy days, she reminds me.“

Here I draw a parallel to the work of Gaitskell, (2010) who recounts the work of Christian missionaries during the time of colonialism who „trained“ young African girls to be „homemakers“ and instilled in them Christian values. These girls were taught to become the Christian ideal of domesticity and shun their „native“ behaviour which was seen as corrupt. While the situation of the absorption of Islamic behaviour by the maid in the case of my research may not be to the extent of conversion, madams interviewed often teach their domestic workers Islamically acceptable ways of cleaning and dressing.

Another aspect of how Islam becomes ingrained in the personal space of the domestic worker is through audio and visual influences in the home. Many of the madams interviewed enjoyed listening to the Islamic radio station, Al Ansaar during the day or Channel Islam, a Muslim television channel broadcast on DSTV at home. On these channels, educational Islamic programmes are aired and Islamic songs and Quraanic verses are played. Working in this environment on a regular basis, maids involuntarily learn Islamic terms and in the instance of Mrs Salma Khan’s maid, learn to sing along with Islamic songs and begin to enjoy them: She still loves it when I switch on the Islamic radio station and I play Islamic CD’s and she sings the songs. Mrs Ismail actively informed her domestic worker about Islam while she worked,

„when I read Quraan I ask her if she knows about these stories from the Bible. Sometimes she says yes and other times no. If she doesn't know I explain it to her.“

It seems that in these instances where Islamic songs and visuals as well as the „preaching“ of Islam to the maid as in Mrs Ismail's case occur, there is no escape for the maid from internalising certain Islamic ways or language. The madam not only holds the power in determining the environment of the domestic worker's work space, but influences her private space as well. This sees the external environment of the maid's working space being influenced by the madams private space and ultimately being internalised by the maid into her personal space and even her own body, regardless of the domestic workers opinion. The home, however is not only viewed as private space with the outside being public space – within the home there are some places that are more private than others.

6.5 Public versus Private Space

Despite the home being categorised as the private domain in relation to the profane public external space, there exist spaces in the home which are more private or more public than others. As discussed earlier, the film *The Maid* explores the differences in status between maids and the families they work for, paying particular attention to a Chilean maid, Raquel who is summoned to clean up after a birthday party thrown in her honour. While the family celebrates, Raquel eats in the kitchen as usual, still in her black and white uniform – showing that the home itself is compartmentalised into public and private spaces which determines the domestic workers' functions. While the home itself is viewed as a private domain, this highlights that within the home are varying levels of private and public space. This relates

aply to McDowell's study on gender and space (1999: 166), which notes that there exist „explicit and implicit rules and regulations about whose bodies are permitted in which spaces between them and their internal divisions.“ The concept of private versus public spaces in the home relate to my thesis in two ways. Firstly, I focus on where the domestic worker performs her personal functions such as eating and secondly, the living arrangements of those domestic workers who live in their madams homes or in the maids' quarters in the building.

Where and what the domestic worker eats is key to examining the spatial boundaries between mad and madam within the home/ work space. Most (16 out of 20) madams interviewed stated that their maids ate at the table with them. Three ate in the lounge while one ate on the balcony or in the kitchen. Five domestic workers ate lunch that the madam prepared, while the same number were allowed to open the fridge and eat what the employer had cooked for the whole family. Eight domestic workers were allowed access to the madam's entire kitchen and to make their own lunch. While these results seem as if the majority of domestic workers eat at the table, it must be noted that they are not eating at the table with the madam or her family. She occupies it when nobody is there, much like Lan's assertion that „domestic workers constitute the intimate Other – they are termed part of the family but excluded from the substance of family life.“ The boundaries between madam and maid are thus permeable at times and may shift due to the contradictory nature of the relationship between madam and maid.

A few madams however said their maids themselves feel awkward eating with them and would prefer to be in the kitchen or a more private area. Mrs Salma Khan related that she has tried on many occasions to get her domestic worker to join her and her family for Jummuah (Friday) lunch:

„She refuses to have lunch, but I insist that she has Jumma (Friday) lunch with us because we are a family. So she sat with us a few times. She was very nervous, but she decided afterwards that she can't sit with us anymore because it kills her time and her work gets left for too long.‘

Similarly, Mrs Ismail asked her maid to sit at the table with her, but her maid refused:

„She prefers to sit on the floor and eat. No matter how many times I tell her to sit at the table, she wants to sit on the floor.‘

Thus, it may not always be the case that madams dictate where their domestic workers should eat, but in many instances, domestic workers choose to eat in their own private zones, away from public view where they can be supervised. On her „lunch break“ she may not want to see her employer or feel like she is being watched. Even though the home is a private environment with no set times or spaces for a break, the domestic worker feels most at ease eating in the kitchen or even the balcony and in this way, the maid contributes to the creation of boundaries. What she eats is often determined by her madam, especially in terms of haraam food not being allowed into the house, but this is apparent in degrees of freedom in the kitchen. Some madams prepare lunch specifically for the maid while other maids are allowed to make whatever they want to eat in the madam's kitchen. Thus practices of power and identity are manifested through access to and the preparation of food in the madam's home. It is this freedom or lack thereof which defines social boundaries within the home space in terms of who controls the distribution of space and resources. Lan (2003: 527) mentions that „the deployment of home space is a critical practice that delimits and affirms family boundaries. It symbolises status distinctions among family members“ and determines relationships such as the master-servant relationship.“ This is particularly clear in the living arrangements of the madam and maid when living in the same home or building.

While most of the domestic workers employed by the North Beach Muslim madams travelled to and from their own homes to work every day, two out of the 20 respondents had „live-in“ domestic workers. These domestic workers held particular interest for me in terms of the spatial boundaries between madam and maid beyond working hours.

In the case of Mrs Ebrahim, her domestic worker lived with her and her family in her apartment and used the enclosed balcony as her room. Despite being a „mother“ in the home Mrs Ebrahim’s domestic worker lived along the „margin“ of the home, away from Mrs Ebrahim and her family. While her employer stated this was „their home,“ Veronica was undoubtedly placed on the outskirts of the family at the edge of the apartment. Durrheim *et al* (2011: 127) illustrate the plan of a house from 1994, showing the living arrangements of many domestic workers in their employers’ homes:

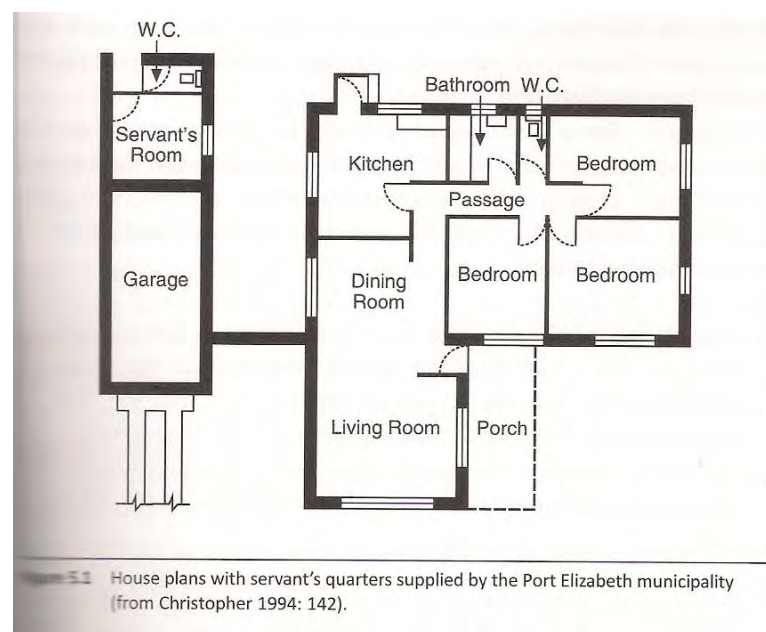


Fig 5- Living Arrangements (Source: Durrheim et al (2011: 127))

The servant lives away from the family, on the outskirts of the home behind the garage. While they are required to practice intimate work such as cleaning the family's bedroom and clothing, they are not part of that family, merely living and working there. Similarly, Mrs Desai's domestic worker lived in the maid's quarters at the bottom of her building. She shared rooms with other maids in an almost hierarchical structure where the madams live upstairs and the servants below. When Mrs Desai was ready to see her maid, she would give her domestic worker a missed call and expect her maid to report to work. Thandi, one of the key informants explained that madams preferred their domestic workers to live in the maids' quarters so that they can call on them in the evenings to come upstairs and wash the dishes. „We work till very late,” she said, „we only go home after everything is done. Sometimes when they want to go out at night they call me to look after the children till 1 or 2am.”

In Parreñas's (2008: 104- 108) view, madams often monitor when and where their domestic workers go out when they are living in the same space. The worker then feels trapped in the home and unsure of her place in the external environment resulting in the feeling of „placelessness,” and uncertainty in the grey area between public and private space. While I am in agreement with Lefebvre's (1991) argument that space excludes some and includes others, I must point out that when dealing with the „intimate Other,” the boundaries are often not clarified, resulting in a sense of being outsiders at times, while belonging at others.

This intrusion on the maid's private space may also point to Cock's (1980) assertion that madams don't see their domestic workers as women which I discussed in chapter three. In these terms, the madam does not feel her domestic worker needs to fulfil her feminine role as wife and mother in her private space and feels free to impose on her spare time and summon

her to work. Living in the building of the employer, or frequenting it on a regular basis has further implications as this becomes a site for the regular meetings of madams and maids.

6.6 Tensions between Madams

Living in such close proximity to one another allows maids and madams to run into each other in the corridors, in the elevators and parking lots. Space in this context is examined in relation to the interaction between various madams and maids on a regular basis and their perceptions of each other. Thus, the „home“, which is located in the apartment building becomes a site for workers to discuss their madams, madams to discuss their maids and most controversially, for madams to „poach“ maids who they assume are ideal maids. I argue here that the building space and the poaching of maids becomes a testing ground for loyalty between madams and maids. Many maids, despite having a good relationship with their madams, have been poached by other madams lured by an increase in pay or a decrease in working hours. This brings the intimacy between madams and maids into question.

In one particular building which was as a key site for my research, I was struck by the apparent friendliness and almost village-like ambiance of the apartment block. Neighbours seemed close-knit and aware of each others' routines, assisted by the fact that all the inhabitants of the building were Muslim. However, when I remarked on this positive attribute, one of the respondents mentioned:

„Well, we tend to keep to ourselves, but say what you want – jealousy is everywhere.“

An unexpected result of this research, tensions between madams arose as a contentious issue in the arena of madams who live in the same building and the maids who work for them. At first, madams may share the same maid with each other, but over time the relationship sours as one madam may want to employ the maid for an extra day or increase her pay, leaving the other madam feeling betrayed as in the case of Mrs Khan discussed in chapter five. Many respondents mentioned that they do not speak to their neighbours about their maids for fear of being overheard by one of the maids in the building due to the close proximity of their flats and more importantly, for fear of their good maids being poached. „That’s why you must never praise your maid,” said Mrs Karrim, who explained that while running errands between her flat and her neighbour’s, the neighbour had asked the maid to work for her. She added:

„They have tried to hijack her. It’s strange because you think your neighbour is helping you but in the meantime they’re quizzing the maid and they don’t even tell you they want your maid to work for them on another day of the week. I wouldn’t do that. I would ask if they minded.”

Mrs Aziz experienced a similar situation where she could hear her neighbour through the bathroom window ask her maid as she went past her door to work for her. The maid mentioned it to Mrs Aziz and while she was loyal for a while, Mrs Aziz’s neighbour eventually hired the domestic worker for a few days a week.

Bribery was also found to be used in the poaching of maids. In Mrs Emam’s case, a neighbour had come to her flat when her domestic worker was alone at home to borrow coriander. The maid let the neighbour in, who proceeded to bribe her to work for her with a R100 note. This was not the first incident of her neighbours wanting to employ her maid. She mentioned that everyone in the building knew how hardworking her maid is:

„I was living upstairs and had to move to this flat. she practically moved all my furniture and did so much work because my husband isn't well. And that was the thing that everybody in the building saw and realised what a good maid she was.‘

While the poaching of maids may seem frequent due to the shared spaces in apartment buildings, two madams who had previously lived in the suburbs – one in Reservoir Hills and the other in Stanger noted occasions when their neighbours had poached their domestic workers. Ultimately, the responses indicated that most madams had resorted to not talking about their maids at all due to suspicion of their neighbours.

„You should be able to have a good relationship with your neighbour, but now you are always suspicious,“ said Mrs Karrim. Expanding on this point, it was found that some madams who shared a maid used the maid to spy on each other:

„When they are working for two madams in the same area, the one madam asks what is happening in the other lady's house. They like to fish for gossip.‘

Mrs Emam mentioned that the suspicion between Muslim neighbours who should trust each other results in tensions and irritability that lead to awkwardness especially when they meet in the foyer or lifts in the building. However, Mrs Desai's case reveals that while madams may struggle to keep a good maid, they do trust each other's opinions with regards to staying away from a „bad“ one:

„I had a maid working for me who had taken her previous madam to the labour court. Now I didn't know who worked for who in the building, but I noticed that this previous madam wouldn't greet me whenever she saw me. One day I asked her what the problem was and she said to me do you know your maid worked for me before? Why did you take her?‘ I told her I didn't know. But then when she told me all the

things the maid did, then I felt like I needed to let this maid go. So I made her work in my shop and from there I let her go. ‘

It is clear that madams, despite the tension between them, trust each other over their maids. However one of the key factors in the poaching of maids was the madams’ sense of ownership over their domestic workers. This revealed that not only did madams control the spatial boundaries of their domestic workers in terms of their work, but also felt they owned the domestic worker themselves and the decisions they made in terms of who to work for. It becomes increasingly clear that the relationship between maids and madams goes beyond the working contract and in this case, is heavily dependent on loyalty and the levels of emotional attachment between the two.

6.7 Ownership and Protection

While many madams felt they „owned“ their maid and that their domestic workers should be loyal and not allow themselves to be poached, they also expected their domestic workers to protect their home or private space. However, it came to light that many of these madams did not legally protect their domestic workers in terms of the labour law. Table 10 depicts the total number of hours a week the domestic worker is in the madams’ home, the monthly remuneration and whether or not the domestic worker is registered or has a written working contract.

Table 10: Remuneration and Registration

| Participant* | No of hours a week | Remuneration (monthly) | UIF Registration Or contract |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Salma Khan | 42 | R2000 | No |
| Naseema Osman | 5 | R200 | No |
| Farida Moosa | 18 | R1500 | Yes |
| Faheema Ally | 48 | R1600 | No |
| Gori Seedat | 14 | R600 | Yes |
| Kathija Moolla | 14 | R600 | No |
| Husna Ebrahim | Live in | R1200 | Yes |
| Ayesha Aziz | 5 | R320 | No |
| Lutfiya Paruk | 54 | R1500 | Not sure |
| Tasneem Abdullah | 16 | R1200 | Yes |
| Zarina Amod | 12 | R560 | No |
| Feroza Meer | 6 | R300 | No |
| Shaida Ismail | 7 | R400 | No |
| Ruqayya Lockhat | 30 | R1200 | No |
| Shameera Sayed | 18 | R900 | Not anymore (pensioner) |
| Rabia Karrim | 5 | R320 | No |
| Sumayya Desai | 15 | R400 | No |

| | | | |
|-------------------------|---------|-----------|----|
| Zaakirah Ahmed | 42 | R900 | No |
| Fara Tarmohammed | 30 each | R850 each | No |
| Haseena Mia | 25 | R1500 | No |

Four madams out of 20 had registered their domestic workers. With the exception of those who employ their maids for less than the minimum time required for them to be registered, almost all the remaining participants were unaware of labour law and the minimum rates of pay. On closer inspection I found that most of the madams paid their domestic worker higher than the minimum rate of pay. However, this does not ensure their domestic workers job security and equally important, this does not stop poaching. In fact, this leads to domestic workers working for any madam who will pay more for their labour. All the key informants said they did not think they were being paid enough. One worker mentioned that she works extra so that she could earn more money. UIF registration in this regard may not increase their pay yet it could curb poaching as their work contracts could not be terminated as easily.

However, two of the key informants interviewed did not wish to be registered. They saw it as the start of a life in domestic labour, while their dreams were to save enough money to study social work. Mrs Sayed and her domestic worker viewed UIF in a negative light, having had a sour experience with claiming funds and believed that there was corruption within this arena of labour law. The ignorance of labour law or refusal to commit to it leaves madams open to poaching and maids open to unprotected dismissals where those who are meant to be working and protecting the space of the madams aren't protected themselves and may lose their homes, especially if they are living with their employers or in maids' quarters.

6.8 Conclusion

Space and the frequent negotiation of it between madam and maid is a key indicator of the intimate or distant relationships between them. It is clear that the home presents a contradictory space as the work space for the maid and private space for the madam, attributing meanings to each in accordance with their purpose in the home. I have argued that even within the private space of the home, some spaces are more private than others. These spaces are created through boundaries. These may be physical in terms of living arrangements or social and may be created by either the madam or the maid. In this way, space is produced as either public or private. Within the Muslim home, space is produced through religion. The influence of religion on the space is inescapable for the domestic workers who spend much of their time in their madams' homes. This influence often extends into the private space of the maid. Space, in terms of living arrangements, also points to manifestations of power through these boundaries. Through a sense of ownership of their domestic workers, madams and maids experience tension due to the apartment block and regular interactions with each other, thus taking into account not only the space within the home, but outside of it as well. The negotiation of boundaries within the home by the madam and maid is a clear indication of the type of relationship they share. This will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven

Relationships at Work

7.1 Introduction

This chapter engages the third contributing part of my major argument. After establishing the links between Muslim identity and the selection of a domestic worker, this thesis has demonstrated that domestic work operates on a level that extends beyond the parameters of the working contract. I have shown that the negotiation of space and the influence of religion within it are instrumental in determining the types of relationship between madam and maid. This chapter now focuses on the importance of the shared gender between Muslim madam and maid in determining levels of intimacy between the two.

I aim to provide a framework for the various relationships at work between madam and maid and to explore the catalysts for common concern or division within them. In order to do this, I have structured this chapter into three sections. The first section focuses specifically on three types of relationships that operate between madam and maid. I demonstrate that there are three main types of relationships which operate between madam and maid. These include those which are quite formal and rest mostly on the working contract, those which are almost

familial and those which are ambiguous and characterised by both friendliness and distance. The second section of this chapter investigates the underlying elements of these relationships. I highlight the markers of togetherness which facilitate close relationships between madams and maids and markers of difference which emphasise discrepancies between the two which facilitate distance. Lastly, I explore the concept of shared gender between madam and maid in terms of empathy and understanding but most importantly, as the key to questioning the notion of sisterhood as an influential factor in the intimate or distant relationship between madam and maid. This shared experience of being female, as discussed in chapter three, has a profound impact on the degrees of intimacy or distance between madam and maid and based on the markers of togetherness or difference, ultimately question the intimacy between madam and maid.

7.2 Types of Employment relationships

During the research process, it became clear that the relationships between Muslim madams and their domestic workers operated on three axes. Some had more of a formal working relationship with their domestic workers, others shared an almost familial bond between them and finally, there were those who shared an ambivalent relationship which centred ambiguously on friendship and distance. This section focuses on these types of relationships which are central to the intimate or distant relations between madam and maid and questions the intimacy between them.

Firstly, I highlight the formal working relationship between madam and maid. Despite domestic work being practised in the private area of the home and the working contract being

adapted to the madams' personal requirements as we saw in chapter five, some madams ensured they held a formal working relationship with their domestic workers. Ms Karrim and Ms Aziz did not engage with their domestic workers much further than greeting the domestic worker and enquiring about their children. Ms Karrim said „As for confiding in them, “I'm not feeling well today” is as far as it goes.” Within the first focus group, other madams agreed with her, especially Mrs Amod who stated that if one confides in their domestic worker that they are feeling tired, the domestic worker will take advantage of that and not work as well as she should. Thus the working contract was central to the relationship between madam and maid, even if it was just a verbal one. These madams and maids were clear on the responsibilities of each in the home and working times were adhered to, despite the lack of adherence to labour regulations such as a written contract. These madams felt that there was a need for a distance between themselves and their domestic worker in order to keep the working relationship intact without bringing too much personal information into their conversations and exposing their personal lives to an outsider.

The master-servant relationship in this case is quite defined in terms of power; however as Ally (2010: 116) points out, most domestic workers prefer this type of relationship as its well defined parameters leave no room for them to negotiate the ambiguities that come with intimacy. In this regard, there are set working times and no risk of being asked to do unpaid favours for the families they work for. However, it must be noted that in these instances, their domestic workers had only been employed for one to three years and worked in their madams' home once a week. Thus, there may be not enough contact time between madam and maid for intimacy to develop. As Mrs. Ismail whose maid sees her once a week pointed out, „she works for me, she is not part of my family.” These distant relationships place more emphasis on the working contract rather than a personal bond between madam and maid. In

fact, madams in focus group one listed disadvantages of being close to ones domestic worker, saying that the closer one is, the more lenient one becomes with them and the more advantage they take of the madam. Thus there are reasons behind having a formal working relationship between madam and maid, along with time constraints. Conversations between madam and maid were kept short and restricted to topics such as the current news and brief inquiries about each other's children.

On the other hand, most madams interviewed had an almost familial bond with their domestic workers. This second type of relationship is of particular importance to this study in terms of the intimacy between madam and maid as these domestic workers were seen to be „one of the family,” a concept which according to Ally (2010) is used quite loosely by madams. The domestic workers in these types of relationships often saw their madams every day and spent up to 54 hours a week in their madam's homes. Intimacy between madam and maid is quite prevalent in the way madam and maid interacted with each other. Two cases were of particular interest to my research in this regard. Mrs Moosa described her relationship with her domestic worker Moira who has been working for her for 38 years:

„We fight a lot (laughs). She'll come in the morning and tell me –oh queen, you still sleeping, wake up!” and I tell her to shut up and leave me alone...and if she's done cleaning the kitchen and I go in to cook, she'll say –oh now you're going to mess it again, I told you to cook before I clean.” Things like that – nothing serious. But on the whole, she's very particular like my husband and myself, she knows how things must be cleaned. We both can laugh and joke and share a good sense of humour. Sometimes we will fight, but the next minute we're still talking to each other. She'll have a cry or I'll have a word or two or a cry and then we're back to friends. ‘

This relationship has developed over the years to become so familial that socio-spatial and conversational boundaries between madam and maid have almost completely disappeared. Coates (1996: 56) observes that female friends cry together and then move on, showing that they are similar in their emotions and can be open to each other in expressing how they feel, much like Mrs Moosa and Moira. Looking at their interactions which ranged from shouting at each other to laughing with each other in the next moment, it is clear that the professional or formal working relationship between madam and maid has been overtaken by a familial relationship in which there are no boundaries. However, in terms of the working contract, the job description of the domestic worker was not clear – Moira just did „everything“ and came and went as she pleased, having no set times for work and thus the working contract was overshadowed by her familial relationship with her madam. Yet when speaking to Moira, she mentioned that she deserved to be paid more for all the work she did within the home. Mrs Moosa mentioned that Moira knows everything that happens in her home, in agreement with Ally's (2010) argument that domestic workers become entwined in the intricate and intimate workings of the home and its inhabitants.

Along similar lines, Mrs Khan explained:

„We are similar because we laugh the whole day and there is not a boring moment in our home when we are together. When she is quiet, I must make her laugh or if I am busy and quiet, she can't handle that for too long and she comes and asks me what's wrong and then she will say things to make me laugh or tell me about her family. It will be very hard for us to get irritated with each other. The only difference I can think of is that she is black and I am Indian. But that's on the surface, I think we are one and the same though. She has transformed my life I would say. I never thought I

would be doing business on such a scale. She has made me lazy because I am so lazy to do housework now – she has really taken a burden off my shoulders so now I can concentrate on what's important – my biscuits. She is a great personality in my life and a star in my home. She takes every other chore off my shoulders, without a grumble.'

Her words, „we are one and the same,“ points to her emphasis on their similarities rather their aesthetic differences of belonging to different races. Of even more significance is the familial relationship evident in their interactions – when one is quiet, the other makes her laugh. Saying „our home“ reinforces the notion that Precious, the domestic worker is one of the family. Being „one of the family“ is often referred to when the domestic worker is likened to a motherly, sisterly or daughterly figure. Despite Mrs Desai's negative attitude towards domestic workers, she imparts advice to her young domestic worker:

„I tell her that if she is going out with boys, she must be careful because boys won't tell you if they have Aids. They might be good looking, but she mustn't go out with them without finding out what they are like.'

This advice is almost maternal, as if a mother is imparting life advice to her daughter about „boys.“ As a woman, protecting oneself from „the other“ sex is discussed only among women as it constitutes a very private aspect of personal choice. Despite Mrs Desai's often turbulent⁹ relationship with her domestic worker, she is concerned for her safety and encourages her to make educated and informed decisions. I suggest that this type of personal advice points to

⁹ Turbulence here refers to the nature of her relationship with the domestic worker, where Mrs Desai is suspicious of her maid and refers to her in a derogatory manner, yet at times advises her domestic worker in a maternal way.

the notion of maternalism as the madam takes on the role of a mother guiding her daughter towards making the „correct“ life decisions. However, while this advice may be sincere in its intention, the notion of maternalism is contested by King (2007: 44) as a means of control in order to exercise power over the domestic worker. Therefore, by taking on the role of a motherly figure, the madam may claim that the maid is one of the family, yet in truth be maintaining the status of an authoritative figure who is not only an employer but a mother figure who commands respect. King (2007: 44) explains that „paternalistic and maternalistic practices erode the status of a servant. In denial of their adulthood to that of child this in effect strips away some of their „personhood.“ Essentially, employers define the standards for good and bad servants and those who are „good“ reflect the personality and behaviour of their madams.

This advice between madam and maid works in the opposite way for Mrs Ebrahim, who takes advice from her domestic worker, Veronica:

„I talk to her like she is my mother. I talk to her about my past, my present and the future. I take my decisions from her actually. Even my kids ask her for advice.“

In this instance, the domestic worker is the maternal figure and there is no topic that cannot be discussed between the two. Here the debate arises of being „paid to care.“ Even though the domestic worker is seen as a motherly figure, she is being paid to listen to her employer and give them advice. Despite being given the status of a mother, should the employment contract be terminated, so will her „place“ in the family. This „cruel irony“ (Ally, 2010: 119) is specific to domestic work, especially in cases where the domestic worker is paid to care for her employer’s children and „love“ them despite being a paid worker. In this regard, the domestic workers’ relationship with her employer is much more complicated than the formal working relationship discussed earlier. They speak to each other about everything. As Coates

(1996: 56) reiterates, these conversations are intimate and have „no agenda.“ One of the key cases in the regard was Mrs Emam who said:

„...she's been working here for 11 years so if I have a problem she can sense it. She'll ask what's wrong or if my pressure is high and if I took my tablets. Like a mother, she scolds me if I haven't. When she's not here I miss her. She misses me too, because she sends me please call me's and I phone her and we chat.‘

This notion of „sensing“ something is not quite right without it being verbalised is also central to relationships between friends or family who know each other for a long period of time. In this case, madam and maid know each other so well that if something is wrong, the other can sense it. Furthermore, their conversations are not restricted to working hours or the work space – Mrs Emam mentions that they miss each other and chat even when they don't have to. This is a clear indication of „the primacy of talk“ (Coates, 1996: 44) between women friends, who will find any time or excuse to engage with each other. Thus, conversation and talking is key to the intimate relationship between madam and maid.

While the relationships leaning towards a formal working relationship and those which are deeply ingrained in the familial are quite distinct from each other, the third type is an ambivalent relationship which encapsulates a simultaneously friendly and distant relationship. It is complex and contradictory by nature and not clearly visible. Through speech patterns and observation, these relationships become apparent. Their ambivalent interaction is summed up quite aptly in Van Rooyen's (2009) statement, „they're sisters until the toilet needs cleaning.“

Likewise, some of the madams interviewed displayed friendly attitudes towards their domestic workers, yet kept their distance when they felt their domestic workers were becoming lazy or coming too close to the boundaries. One such example was Mrs Lockhat, who mentioned that while she does joke with her domestic worker about boyfriends, she will not talk about her own personal problems or concerns. Thus, even though the madam feels she can joke about her maid's private life, the domestic worker cannot ask about her madam's. Coates (1996: 50) mentions that female friends share their problems with each other, including their opinions of their male partners. However, this relationship between Mrs Lockhat and her maid cannot entirely be seen as „friendship“ when it is clearly one-sided as fraught with distance on the part of the madam, who has the power to decide what she will and will not speak about. These contradictions become even clearer in relation to intimate subjects such as trust and religion. While Mrs Mia says that her maid is part of her family, she then adds that she does not tell her domestic worker personal things about herself. Despite this distance she wedges between herself and the domestic worker, she still then tries to persuade her maid to convert to Islam, imposing herself on an intimate area of the maid's life. On the level of trust, Mrs Sayed says of her maid, „she's part of me.“ Yet, when asked if she leaves the maid at home alone, she explains:

„I used to leave her alone at home a lot, but my husband wanted me not to leave her alone because of all the incidents you hear of them cleaning you out and leaving. So I don't go out anymore unless it's urgent.“

This is indicative of the „peculiar“ ambiguities of intimacy which Ally (2010: 98) describes as a „curious kind of relationship in which closeness, familiarity and intimacy coexist with distance, estrangement and dehumanization.“ Intimately referring to her maid as part of herself, she then places much distance between her and her domestic worker by associating her domestic worker as the other or „them“ and negating any of the sense of trust that the first

statement held. Looking at Mrs Desai's „maternal“ advice to her domestic worker and her concurrent negative and distant attitude to her domestic worker, it becomes clear that their relationship is quite ambivalent as Mrs Desai talks at length of her mistrust of her domestic worker and the fact that her maid does not have free access to her kitchen and yet she offers advice to her maid about intimate areas of her life, including how the domestic worker should dress, discussed in the previous chapter.

I found that for madams who held these ambiguous relationships with their domestic workers, it was difficult to define their interactions. Asked to define their relationships in terms of these categories, some madams became uneasy. Ms Karrim found it difficult to define their relationship, saying:

„I would like to think that we are not strangers, but being family would be describing it as too close. We do talk about our concerns, like her husbands' drinking and unemployment and I think she values her job. And I also value my job so that's important to both of us – we do have things in common. And if she's not happy, I can see it and I do ask her – that's as far as the closeness goes.‘

Mrs Lockhat and Ms Osman were further perplexed and resorted to scoring their relationships on an intimacy scale out of ten, giving their relationships a six and seven out of 10 respectively. Despite Mrs Khan referring to her domestic worker in a familial way, she did mention that when her domestic worker was away, she felt a sense of ease, as if she could speak openly to her husband. „I was quite surprised, I don't know why I felt that way,“ she said, remarking that she can always discuss anything in front of Precious. The peculiarity of her remark sheds light on the notion that even though the madam may feel that her domestic worker is part of the family, there exists an underlying distance between the two which is not always immediately apparent. This points to markers of togetherness between madam and

maid which bring them together and markers of difference, which create distance within their relationship.

7.3 Markers of togetherness

In analysing the catalysts for the intimate and distant relationships between madam and maid, it is clear that there are definite markers of togetherness and difference which influence their relationships. Here I focus on those aspects of the relationship which serve to unite the Muslim madams and her domestic worker. The first marker relates to the similar personality traits between madams and maids and their status as mothers. Secondly, I look at the conversations held between the two and the topics talked about. As a marker of togetherness, subjects brought up in conversation mirror the intimacy or distance at work between madam and maid. These include health concerns and talk about male partners. Similarities between their religions are also explored as a force of unification between madam and maid.

I have established in chapter five that Muslim madams seek out those domestic workers who reflect similar morals and values to their own. On a related note, the first marker of togetherness found between madams and maids was their similar personalities and their status as mothers. Mrs Emam, who has employed her domestic worker for 11 years says, „we have the same personality,“ allowing them to work easily together in the kitchen on a daily basis for the last 11 years. Despite their age difference, Ms Osman mentioned that her maid was „quite conservative and respectful“ and this was similar to her personality as she was raised with these values. Similarly, Mrs Paruk said, „we are very similar – we can be jovial and emotional. But she is not diplomatic or cheeky like me. She won’t stand up for herself.“ Her

passivity in not standing up for herself may be viewed as a suppression of her true feelings or identity in order to conform to her employer's, however Mrs Paruk's domestic worker has been in the family's employ every day for the past 10 years and her lack of assertiveness is part of her personality.

The madams often overlooked these minor personality differences in favour of their similarities, especially in terms of their roles as mothers. Madams who had children explained that it was their status as mothers which was the biggest similarity between themselves and their domestic workers:

Mrs Tasneem Abdullah mentioned that her domestic worker of 15 years was very quiet and shy, however she explained that „I think she has got children and worries about them like I worry about mine. The biggest similarity is that we are mothers.“ Akin to her statements, Mrs Ahmed who has four children and is a vice principal at a pre-primary school mentioned:

„We are very similar in a motherly way. We love children. And we are totally different in that she is very quiet and I talk too much, I am very loud‘ (laughing).

Clearly, being a mother is a key aspect of how madam and maid identify with each other beyond just being female. Their love for children and the responsibilities they share as mothers facilitates an understanding between them which extends beyond personality or age differences. In some cases, like Mrs Tarmohammed and Mrs Paruk who were discussed in chapter five, the main quality required of their domestic workers was not that they were punctual or the most superior worker, but that they cared for children. Thus the markers of togetherness which rely on the shared experience of being mothers is related to the experience of being female.

Secondly, just as madams sought maids who had similar personalities to themselves, they felt closer to their domestic workers if they held certain Islamic qualities. Mrs Khan, who has employed Precious every day for eight years praised her for having Muslim qualities, saying that she would make a very good Muslim. Along with knowing Islamic terminology and enjoying Islamic songs, Precious and Mrs Khan identified with each other through religion. Similarly, I referred to Mrs Emam in chapter five, who mentioned that her domestic worker knows how to answer the phone saying „Assalamualaikum“ and preparing food for Ramadhaan. Mrs Ahmed elaborated, saying her domestic worker used to fast with them for a few days in Ramadhaan. These strings of attachment between maid and madam bind them together through religion. While some madams actively try to convert their domestic workers to Islam, Alice, one of the key informants was adamant that even though she would not convert to Islam, she found many similarities between her Shembe religion and Islam, especially in terms of conduct. A case in point is Mrs Ismail who engages her domestic worker in discussions outlining the similarities in the Quraan and the Bible. Overall, most madams stated that if their domestic workers had to become Muslim, the bond between themselves would improve, much like the theory of religion as social cohesion, discussed in chapter two, where individuals may connect with each other more, due to similar beliefs and rituals.

It is clear, reflecting on these examples, that talking to each other becomes instrumental in the relationship between madam and maid and for females as Coates (1996) reveals, a central theme of their relationship is the fourth marker - conversation.

Much of these relationships between women are primarily based on talking and what madam and maid talk about. Coates (1996: 49) states in her work on conversations between women that „talk is central to friendship,“ which I link to the concept of shared gender. Her research, which focuses on subjects, spaces and private talks between women shows that topics which

women may not be able to discuss with their male partners or colleagues are discussed with their close friends in intimate environments such as their kitchens or living rooms. However, Coates (1996:49) suggests that „the kitchen is preferred not just because it’s a refuge from other domestic demands, but also because it’s a place where women feel uninhibited about expressing themselves.” This is relevant to my research as women sharing the same space are bound to engage in conversations with each other and the level of intimacy of these conversations is dependent on familiarity or trust between the two. Some madams who enjoy a familial or friendly relationship with their domestic workers often share personal problems with them, especially in the case of Mrs Emam who cleans the kitchen with her maid.

Along these lines, all participants were asked what topics they spoke about when talking to their domestic workers. Much like the main similarities between domestic workers and madams, most spoke about their children and the experience of being mothers. Mrs Moolla and Mrs Ismail often talked about their children with their domestic workers and home remedies they knew of when their children were sick. This sometimes involved religious beliefs as Mrs Ahmed mentioned:

„She talks to me about her children. Her son had a stroke and I advised her to take him to the hospital rather than the sangoma.”

Mrs Amod also related an incident in which her domestic worker’s son was seriously ill and through sharing her problem, Mrs Amod tried to help with an Islamic remedy:

„In fact my previous maid's son had Meningitis and I gave her Zam Zam¹⁰ water. I told her she must make him drink it and pray to the one and only God to cure him and within 30 minutes he was feeling better. The nurses at his hospital were shocked.‘

Advice when dealing with health problems was one of the topics highlighted by Coates (1996) which was not uncommon for female friends to discuss. The topics of health and old age were also discussed between madam and maid and Mrs Moolla pointed out that when her domestic worker told her that washing the floors with a brush was causing her back pain, she bought a mop that would make her domestic worker's job easier. This is in line with Coates' (1996:50) suggestion that women complain to each other about their personal problems. In particular, maids and madams often complained to each other about menstrual pain. Mrs Ahmed explained that her domestic worker suffers terribly from cramps and she allows her to not come to work on that day and that she gives her medication to ease the pain. In the cases of madams who were medical professionals such as Mrs Abdullah and Ms Karrim, medical advice and medication was often provided to their domestic worker free of charge. Health concerns played a major role in conversations between madam and maid, indicating a level of trust between the two on a subject which may not necessarily be discussed in public or with men.

Another personal topic of discussion between madam and maid was their male partners. This however was only evident in a few homes where the domestic worker spent much time and had built a relationship with the madam over many years. Just as female friends may talk about their boyfriends or husbands, Mrs Lockhat teases her maid about her boyfriends and said „we are all girls here so we can talk about these things.“ The same could be said for Mrs

¹⁰ Holy water from Makkah

Paruk who said, „I tease her about her boyfriends and that she must get married and mustn’t make any more babies.“ The subject is approached with humour and teasing, in order to create an ease of conversation between madam and maid.

7.4 Markers of difference

Despite these markers of togetherness which have balanced on the notion of being mothers, intimate conversations and religion, there exist markers of difference or „chains of otherness“ as King (2007) calls them, which ultimately set the maid and madam apart on many levels. This ties in directly with the discussion on difference and intersectionality in chapter three. While there does exist the generalisation that all women share in the experience of being women as I explained using the arguments of Fouche (1994) and Mohanty (1995), the vast differences in the life experiences of each woman cannot be overlooked. Thus, intimacy between madam and maid, who have different backgrounds, can be questioned due to the markers of difference between them.

At the outset, madams were quick to mention that they were aware that their lives were luxurious compared to the daily struggles faced by their domestic workers in order to make ends meet. Ms Osman stated that although she and her domestic worker have similar personalities, they differed in their life stories. „I would never know what that’s like, living hand to mouth,“ she said. Explaining this further, Mrs Tarmohammed says, „well their lives are much harder than ours. And it takes a lot to overcome hardships that they have gone through. I mean Zinhle has lost her mother and father. I don’t think I would be able to do that.“ They mentioned that culture also presented a divide between them. In particular, I

highlight race, dressing and the use of separate utensils, the terms „maid“ and madam“ and religion as markers of difference between madam and maid which facilitate distance within their relationship.

The most apparent difference that emerged through conversations during the focus groups was constructed on the basis of race. With most madams being Indian and all the domestic workers being black African, race did not initially appear as a major differential factor between madam and maid, with only two of the madams saying „race is the only difference between us.“ In the individual interviews the words black and Indian were hardly used, however the racial differences between madam and maid did arise in speech patterns. An example is Mrs Mia, who consistently said „you know how they are,“ referring to domestic workers and Mrs Khan who said „she is different from the blacks I know.“ Durrheim *et al* (2011: 188) noted that the use of the word „they“ can refer to black, domestic workers or the poor and indicate negative stereotypes, but by saying „she,“ the employer shows that the stereotype is not necessarily true in the case of her domestic worker. In Durrheim *et al*'s opinion, employers and domestic workers talk about superficial subjects rather than explicitly mentioning the race differences between them.

However, differences constructed around race did arise during the focus groups in which three madams mentioned examples of these differences in terms of cleanliness. They mentioned that blacks have contributed to the degradation of West Street and that young blacks were becoming so modern that they did not want to be domestic workers anymore – they wanted the „top jobs.“ As discussed in chapter five, many madams did not feel their domestic workers were clean enough to use their toilet or aware of proper sanitation because they were „from the bush.“ Even the positive notion some madams had of their domestic

workers in saying „we can't clean like them“ reinforces the „us“ and „them“ mentality. Race was also viewed in a geographical context, where madams preferred black domestic workers who were not from KwaZulu Natal. Mrs Abdullah, who has a good relationship with her domestic worker, mentioned that once she employed a foreign domestic worker in her maid's absence:

„She is Zimbabwean and she is very friendly. They have a different way of doing things and are very pleasant.“

Ms Osman explained that her family now only employs Malawian maids and that they are friendly and respectful, unlike maids in Durban. South African maids are also differentiated into Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho in the following excerpt from focus group 1:

Zarina: „You get those blacks that are okay though. Like my friend's maid is caring and kind.“

Rabia: „Oh where is she from?“

Zarina: „Matatiele. We have the Zulus. They have that wildness in them, they're from Shaka.“

Sumayya: „Yes, the Xhosa and Sothos are very nice though. The BaSotho.“

Rabia: „Yes, when we went to Lesotho, we were shocked at how calm and pleasant the Sotho people were.“

Zarina: „Even in Johannesburg, there are some of them there with such good ways and they can sit and talk with you. PE as well. I went there to the beach on Christmas day, and it was packed. But when they all went into the water, there wasn't even one

paper or dirt on the floor. When I went to the garage, I told the lady there that it was the first time I saw such cleanliness. She smiled and said thank you. ‘

Muslim madams also noted differences between older and younger maids; and more importantly, they resented younger domestic workers for becoming more educated and looking Indian due to hair extensions and make up. The following excerpt from focus group one encapsulates these concerns:

Sumayya: _You know Quraisha, just now you ‘ll hear there won ‘t be any maids – black people won ‘t be working for us, because they all want to get educated. ‘

Feroza: _Yeah this generation...(nods disapprovingly) ‘

Sumayya: _They don ‘t want to work for you. They tell you straight that they ‘re going to study and certain times they go for courses. ‘

Researcher: ‘Yes, a lot of young maids are studying and working...but do you find there’s a difference between the older maids and the younger ones?’

Zarina: _Yes, a very big difference, the older maids stay for longer, they are more patient and more consistent with their work and they listen to you and do the work properly. They are really caring and get the job done. But the younger ones just don ‘t care. The older ones don ‘t think too much, they do what you tell them to. ‘

Sumayya: _But the older ones...you don ‘t want to give them difficult work or too much work. ‘

Zarina: _But they work. The younger ones feel like they can just come and go when they want to and they just want the money for the good things in life. You see when

they have babies, they get that money (welfare) and they use that money for their hairdos and things. ‘

Rabia: _And cellphones!’

Sumayya: _And manicures. ‘

Rabia: _And wigs and extensions. ‘

Sumayya: _But we don’t worry about all that – as long as they get your job done. As long as you got your maid coming, she’s neat, she wants to work for you and not just coming so she can keep a boyfriend around in town. You know some people; they just work to have contact with their boyfriends. ‘

Zarina: _And now they’re dressing very modern – not like how they used to. ‘

Sumayya: _Now the black guys look at us like they’re seeing a black woman, because they can’t make the difference out!’

Zarina: _Ya, and even I can’t tell the difference when they dress up, you think they’re Indian. ‘

Feroza: _Yeah, when they wear the wig and things you can’t make out the difference. ‘

Race as a social construct of difference influenced the negative perception of domestic workers in terms of stereotypes. In these cases, race and class overpower the apparent shared similarities, and differences are highlighted. Cock’s (1980) argument that race was a threat to „universal sisterhood“ is thus substantiated. However, what needs to be further analysed is the issue of looking Indian. This argument is laden with ambiguity as madams tried to convert their maids, outline the type of male partners their domestic workers should choose and most importantly, dictate their dressing in order to ensure their domestic workers upheld their

beliefs. Yet, when their black domestic servants show aesthetic similarities to Indian women, madams resent it, emphasising the distance between them and the disdain that black men cannot tell the difference.

Madams preferred older domestic workers who did not „think too much,“ rather than younger maids who had ambitions to become professionals. This was not the viewpoint of all the madams though. Two of the key informants revealed that they would ideally like to be social workers and were working as domestic workers to save money to attend university, thereby increasing their income generating power. Their madams were assisting them by giving them extra work and helping them make more money during the day by sharing them with other madams in the building. In this way, madams recognised the need to be educated and assisted if they could as education was viewed as an opportunity that everyone should have. Madams in the focus group however, did not believe domestic workers should have the „good things in life“ such as cell phones, wigs and manicures, which many of the madams themselves consider essential to their lives. Although they may claim to be quite similar to their domestic workers, they resent their maids looking like them, or looking „Indian“ as black men cannot tell the difference. Thus, for them it is key that others can differentiate between them and their domestic workers, or between Indian and black women, negating the notion of a togetherness between them.

While religion has been referred to as a marker of togetherness between madam and maid, it also acts as the second catalyst for difference. This is largely due to the fact that although madam and maid may have similar values and morals, there are distinct differences in their belief systems. As one of the main markers of difference between Muslim madam and maid,

religion was a theme that continuously arose when madams spoke of their domestic workers and vice versa. Grace, one of the key informants, said that she preferred working for Muslims because they were „nicer than other Indian madams.“ She said „Muslims love their religion too much and a Muslim will never change their religion.“ However, most madams did try to convert their maids to Islam. Despite their thoughts that maids thought all Muslims were rich and expected many things from Muslim madams due to the Islamic emphasis on charity, they believed this difference in religion would turn into togetherness if their maids followed Islam.

„Islamically it is our duty to do Dawah (spread the religion) and tell them about Islam,“ said Mrs Meer and commended those madams who attempt to convert their domestic workers to Islam. In response, Ms Osman spoke of her domestic worker and the topic of conversion, saying, „Mama is very knowledgeable about Islam and she knows everything we do. She is pious and god fearing and Christian. I think for a Muslim, da‘wah is not about converting people to Islam, it should be your conduct. I never really invited her to Islam, but she knows a lot about it.“

Observing their madams or their madam’s families praying and conducting themselves in a respectable Islamic manner often leads to some domestic workers becoming curious about Islam. Along with discussions with their madams as in the case of Precious, Mrs Khan’s maid, the domestic worker may consider converting to Islam:

„I talk to her about Christianity. I explain her religion to her because I used to be Christian. I show her the downfalls of it and how those can be fulfilled in Islam. We used to read the ten golden rules of the day everyday and we try and practice it. She really wanted to become Muslim three years ago before she had her baby. It was namaaz that made her want to become Muslim. But then it was peer pressure that

convinced her not to become Muslim. While she was staying with me, she really loved the fact that we prayed and we didn't rush no matter how busy I am. She used to see us read Asr and Maghrib (namaaz) and she was very fascinated by it. Then she told my daughters in their room that she wanted to become Muslim. They were ecstatic. She wanted to be called Fathima and I started crying because it was so beautiful. She said she sees how I treat people and how we don't tell lies and I was the reason she wanted to be Muslim. She said –and you pray on that mat and I love how you pray.” But she changed her mind after peer pressure.’

Two madams mentioned that peer pressure or disapproval from the domestic worker's family hinder the conversion of the domestic worker to Islam. „Only if they are live-in maids will they be good practising Muslims – but let's face it, who will want to live in forever,” said Mrs Desai. This subject of conversion was an unanticipated result of my research, yet it became clear that madams actively try to convert their domestic workers to Islam as well as their families. Most agreed that it would strengthen the bond between themselves and their domestic worker and make them „closer.” As Mrs Aziz said, „if she were Muslim I would feel a lot closer to her and take more of an interest in her life. Similarly, Mrs. Amod explained:

„Oh yes, I would be closer to her and would want to teach her things and help her out more...the ones who are receptive and want to listen, I tell them about Islam. I tell them that listening is from God. When I get a chance I do speak about Islam, that there is one God and that's the right way.’

Along similar lines, Mrs Lockhat said, „She has different values and beliefs from Muslims. It's not like having another Muslim in your home. I think if she were, we would be closer.

Some of the madams like Mrs Ahmed said that if her domestic worker became Muslim, she would trust her more in the kitchen. This is quite a significant point, considering the emphasis Muslim madams place on the kitchen being solely their domain and the strong ties between cooking and Muslim identity. Thus, the conversion of the domestic worker would influence her responsibilities in the home and increase the level of trust between madam and maid. Other madams said they would help their domestic worker financially as their trust in their maid would increase.

Mrs Moosa, who has known Moira for 38 years initially said that her maid's conversion to Islam will not make a difference, but after thinking about it more revealed that it would indeed change their relationship:

„I suppose it may, but it doesn't make a difference now either way because she doesn't drink or buy meat from a place that isn't halaal. But I suppose it will make a big difference just having her in the fold of Islam...I've been asking her to come into Islam for a long time, but she has one daughter that doesn't want her to because she's a sangoma. But she has two grandchildren which I'm coaxing now, to come into Islam.‘

The „coaxing“ to come into Islam does not only end at the domestic worker in this case, it extends to her grandchildren, despite their mother disapproving. Often, domestic workers respond by laughing it off while few consider it. Mrs Sayed said: „It doesn't matter to me because she respects Islam even though she is not a Muslim. Her sister Ayesha is actually a Muslim and I laugh at her and tell her she must become a Muslim. And she just laughs.“ The similarity between this response and that of Mrs Moosa is striking, since madams initially say it would not matter if the maid converted or not, but it is immediately followed by their efforts to coax them into Islam. This ambivalence is prevalent in conversations I had with

many of the madams. Mrs Aziz for example, feels she would be much closer to her maid if she were Muslim. When asked if she would be closer to her domestic worker if she were Muslim, she mentioned that being Muslim is much more importance than racial similarities. However, her relationship with her domestic worker is fraught with awkwardness and distance. Expecting someone from another faith to convert to one's religion requires closeness yet there are constraints in these relationships.

Two madams were adamant that their maid's conversion to Islam would make no difference to their relationship. Mrs Emam and Mrs Ebrahim felt that they had known their domestic workers for so long and trusted them as family, thus it would not matter what religion she was. Responses from focus group one indicated a unanimous agreement that the relationship between madams and maid would improve if maids became Muslim, with Mrs Amod mentioning that she would be able to relate to her maid better and speak to her about namaaz (praying) and in general it would „make everything easier.“ Although Mrs Abdullah from focus group two did speak to her domestic worker about Islam, she noted that her domestic worker found Islam too difficult and despite Islam and Christianity being similar, her domestic worker would not convert. Thus I suggest that gender may be trumped by religion as a catalyst between Muslim madam and maid, as there lies a greater intimacy between „Muslim women,“ than merely „women.“

Two of the key markers of difference between madam and maid are the uniform and the separate utensils used by domestic workers. Much like the discomfort experienced by the madams regarding their domestic workers looking Indian or looking like them, an excerpt

from King (2007) reveals that the uniform is one such tool that represents the separation of the madam from the maid in a physical sense:

„The uniform that many domestic workers wear is more than a functional garment to save their clothes from being sullied, but also a symbolic representation of their constructed role. Perhaps employers are trying to distance themselves physically from their servants, as part of the rejection process of what their servants represent in themselves. “I am not like you – you do not act like me, you do not dress like me. Maintaining physical difference therefore is a manifestation of psychological rejection of what I do not want to be” (King, 2007: 36).

Most of the madams interviewed did prefer their domestic workers to wear uniforms, while others allowed their maids to bring work clothes to change into while they were carrying out their tasks in the home. Nevertheless, the physical appearance of maid and madam was quite different, visible through the observation process. Madams, such as Mrs Lockhat however mentioned that her domestic work was „cool with it“ and did not mind wearing the uniform. Mrs Khan explained that in fact, her domestic worker Precious enjoyed wearing a uniform, saying:

„She never used to wear one but I thought it didn’t look nice. I felt I needed to complement her with a new uniform. I bought her a set of a uniform, apron and a hat. But I’ve noticed that she doesn’t wear the apron and hat anymore, I think it ties her down. But she was so thrilled when I got it for her, she kept hitting my shoulder in disbelief and saying –hau madam!” My husband was just telling her that we need to get her a new set now and she said that would be nice. ‘

Perhaps domestic workers themselves preferred to look different from their employers in order to emphasise their role in the home. Three of the key informants interviewed said they

did not have a problem wearing a uniform, while the two others wore work clothes of their choice when cleaning their madams' home. Madams in focus group one had interesting reasons for not imposing a uniform on their domestic workers:

Sumayya: _You know I don't give them a uniform to wear for one reason – when you get another maid and they are a different size, then you have a problem. '

Feroza: _Also when they are working at 3 different places, then it becomes an issue because you bought them the uniform but they are wearing it somewhere else. '

Rabia: _I allow my maid to change into her work clothes, but I don't have a set uniform for her. '

Zarina: _Yes, I used to allow her to take the uniform home and bring it back... '

Sumayya: _Oh mine will never bring it back if I let her take it home!' (laughs)

Zarina: _Yes that's what happened! Every maid I had never brought the uniform back to me – all of them took it away. '

Uniforms in their case were seen more of a hindrance despite them not wanting their domestic workers to look like Indian women. Due to their negative history and employment of „countless“ domestic workers, investing in a uniform would result in size problems when they employed a new maid, issues of theft if the domestic worker did not bring it back as well as problems when the domestic worker wears it at another job. While these domestic workers were allowed to wear their own choice of work clothes, they were still subject to „social distancing,“ referring to „various attempts to create and maintain social and physical distance, often through dehumanising practices“ (Ally, 2010: 98) such as using the toilet outside and relevant to this example, using separate utensils from the madam and her family. Thandi, one of the key informants, felt degraded by the fact that she could not use her madams' toilet or

their utensils, as she was the one employed to clean them. Some of the madams interviewed found this behaviour was carried out by their parents and stopped this practice once they became madams. Ms Osman and Mrs Abdullah in focus group 2 thought the practice was „unacceptable“ saying they did not understand the intention behind it. The same could be said for Mrs Ebrahim who said, „No! She is part of my family, how can she have her own set of things? We share the same bathroom and toilet and her clothes get washed with mine.“

However, madams in focus group one felt that giving the domestic worker her own utensils was a necessity:

Feroza: _Yes, my Bertina has her own plate and cup and things. ‘

Zarina: _I did that after my first maid died of Aids. Actually there were two of them that had Aids. They were very young. So I gave them their own things and I told them they must wash it and keep it here. ‘

Sumayya: _Yes, me too. From the beginning they must have it set. We’ll never allow them just to use any plate. ‘

Zarina: _Some of them, when you aren’t looking, will just take any glass and drink water by the sink! ‘

Rabia: _The other thing is also TB. More than Aids. I think that’s more than a risk because it’s more infectious than Aids. ‘

Researcher: ‘Do you not feel bad about giving them separate utensils?’

Zarina: _I used to before, but I realised they don’t feel bad about it. They ask me _which is my mug? ‘ (laughs)

Sumayya: _They don’t mind. ‘

Zarina: Yes and it's a nice set now. It's not like before when they used to get an enamel mug, now it's all glass. They are very happy now. '

Feroza: As long as they use it, wash it and put it away, it's fine. '

While health concerns over TB and Aids are strong, the domestic worker still irons the madam's clothes and cleans her home and thus the potential for cuts or infection is not lowered by the separation of utensils, according to Mrs Abdullah, a medical professional. Zarina Amod in the above excerpt expresses shock that her domestic worker will „take any glass and drink water by the sink“- an act that becomes almost criminalised because it is being done by the domestic worker who in fact washes the dishes. Thus, space within the domestic worker's work space is also filled with private elements which are not to be touched. Probing further, madams said they did not feel this behaviour was dehumanising as they now give their domestic workers glass plates instead of the enamel mugs and plates that they were given before and that their maids ask for their own set of utensils – once again, perhaps to separate themselves from their madam or because they have become so used to this practice that it does not offend them anymore.

By justifying the use of separate utensils with the fact that these are glass and not enamel, the madam tries to ease her conscience and further explain that the domestic worker prefers to have her own set. Like Grace, a key informant who said „this is my madam's house, I must respect it“ and who sat on the floor to eat instead of at the table, domestic workers may feel that it is not wrong to be differentiated from family members in this way. This is similar to Durrheim *et al's* (2011 186-187) observation of a domestic worker eating from an enamel plate. She says that it is her choice to eat from a separate plate as her employer has „no apartheid.“ Thus she overlooks the inequality and attributes it to her choice repressing the real

reasons behind the situation as she avoids race and would rather not think of it as an instrumental factor in her relationship. This is part of the trouble with race as Durrheim *et al* (2011) put it, due to the awkwardness the topic of race presents, despite the construction of race as a marker of difference.

Another hurdle to sisterhood in the case of madams and maids is the term „maid.“ The master-servant relationship encapsulates a power relationship discussed in chapter two, which overshadows any similarities between the two and emphasises inequality. I have focused on a few madams who refer to their domestic workers as part of their family and referred to them in maternal terms. The term „maid“ to them is unacceptable. In Mrs Khan’s words, „she is not my maid, she is my help-mate.“ Mrs Khan’s children were taught to address the domestic worker as Auntie Precious or Gogo in order to show her the same respect one would give an older family member. Mrs Osman called her maid „Mama“ and only recently found out her name was Anna, but still addressed her as the former. She preferred to see her as a helper rather than the „maid.“ Domestic workers themselves are beginning to resent the word as Mrs Desai mentions:

„You know one day I walked into the lift, and I asked the maid are you 504’s maid? ‘ and she said to me I’m not a maid.‘ So I said sorry, what are you doing here? She said yes, I’m working there, for 504. I thought oh my God, okay. ‘

Madams in the focus groups were asked if they were comfortable with the term „maid“:

Rabia and Zarina: Yes, it’s fine. ‘

Zarina: But some people use the term ~~helper~~” and things and it confuses me. ‘

Rabia: _But I don't know if I like the term. Maid is more like a servant. Maybe domestic help is better term. '

Sumayya: _And you can't call them ~~my~~ girl" or ~~my~~ boy" anymore. '

Feroza: _You must call them by their name. '

Feroza : _I'm okay with using the term maid, but sometimes in front of them I feel bad. '

*Sumayya: _Yeah, just say Happiness or something. Some people say maid but I always make them happy and say ~~my~~ Happy is coming'. Before I used to say k****s, and my son used to tell me to keep quiet, but when they make you angry, it makes you want to call them that. '*

There was some guilt surrounding the term „maid“ as it had the connotation of being a „servant.“ Furthermore, Mrs Desai mentioned that you can't call them „my boy“ or „my girl“ anymore, indicating that this derogatory label is slowly being abolished. However, some madams still refer to their domestic workers as the „k“ word when talking to their friends and family, and I have observed that the younger madams, and in Mrs Desai's case, her son, steer away from these terms. Despite the close relationship of some madams to their domestic workers, such as Mrs Moosa and Moira and Mrs Emam and her domestic worker, madams are still referred to as „madam,“ despite their „familial“ bond. The „one of the family“ concept and use of the words „helper“ and „aunty“ as many of these domestic workers are referred to is as Ally (2010: 99) points out, „define the relationship between employer and employee in familial, voluntaristic terms, masking the relationship as one of waged labour, allowing for the extraction of more and unpaid labour on the basis of charitable obligation...” Mavis Khubelo, one of Ally's respondents says, „they know you love their children, that you are part

of the family, so they keep saying this. But, you are only a part of their family when it's convenient for them." While this mask of intimacy is a tool in the exercise of power on the madam's part, Ally (2010: 100) notes that South African maids use it as well, in order to negotiate better working conditions or time off. Thus, the power relationship between madam and maid sees the bulk of power leaning toward the madam, even in terms of the words she uses to refer to the domestic worker. However, the worker is not powerless and can use this strategically to meet her own needs.

7.5 Shared gender and the 'sisterhood myth'

As one of the sectors which finds itself continually associated with the feminine domain, I consider the sharing of gender between madam and maid as both share the experience of being female. The notions of intimacy and empathy between women point to a common understanding between madam and maid based on the similar trait of gender, as discussed in chapter two. Many of the markers of togetherness I have highlighted rest on the fact that both madam and maid are female, allowing them to discuss their male partners and their children. Due to much of the similarities between madam and maid resting on the notion of being mothers and possessing nurturing personalities, I highlight shared gender as a basis for understanding between madam and maid. Working closely in the feminine domain of the home and sharing tasks which are predominantly female oriented, gender arises as a common factor between employer and employee and may serve as a catalyst for togetherness in terms of understanding certain experiences of being women. This is further substantiated by Ms Osman who had earlier mentioned that they did not always have female domestic workers

working for her family, but finds comfort in employing a female domestic worker in her current home.

...because she is a woman I'm comfortable with her especially because I am Muslim. We had a male worker before at home and it was so strange...it didn't motivate us to do anything or talk to him. The home is the woman's domain and I think the maid, from experience does a better job cleaning the home than the male.'

She explained that it was much easier to communicate with the female domestic worker as she was more comfortable around her and could not fathom having a male domestic worker in her current home. This may be partly attributed to the Islamic rulings regarding the interaction between males and females who are not married, yet for the purpose of this research I look specifically at the sharing of gender and whether this facilitates the relationship between madam and maid. Explaining their relationship as women further, she said:

I think we communicate as women on so many levels. I think we are more understanding of each other and she was very supportive of me especially when I was living alone. Now I'm not alone, but at that time she understood how hard it was cooking just for oneself and she went the extra mile in asking me if I was okay and she was concerned for my safety and the times I would come home. It was like having a mother in the house.'

Her words indicate firstly, the primary role of women as the caretakers of the home and of equal importance, their bond as women which facilitates a nurturing relationship based on concern for each other. The notion of a young girl living alone raised concern on the domestic worker's part, as she understood the security risk this posed. In this case, as with a

few other madams interviewed, the domestic worker took on a maternal role – a key factor which will be examined when focusing on the „sisterhood“ between women.

Empathy due to the sharing of gender was evident between some madams and maids, especially regarding menstrual pain. While their relationships may not have been that of a familial bond, there was an understanding between madam and maid due to similar experiences. Madams offered tablets or time off to domestic workers in such predicaments as well as allowing them time off when they fell pregnant. On a lighter note, madams like Mrs Lockhat who only had girls in her home said, „I joke with her and we talk sh*t sometimes because there aren’t any men in the house.“ She and Mrs Aziz agreed that they shared a similar fashion sense to their domestic workers and this was particularly because they were young females, even though Mrs Aziz was not close to her maid. Essentially, gender and similar personality traits contribute to the relationship between madam and maid.

These understandings between women centered around safety and the feminine domain of the home point to shared commonalities between women and a possible sisterhood which binds them together. Thornton Dill, writing in 1983, explains that sisterhood indicates a unifying force between contemporary women and emphasises the similarities between women rather than the differences and is a „feeling of attachment and loyalty to other women“ (Thornton Dill, 1983: 135). However, she goes on to state that this concept of an all inclusive sisterhood is a myth due to deep racial and social divisions in society. These differences, as King (2007) adamantly argues, are still in existence are a great threat to the concept of sisterhood. In fact, these discrepancies serve to cause frustration between women and divide them further on the basis that these experiential differences stemming from race and class are vastly dissimilar.

A case of particular interest was Ms Karrim who viewed the similarity between herself and her domestic worker in terms of a socio-economic predicament. She poignantly stated that, „I think she’s the sole breadwinner in her family, like me. That’s quite a responsibility. I think she understands what it’s like to be a working woman.“ In these terms, Ms Karrim and her domestic worker identify with each other as independent working women and mothers. As breadwinners in their respective families, they are both familiar with a socio economic challenge as well as their status as mothers. However if one were to inspect this further, it can be argued that a woman’s experience as a domestic worker and mother who supports three children and her husband varies greatly from that of Ms Karrim who is a medical professional and a single parent of one child. This debate surrounding intersectionality once again poses serious challenges to the notion of sisterhood and substantiates Phillipson’s (2003: 33) observation that, „some women inherit more power than others through the random lottery of birthplace and so the point of influence has become not so much gender, but rather socio-economic factors.“ Thus, class becomes the overall unifying factor rather than „shared gender“ as a catalyst for togetherness or division.

While the classes and social power of women particularly in North Beach are visibly vastly imbalanced, it is clear that in a rather Marxian sense, madams and maids need each other for their survival. Stating this quite accurately, Magona’s respondent (1991:59) states, „their need of us in their homes beats their dislike and suspicion of us. They are slaves to the leisure and luxury that having servants gives them. Yes, they are slaves just as we are slaves. We need each other...we need each other to survive.“

7.6 Conclusion

Madams and maid clearly negotiate their subjective boundaries around each other. Some favour strict parameters while others take each other on in a familial relationship defined by intimacy. However, it is the ambiguous friendship and distance which facilitates complexities and contradictions between employer and employee that is unique to domestic work. Within these relationships, race, religion, and personality traits, along with conversation and a sense of shared gender are influential factors in determining the consequent relationship between madams and maid. This chapter has shown that there exist similarities between madam and maid and that these are based on similar personality traits and more importantly on the experience of being mothers. Through these inherently female traits, madams and maids may identify with each other based on gender. Conversations and jokes about male partners also contribute to intimate relationships between madams and maids. However, despite markers of togetherness between the two, I argue that it is the makers of difference which counteract claims of sisterhood between madam and maid purely based on gender. Constructions of difference based on race and class link back to my discussion on intersectionality in chapter two and do pose challenges to a sisterhood between madam and maid based purely on gender. Madams noted that their lives and experiences were essentially very different from their maids. The markers of difference between them also took into account religion, upbringing, life challenges and constant reminders of power imbalances in domestic work such as wearing a maid's uniform and terminology such as maid and madam.

While some refer to their madams in a maternal sense and some madams refer to their maids in a sisterly way, the unequal power relationship between them will always render one the „madam“ and one the „maid“ and these statuses will continuously emphasise the distance between them in the realm of paid domestic work. This chapter has shown that these markers of togetherness and difference contribute to the various types of relationships which emerge, from the madam-maid dynamic. These bring the intimacy at work within the relationship into question, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Eight

Questions of Intimacy

8.1 Introduction

Relationships between Muslim madams and their domestic workers begin during the recruitment process of the ideal maid which is largely dependent on the madam's identity and preconceptions of her ideal domestic worker. Finding a maid who reflects her values and behaviour, the potential for a close relationship is in place. Through elements of daily life such as spatial negotiation, boundaries or the lack thereof as well as personal conversations and markers of togetherness and distance, madams and maids may find themselves in relationships which are characterised by intimacy, distance or both. The notions of intimacy and distance have not explicitly been discussed in my three preceding chapters pertaining to religion, the negotiation of space and the shared experience of being female. This chapter highlights the concept of intimacy specifically in terms of the relationship between madam and maid. Throughout the thesis, comments from madams have alluded to notions that the domestic worker is one of the family or like a stranger in the employers' home. I will explore this firstly in terms of the concept of „cultivated intimacy“ between madam and maid. I then examine the complexities and contradictions of intimacy and the notion of being „one of the family“, ultimately viewing their relationship as „distant companions“ and questioning the ambiguous intimacy and distance in the relationship between Muslim madam and maid.

8.2 Cultivated Intimacy

Intimacy is often seen as a naturally developed connection between two people as Erber (2001) suggests. However, in the case of the madam and maid, I argue that intimacy should be viewed as a social construct between two women, which for Winstead (1997: 118) should allow close friendships to emerge. In defining intimacy as a „close friendship,” Winstead (1997) suggests that women are more likely to share through talking as they are more emotional and expressive. This results in a more intimate relationship and bonds, which are „richer” than others, as I discussed in chapter two. However, in the maid-madam relationship, intimacy is not naturally developed between women „friends” as the relationship is based on paid employment and imbalanced power relations between the two. I suggest that there exist degrees of intimacy between madam and maid. At times, the levels of intimacy may increase or decrease depending on the permeability of the emotional, physical or social boundaries between the two.

I look to Erber (2001) where intimacy is also defined as a need. This is due to a person’s need for affiliation or identification with others. Thus, when madam and maid are in the same space, they may feel the need to find similarities and identify with each other. While this may explain the nature of friendships, I argue that intimacy within the madam and maid relationship is based on Erber’s (2001) earlier notion of the reward-cost dynamic as being more intimate benefits both the madam and the maid. For the maid, this may be a way of

controlling her work and eliciting sympathy from her madam, while the madam may gain loyalty from her domestic worker.

I choose this suggestion that intimacy is a cultivated concept which benefits both parties as a basis for intimacy and distance within the context of my research. In the world of domestic work, the closeness between madam and maid is a process of cultivation as most of the results have shown. This has been evident firstly in the calculated way in which Muslim madams find domestic workers with whom they can identify in terms of common values, a shared love for children or even their modest dressing. Madams actively seek domestic workers who they share something in common with, or possibly an intimate working relationship. Chapter four was explicit in detailing these avenues for finding the „ideal“ maid who would suite the madam’s requirements and fit in with the Muslim madam’s identity. In building this argument, it is clear that the creation of boundaries is also a determinant of intimacy. By engaging with or working with the domestic worker, madams not only supervise their maids but also cultivate a closeness between themselves and the domestic worker by choosing to be in their work space. Others have shown that they try to „stay out of the way“ in chapter five, which conversely cultivates distance. Ultimately, madam and maid may share the common denominator of gender, yet the cultivation of intimacy between the two is dependent on the emphasis of the markers of togetherness, which bring them together. It is clear then that intimacy or lack thereof is a calculated process which begins at the start of the domestic employment process and does not occur effortlessly.

Ally (2010: 102) refers to this cultivated intimacy as a strategy of „emotion work“ on the part of the domestic worker to exert control over her work and protect herself from exploitation. „You must have feeling for them. Or, they will not have feelings for you,“ said one of Ally’s

(2010: 104) respondents when explaining that maids must make an effort to care about their madams, despite power inequalities in the relationship. I extend this concept on the part of the madam. Madams interviewed mentioned that they put effort into building a relationship with their domestic worker in order to achieve a clean home, loyalty from the worker and build a level of trust between themselves and their maids so that they could ensure peace of mind if they were to leave the domestic worker unattended or with their children. Thus they gain reward from facilitating an intimate relationship with their maids as Erber (2001) theorised. This is substantiated by Mrs Desai, who stated that, „to get on with the maid and get them to work, you have to have a relationship with them.“

In this case, the relationship is in place „to get them to work,“ rather than a mere personal connection between madam and maid – thus it is not a natural intimacy, it is cultivated and may be viewed as a manipulation of the power the madam has over the maid. This is reminiscent of Muslim madams in chapter five, who had „learnt“ to get along or adapt to their domestic workers. Aptly referred to as „false kinship“ by McDowell (1999), the intimacy in these relationships is very strategic and not naturally developed. The process of strategising intimacy between madam and maid to make the most out of the working relationship is at play here. Boundaries in conversation or space ensure that the ambiguity of intimacy and distance is always at work. While some madams like Mrs Moosa and Mrs Emam don’t have explicit parameters in this regard, madams who have a fairly distant relationship with their domestic workers monitor their closeness with them. Mrs Karrim mentioned, as noted in the previous chapter:

„We do talk about our concerns, like her husbands‘ drinking and unemployment and I think she values her job. And I also value my job so that’s important to both of us – we do have things in common. And if she’s not happy, I can see it and I do ask her – that’s as far as the closeness goes.‘

Distance, in the case of Ms Karrim is therefore controlled and conversations are restricted to certain subjects, as discussed in chapter six. In these cases, only a few aspects of personal information are shared between madam and maid- those aspects which both may identify with, like occupational concerns. As the „intimate Other,“ a concept discussed earlier, the domestic worker may have intimate knowledge of her employer, yet she is still an outsider. One of the main aspects of intimacy relevant to my research pertains to how much personal information madams had of their domestic workers. This focused on the basics such as where their maids lived, how they travelled to work, what their education levels were, whether they had children and what religion they subscribed to.

It was apparent that most madams were familiar with the travel and living arrangements of their domestic workers, including if their maids have families of their own. However, it is imperative to point out that most madams don't know the education level of their domestic workers or their religion. While this may be seen as very personal information to exchange in terms of the madams who have a formal working relationship with their domestic workers, (like Mrs Aziz), for madams like Mrs Emam, Mrs Paruk and Mrs Abdullah who claim to have a more intimate relationship with their domestic workers, this lack of information is rather peculiar. Domestic workers clean the most private areas of their employers' home, wash their clothes and witness family routines, they become involved in the lives of their madams. However, here it is clear that often madams may not even know the education level or religion of their domestic workers, despite having them in their homes for over 10 years. Even though most madams stated they would feel closer to their domestic workers if they became Muslim, they have not asked their domestic workers what religion they subscribe to. In fact, some madams who actively preached Islam to their maids had no idea which faith their maids were involved in.

Clearly, the number of madams who knew more personal information about their maids such as the names of their children or if their maids had husbands decreased as the level of personal information increased. While some madams were aware of their domestic workers' marital status, few knew the actual reasons behind it. Mrs Seedat, who has employed her maid for 21 years knew her maid's husband had been shot, and Mrs Khan in particular mentioned that while Precious had a husband, he was a „rich womaniser,“ explaining that Precious did not want him to support her. Mrs Khan had also met her domestic workers' children and spoken to them on the phone, saying:

She has four kids. Three girls and a boy. I met all of them, they visit me and phone me. The boy is very good with electrical things. He repairs fridges and appliances. And the older girl, Prudence is in matric and going for driving lessons. She wants to go to college and work in a bank. She has aspirations of looking after Princess and buying her a flat. I think she deserves it because she is very hardworking.

Others were unsure of the number of children their domestic workers had, like Mrs Ismail, but knew she had children. Few could not remember or did not know where their maids lived. Overall, the results point to the possibility that madams either don't ask domestic workers questions surrounding education or religion, or alternatively, seek only the information that suits them such as transport to work and where they live. Thus the intimacy created in their relationship is based on a few personal details or assumptions about each other and I argue that there are varying degrees of intimacy and distance within these relationships. Some of the madams assumed their maids had little or no education and assumed their domestic workers were Christian because they went home for the Christmas holiday. Ultimately, intimacy between madam and maid is created from the information they may have in

common with each other, yet there are areas of the domestic workers lives which the madam is completely unaware of. These create gaps within the intimacy they share, facilitating a simultaneous distance in their relationship – one which Hansen (1989 cited in Ally, 2010: 98) terms „distant companions,“ arguing that the intimacy between madam and maid is „deeply uncomfortable“ as this type of intimacy attempts to mask the inequalities domestic labour suggests and madam and maid actively distance themselves from each other at times when they feel one or the other is becoming too close with practices such as using separate utensils, while still referring to each other as family. This ambiguity is even more apparent in situations where madams and maids refer to each other in a familial sense where their intimate relationships are fraught with contradictions and complexity.

8.3 The complexities of intimacy

Domestic workers become ingrained in the intricacies of daily life in many homes to the extent that many employers view them as part of their family. Thirteen of the 20 madams interviewed stated that their domestic workers were part of their families. These responses in some cases required some thought, with one madam saying „yes, she is like family,“ while others like Mrs Sayed and Mrs Paruk saying, „she is part of me“ and „yes, if she left I would be devastated.“ When asked this question, familial terms were brought up again, where madams saw their maids as maternal or sisterly figures and in Mrs Emam’s case, a daughter to her. This reflects the worker’s intimate participation in the employer’s family. While most of the key respondents did agree that they were part of their madams’ families, it was apparent that they were quite reserved about answering questions about their madams,

especially Mavis whose madam was in the next room on the telephone. She said to me, „you are stirring a pot,” and then explained in Zulu that she cannot speak openly about her madam.

As a clear example of the contradictions within this complex and intimate relationship, this notion of ambiguity became key to my understanding of the relationships between madams and maids. While Mavis and her madam have a close relationship which has been developed over eight years, she still felt restricted in saying what she was really thinking, worried that it would create a problem between herself and her employer. This is taken further by Ally (2010: 109) who argues that while being one of the family does mirror closeness, it also hampers communication between madam and maid. One of her respondents, Mrs Khubelo said, „it’s like with your sister or good friend. Because you are so close, you sometimes can’t really say what you are thinking because it’s uncomfortable. Like with your sister, when you think there’s something wrong, you don’t just say it, because there are feelings there.”

This mirrors the strangeness of the „one of the family myth” as Ally (2010) calls it, as it presents an awkwardness between madam and maid when there is a problem between them based on the working contract. Some madams said they felt guilty telling their domestic workers to redo tasks if they were not done properly, choosing to wait until the maid left to correct her work in order to prevent her from feeling upset. I agree with McDowell’s (1999: 84) argument that a „false kinship” exists between employers and employees which „leads to difficulties between the women involved on both sides of the relationship and dissatisfaction by nannies and other domestic workers with their terms and conditions of employment.” While her argument refers to domestic labour and childcare, her concept of „false kinship” is relevant to my discussion in terms of the ambiguities within the relationship between madam and maid.

Emotions or „emotion work“ becomes an overwhelming factor in the relationship where the working contract is influenced by feelings between madam and maid. As Ally (2010) points out, maids cultivate an intimacy between themselves and their employer in order to cope with the workplace and control their work. However in light of my research, employers may initially cultivate intimacy to gain the loyalty and hard work from their maids but essentially develop maternal or sisterly feelings towards them and find themselves becoming too lenient or not being able to assert their roles as employers effectively. One such case was Ms Osman who was asked about the advantages of having a close relationship with her domestic worker:

„I have never felt there have been any disadvantages in our relationship. Sometimes my granny phones and gives Mama a whole list of things to do and I feel bad to tell her what to do. But that's not a disadvantage, I think I feel protective over her.“

It is clear that Ms Osman feels protective of her domestic worker and does not approve of her grandmother giving Mama more work to do. However, this is indicative of how emotions blur the lines of the working contract if their relationship is characterised by intimacy. Mrs Khan related an interesting incident, explaining that she insists her domestic worker wear gloves when washing the toilet and gets very irritated when Precious picks up her daughter's pad and throws it away, but Precious does not feel like these things are dirty because this is her family. Mrs Khan however, feels uncomfortable because this would seem like a dehumanising practice if she were the domestic worker, while Precious feels that the intimacy in their relationship goes beyond these concerns. This points to a very emotional part of the intimate relationship between madam and maid which is often uncomfortable and ambiguous. On the other hand, there were madams who stated that they had a very distant relationship with their domestic workers. Madams in focus group two said they would never reach a point in their relationships with their maids where they would refer to them as family as they did not live together. „That is where the trust comes in,“ said Mrs Amod. Ambiguously, they

stated that they would not like to spend more time with their maids and appreciated their privacy. The madams who did see their domestic workers often, and had an intimate relationship with them, were enthusiastic to spend more time with their maids and in Mrs Abdullah's case, have her live with them. These examples relate specifically to the home and spatial boundaries discussed in chapter six, where negotiations of space were a determinant of the relationship between madam and maid such that those who were comfortable working in the same space were found to have more intimate relationships than those who valued boundaries of space and communication.

My research also investigated physical displays of intimacy between madam and maid such as hugging, throwing birthday parties for their domestic worker and gift giving. While hugging ones domestic worker seemed a foreign concept to most madams, those with very close relationships said they did hug their maids:

Naseema: *Yes, of course I hug my maid! It's a spontaneous thing, not routine.*

Tasneem: *You see her and you're so happy you just want to give her a big hug.*

Naseema: *Yes, it's emotional.*

For these madams, hugging is purely based on emotion and spontaneity. Through their long relationships with their domestic workers, they become physically and spatially closer to their domestic workers, as if they are friends or family members. However, the happiness experienced by these madams may relate to the fact that when they see their maids, they know their houses will be cleaned as Ms Osman reveals, „I always smile when she walks in, because I feel like having a clean house de-clutters your mind and when the floors sparkle it makes me happy.“ She recalls a similar relationship with their former maid, saying, „I remember when we moved from Umzinto, we hugged our maid and cried our eyes out.“ She

goes on to say, however, that there are definite disadvantages to being close to ones domestic workers as one of their male workers stole a diamond ring from their family as he knew their routines and private details about them. Overall, she mentioned that she had had positive experiences with domestic workers, especially those who were Muslim as she felt there was an expectation of trust from a Muslim worker and beyond that, camaraderie. With her current maid not being Muslim, it may be argued that despite the intimacy shared between her and her domestic worker, the fact that she is aware of disadvantages of being too close to the domestic worker as well as her preference for Muslim maids, their relationship is simultaneously intimate and distant.

Another physical display of intimacy and being one of the family was the domestic worker's birthday. While 13 madams said they felt their domestic worker was part of their family, only three knew when their maid's birthdays were, with one revealing that they had a birthday party for their domestic worker every year:

„At Christmas we give her a bonus and on Eid day, she used to get R100 a day because everyone used to come here for lunch so she had to wash too many dishes. Oh and on her birthday, 27th of June we always do something for her. We order a cake with her name on it and me and the kids give her a gift in the morning. We love her so much, we have to make it special.‘ (Mrs Ahmed)

Mrs Ahmed looked forward to her maid's birthday and like one of the family members, the maid was given a celebration with gifts and cake. She mentions she loves her maid and makes it special so that her domestic worker knows she is appreciated. As one of the madams with a very intimate relationship with her domestic worker, it must still be noted that despite her „one of the family“ status, her maid works on Eid day and Mrs. Ahmed further mentioned

that she would trust her domestic worker more in the kitchen if she were Muslim. Thus, the intimacy here exists in relation to some distance in their relationship as distant companions.

When analysing the relationship between madams and maids one cannot help but explore the notion of gift giving. Like many madams, Mrs Ahmed mentioned the Christmas bonus and extra pay on Eid day that maids working for Muslim madams receive. However, beyond this, madams often give their domestic workers old clothes and left over food as gifts. Ms Osman says, „If there are clothes to give away I give it to her even though it may not fit her I give it to her to give to someone. If there’s extra of anything, I ask her to take it.“ Similarly, Mrs Paruk explains, „whatever we have that’s old or been given away like DVD’s or this sleeper couch, it’s her’s.“ Not restricted to Muslim madams, Cock (1980: 13) sees this act of gift giving as a way of reinforcing the power imbalance between madam and maid. While this may not be apparent to well meaning madams who do this out of gratitude, Cock correctly asserts that „this is not to deny the often sincere generosity of employers; it is simply to focus on the status-enhancing properties of such gifts which operate to secure the loyalty of the domestic worker within an extremely hierarchical-unequal relationship.“ She states that these gifts serve as functional items which reinforce loyalty on the part of the maid. I concur with King (2007) who further links this to religion, as highlighted in Chapter two, arguing that gift giving allows the madam to fulfil her religious obligations.

It must not be overlooked that some domestic workers, such as Grace, one of the key informants, benefited from receiving old clothes and gifts. She asked her madams for anything she was not using so that she could sell the items and make a profit out of it. Ally (2010: 106) makes a strong case in this regard, as she relates how domestic workers use this practice in the power relationship between madam and maid. While madams may think they

are getting rid of their „vrot (rotten) things“ as one of her respondents calls it, domestic workers are making money out of them to afford school fees and become independent. The act of gift giving is also viewed as a cure for the conscience of the madam when inequalities are so stark. As Magona (1991: 42) writes,

„The dribs and drabs the white women sees as charity are nothing but a salve to her conscience, an insult to the maid’s dignity and an assault to her self esteem. The maid remains in a never-ending position of indebtedness. She works. Pay her and pay her justly. Then and only then does she become- even in the eyes of the madam- the adult she is.“

In these terms, gift giving is a tool of paternalism, which „demeans“ the worker (Cock, 1980: 13) and in King’s (2007) words, sees kindness become an effective instrument of power. While these clear functions of gifts as a power mechanism may be lost on some employers, the fact that these are old clothes and left over food which they do not deem fit for themselves to wear or eat, is an undignified practice, creating much distance between madam and maid, rather than intimacy. Recognising this difference, only two madams allowed their domestic workers to take what they wanted and threw old clothes that could not be used anymore away, allowing the domestic worker a choice of whether to accept the items or not.

Furthermore, one must question why it is only the madams who are the givers of gifts and not the domestic worker. It becomes evident here that due to the power imbalance between madam and maid, it is the madam who decides when to give gifts or offer hugs. As Gaitskell *et al* (1983) argued (see chapter two), the status of the madam and the maid will never be the same, despite the closeness between them; the reminder of the inequality between them will always leave one in a less powerful position than the other.

While displays of emotional or physical intimacy point to closeness between madam and maid, I argue that ultimately the relationship between madam and maid is ambiguous, harbouring a distance which cannot be bridged due to the inequalities in power between madam and maid. Particularly in the case of domestic work, Magona (1991: 37) reminds us that, „when you work for a woman, you’re not married to her. She can always change her girls if she wants to; she is the one who is paying.“ This fundamental aspect of domestic work – that it is paid labour, distances the status of the madam and maid, despite the intimacy within their relationship which is displayed through sharing space or similar identities. The madam buys the maids labour and can eventually choose to end this working contract, regardless of the threads of intimacy between them.

8.4 Conclusion

The construction of intimacy and distance between madam and maid is essentially that – it is constructed. Unlike natural relationships with family members or friends, I have argued that madams actively create intimacy and maintain distance simultaneously in a relationship with their maids that can best be described as distant companionship. Though this cultivated intimacy, madams and maids may develop close relationships over time, defining their relationship as „like family.“ However, they never really „become“ family despite emotional and physical displays of intimacy, which disguise the inequalities present in the paid domestic labour arrangement.

This has become clear through the use of terminology in trying to define the unique and complex relationships between madam and maid. The domestic worker is viewed as the

„intimate Other,” placing her within the family’s intimate space, yet simultaneously making her an outsider. McDowell’s (1999) label of the relationship as „false kinship” is also defines the distance within the relationship as she questions the notion of the domestic worker being one of the family, as does Ally (2010). However, for this thesis I have chosen to present the relationship between madam and maid as „distant companionship,” in line with Hansen’s (1989 cited in Ally 2010) argument. While I admit that there exist elements of distance between madam and maid, I do not believe that the entire sense of kinship or companionship is false. Rather, madam and maid operate at various degrees of intimacy, yet within each type of relationship are elements of distance and companionship.

Chapter Nine

Conclusion

In concluding this thesis, I have two main objectives. Firstly, I aim to reaffirm the central argument of this thesis. Secondly, it serves to emphasise the contribution of my thesis to the literature on domestic work in South Africa.

While domestic work in South Africa has been theorised in terms of its racial and socio-economic disparities from the perspective of the maid, this thesis has focused on the much neglected subject of the madam. It demonstrates that beyond the strict parameters of the working contract, relationships develop between madam and maid from the beginning of the recruitment process based on the madam's preconceived notions of the ideal worker. These relationships are then reconstructed through key elements of everyday life between madam and maid. Ultimately, I have argued that various types of relationships emerge and that these are characterised by levels of „cultivated“ intimacy.

Thus, I have asked; what is the level of intimacy between madam and maid? In answering this question, I have explored the following sub-questions:

1. What preconceived ideas about maids do madams bring into the working relationship and how do these ideas influence the relationship?
2. What are the key elements of everyday life that influence the relationship?
3. How do madams negotiate the relationships with their maids?
4. What types of relationships emerge?

I have presented my arguments in four parts. Firstly, I have shown that the recruitment process of finding the „ideal“ domestic worker is heavily dependent on the preconceptions Muslim madams have of what the ideal maid constitutes. Given the complex identity of the Muslim madam, I have argued in chapter five that these preconceptions are influenced by the madam’s Muslim identity. The markers of this identity, as this thesis reveals, go beyond just the wearing of the hijab and praying five times a day. Rather, I suggest that the Muslim identity, particularly in Durban, is deeply ingrained in Islamic morals and values, „Indianness,” language and culinary culture. By emphasising the cleanliness of the home as one of the key tenets of Islam, I have highlighted the connection between religion and domestic work. This thesis makes known the influence of this Muslim identity on the selection of a domestic worker by showing that Muslim madams employ a recruitment strategy and seek maids who reflect their morals, standards of cleanliness, dressing and who understand the restrictions of the kitchen in terms of halaal and haraam food, and more importantly, a Muslim woman’s role as a good cook. Ultimately, she seeks a maid who reflects her vision of the „ideal.”

This exploration of the Muslim madam within the apartment block reveals the networked nature of the Muslim community and the manner in which Muslim madams seek „good

maids.“ While Durrheim (2011) and Parreñas (2008) focus on the rise of domestic work agencies, this thesis clarifies that Muslim madams prefer to find domestic workers through trusted networks such as family, neighbours and previous domestic workers – those who share her perception of the „ideal maid.“ However, it further illuminates the apartment block as a space for tension between madams and a test of loyalty for the maids. Ultimately, the development of a relationship between the madam and maid is set in motion through the preconceptions Muslim madams have when entering the recruitment process. These preconceptions are influenced by identity, as well as embedded ideas about race, class and gender, which affect not only the responsibilities of the domestic worker in the home, but also the relationship which emerges between madam and maid.

Secondly, I argue that this relationship is reconstructed during the social interactions between madams and maids in their daily lives. The underlying elements of these social interactions which I emphasise in this thesis are the negotiation of space, the influence of religion and the shared gender between madam and maid. Focusing on the negotiation of space in chapter six, I argue that the home presents a contradictory space as it is both a work space for the maid and a private space for the madam. The way in which madam and maid negotiate this space is therefore a key indicator of the type of relationship they share. Space, as a subject which was touched on by King (2007) but not thoroughly explored, is taken further in this thesis by exploring the „maid’s place in the madam’s space.“ It is within this context of the home that the intimate or distant relationship between Muslim madam and maid emerge. I make use of Goffman’s (1959 cited in Lan, 2003) concept of the home as a „backstage area“ to emphasise the strangeness of the employment of an outsider into the homely backstage. In this way, I suggest that space between madam and maid is negotiated between boundaries of privacy and

social manifestations of power as illustrated through living arrangements or the shared spaces between madam and maid.

Taking into account Lan's (2003: 528) argument that, „due to the modest living space in most households, intrusion on privacy is almost unavoidable for both employers and domestic workers,” the thesis argues that some spaces within the private space of the home, are more private than others. Yet, both madam and maid define their own private zones within this space, dependent on the levels of comfort or unease they experience when in each others' space. These boundaries are created by both madam and maid within the space. One cannot ignore the Islamic ambiance of the Muslim home. While the connection between Muslim identity and its influence of the selection of a domestic worker was discussed in chapter five, this chapter argues that the Islamised space of the home influences the domestic worker not only as an external environment of her work, but on a more personal level as well. I provide evidence that due to long periods in their employer's home, domestic workers take on Islamic styles of dressing, ways of communication, and methods of personal hygiene as well as the consumption of halaal food. By explaining the concepts of „paak” and „napaak,” this chapter illustrates how the responsibilities of the domestic worker are defined by Islam and that the influence of religion in the private space of the home permeates the private space of the domestic worker as well. Furthermore, results from this research have shown that the more the domestic worker takes on aspects of Muslim identity, the more intimate the relationship between madam and maid becomes. Thus, the negotiation of the space and creation of boundaries in their daily lives contributes to the types of relationships between madam and maid.

These types of relationships are identified in chapter seven. In an attempt to define them in terms of the levels of intimacy or distance evident in each, I have broadly classified them into three types. The first relates to the relationships between madam and maid which relies heavily on the formal working relationship. Various factors such as the short length of service and strict responsibilities define this relationship. Conversely, the second focused on those madams and maids who shared an almost familial bond which was characterised by flexible working hours and responsibilities yet longer periods of service. Thirdly and most interestingly, I explore the ambivalent relationship between madams and maids – the relationships that comprised an ambiguous intimate yet distant relationship between madam and maid. Taking the markers of togetherness and distance into consideration, as determining factors of these relationships, my third argument is that even the most intimate of relationships between madam and maid possess elements of distance. This is due to power imbalances within these relationships which as Gaitskell *et al* (1983) aptly theorise is due to the fact that the status of the maid and madam will never be the same.

Despite being referred to as „one of the family,“ I use King’s (2007) concept of „chains of otherness“ to demonstrate the vast differences between madam and maid which set them apart. Through the focus groups, race emerged as a socially constructed difference between madam and maid. Madams, who initially preferred maids to dress Islamically mentioned that they did not like their black domestic workers looking Indian. This was followed by similar ambiguous opinions madams had of their relationships with their maids, with madams explaining that they would feel closer to their maids if they were Muslim. Yet some madams who had a formal working relationship with their maids were not prepared to break down the barriers between them. Uniforms and using separate utensils were physical manifestations of difference, only to be overshadowed by the fact that the ultimate difference despite all

similarity was the power imbalance in the status of „madam“ and „maid.“ While maids were referred to as helpers, mothers, sisters and daughters, the term maid was inescapable. I agree with Ally (2010) who terms this the „one of the family myth,“ arguing that this only serves to exploit the domestic worker as she becomes vulnerable to volunteering to work more due to a sense of family obligation. This does not dismiss the idea that some madams may genuinely feel close to their maids, however my research serves to highlight the intricacies and ambiguities at work within the relationship between madam and maid. Along these lines I chose to view these intricacies in light of the one common factor between madam and maid – their gender. Just as religion and space have proven to be key elements of every day social interactions between madams and maid, I suggest that shared gender is of equal importance.

Some employers did embrace their shared gender as a catalyst for togetherness, especially in households where there were only females and madams and maids were found so show empathy for each other in terms of common problems despite their distant relationships; however hopes for a sisterhood between madams and maids were found to be baseless. While sharing gender did allow common understandings of being mothers and wives, the social status and experiences of madams and maids were undeniably different. Thus, while in their everyday lives, social interactions between madams and maid may be facilitated by shared gender and a sense of intimacy based on this, their life experiences may always facilitate distance between them.

Fourthly, my final argument is discussed in chapter eight. I argue that while relationships between madams and maids may be characterised by intimacy, this intimacy is cultivated over time in order to benefit both the madam and the maid. Rather than a naturally developed relationship between madam and maid, their relationship is constructed on preconceived

perceptions, followed by the reconstruction of their relationship through negotiated space, religion and shared gender. I suggest that the relationships which emerge are characterised by a simultaneous distance between madam and maid, facilitating a rather ambiguous relationship between the two. I have focused on emotional intimacy, where madam and maid may share a close relationship yet this may affect the working contract if the madam is too lenient and is afraid to hurt the domestic worker's feelings if there is a problem. The madam becomes protective of her domestic worker.

Physical displays of intimacy such as hugging and inclusion on Eid day or birthday parties make the domestic worker feel like part of the family, yet she is often the one cleaning up afterwards and in Magona's (1991) terms, displays such as gift giving may serve to salve the conscience of the madam, who tried to mask the inequalities in their relationship with material items. Essentially, I have researched those madams who seem inseparable from their domestic workers, one of whom has been employed for 38 years and others who see their maids for a minimal amount of time, yet even the closest madam and maid are separated by the fact that domestic work is paid employment. In this peculiar arrangement, closeness and distance exist in tandem with each other, resulting in a relationship between madam and maid which can best be described as „distant companionship,“ where the intimacy between them can ultimately be questioned.

My thesis contributes significantly to the literature on domestic work in South Africa. I have shown in chapter two, that while the subject has been interrogated in the context of the pre- and post-apartheid eras, aspects other than race or class need to be considered when analysing relationships between madam and maid. While the groundbreaking work of Preston-Whyte in 1969 was the first to touch on religion as an element of relationships between madams and

maids, and brought to light tension and suspicion between Indian Muslim madams and black Catholic maids, this was not taken further in subsequent research. Cock, writing in 1980 focused rather on racial differences between madam and maid and imbalanced power relationships embedded in this relationship, despite the shared gender between them. Ally(2010) and King (2007) attempt to analyse the relationships between madams and maids, touching on questions of intimacy between the two. My thesis has therefore drawn on the lacunae in the research surrounding domestic work and answers key questions surrounding the underlying elements of the fluid relationships between madam and maid.

It has unearthed the preconceptions Muslim madams in North Beach have of their „ideal“ domestic worker before they enter the recruitment process, as well as elements of their daily lives, which shaped their relationships. Identifying the negotiation of space and the creation of boundaries within the home, the influence of Islam and the sharing of gender between madam and maid, the contribution of this thesis is not only based on its novel madam-focused approach, but in its exploration of the underlying elements and levels of cultivated intimacy between madam and maid, which have largely been overlooked.

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All names have been changed to protect the confidentiality of all participants