

“For better or worse”: Domestic work and outsourced housecleaning services in Stellenbosch

by

David Du Toit

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Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Supervisor: Prof. L.P.T. Heinecken

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Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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David du Toit

ABSTRACT

In the domestic work sector, the employment relationship between employer and domestic worker has undergone various transitions over the years. The first transition saw the transformation of a characteristically abusive master-servant employment relationship into a madam-maid employment relationship. During this transition, domestic servants moved out of masters' houses and opt for live-out and part-time working arrangements. However, this transformation did not improve domestic work much, as the employment relationship was maternalistic in nature. Various authors documented how the personal maternalistic employment was not only emotionally draining to both maid and madam, but also that maids were still prone to exploitation by madams, as domestic work was not regulated by law. This resulted in a second transition, where outsourced housecleaning service companies transformed this personal maternalistic employment relationship into a triangular employment relationship between manager, domestic employee (former domestic servant/maid/domestic worker) and client (former master/madam/employer). The triangular employment relationship creates distance between clients and domestic employees as domestic employees are under the authority and supervision of a third person (the manager/owner of housecleaning service company). In this study, these general trends are analysed with reference to the evolution of domestic work in South Africa. While there have been many studies focusing on domestic work, few studies have documented whether this transition has transformed domestic work 'for better or worse' with reference to the growth in housecleaning service companies in South Africa. This study attempts to fill this void by analysing managers', domestic employees' and clients' perspectives of two housecleaning service companies in the Stellenbosch area. Throughout this study, every transition is discussed in terms of nature of employment, employment relationship, working conditions and benefits for both client and domestic employee. The final chapter tries to answer the question whether housecleaning service companies are 'for better or worse' on both micro and macro level and the need for future research in this field of academic endeavour is spelt out.

OPSOMMING

Die diensverhouding tussen werkgewer en huishulp het verskeie veranderinge oor die jare ondergaan. Die eerste oorgang sien die transformasie van 'n kenmerkende beledigende meester-dienaar in 'n Mevrou-bediende diensverhouding. Gedurende hierdie oorgang, het bediendes uit die huise van die meesters beweeg na 'n leef-uit en deelydse werk reëling. Hierdie transformasie het egter nie huishoudelike werk verbeter nie, omdat die diensverhouding maternalisties in aard is. Verskeie outeurs dokumenteer hoe die persoonlike maternalistiese indiensneming nie slegs emosioneel dreineerend vir beide die Mevrou en bediende is nie, maar ook dat bediendes uitgebuit is deur hul werkgewers, omdat huishoudelike werk nie deur die wet gereguleer is nie. Dit het gelei tot 'n tweede oorgang, waar uitgekonterakteerde huisskoonmaakdienste die persoonlike maternalistiese diensverhouding in 'n driehoekige diensverhouding tussen die bestuurder, werknemer (voormalige dienaar/bediende) en die kliënt (voormalige Meester/Mevrou/werkgewer) verander. Die driehoekige werksverhouding skep afstand tussen kliënte en werknemers, omdat werknemers onder die gesag en toesig van 'n derde persoon (die bestuurder) is. In hierdie studie, word hierdie algemene tendense met betrekking tot die evolusie van betaalde huiswerk in Suid-Afrika geanaliseer. Alhoewel daar 'n aantal hoeveelheid studies oor betaalde huiswerk gedoen is, fokus min studies op hierdie oorgang, huishoudelike werk "vir beter of slegter" verander het in terme van die groei in huisskoonmaakdienste in Suid-Afrika. Hierdie studie poog om hierdie leemte te vul deur die ontleding van bestuurders, huishoudelike werknemers en kliënte se perspektiewe van twee huisskoonmaakdienste in die Stellenbosch-omgewing te analiseer. Deurgaans in hierdie studie, word elke oorgang bespreek in terme van die aard van indiensneming, die diensverhouding, die werksomstandighede en voordele vir beide die kliënt en die werknemer. Die finale hoofstuk probeer die vraag antwoord of huisskoonmaakdienste huishoudelike werk "vir beter of slegter" verander het op beide die mikro en makro-vlak en die noodsaaklikheid vir toekomstige navorsing in hierdie veld van akademiese strewende word uitgespel.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The employment of domestic workers is an integral feature of South African life. It is estimated that between one and one and a half million people are domestic workers in South Africa, and this forms the largest sector of employment of mostly African women (Fish, 2006: 108). Domestic work includes cleaning up the dirt of others, sweeping floors, vacuum cleaning, washing dishes and cupboards and polishing furniture, laundering dirty clothes, preparing meals for employers, caring for the elderly, children and pets of employers (Srinivas, 1995: 271; Anderson, 2000: 15). The occupation itself is commonly seen by society as “inferior, servile, low in status, badly paid [and] it is the weakest and most socially subordinate strata who ends up in this sector: women, immigrants [and] ethnic minorities” (Gaitskell, Kimble, Maconachie & Unterhalter, 1983: 88).

Traditionally, paid domestic work is recognized as part of “the informal” sector and not regarded as an occupation or even formal employment and has been associated with extraordinary servility (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001: x; Meagher, 2002: 53). A characteristic of paid domestic work is that there are no service benefits or chance of promotion and little job security (Romero, 1988: 321). In addition, the domestic sector has typically fallen outside the confines of the labour law, which has made unfair dismissals, the non-regulation of minimum wages, working hours, no benefits and in some cases verbal, sexual and physical abuse a typical feature (Ngidi, 2004: 22; Smith, 1982: 167).

Given these working conditions, the post-Apartheid state implemented regulations to protect domestic workers from exploitation and abuse. The state introduced a national minimum wage, state-legislated annual increases, employment contracts between employee and employer, unemployment insurance benefits (UIF) and enabled workers to belong to trade unions (Ally, 2008: 2). The effect of these regulations on the employment of domestic workers appears unclear as not much has been written on this topic in South Africa. What is evident is that there has been a growth in housecleaning service companies, which may be the result of these new enforced labour regulations.

Housecleaning service companies are provoking a revolution in domestic work, because it changes the market of domestic work to the service sector (Devetter & Rousseau, 2009: 312).

Mendez (1998: 118) calls this the commodification of domestic service, while Ehrenreich (2000: 64) refers to it as “a fully capitalist-style workplace”. Housecleaning service companies are accompanied by qualified and skilled managers, supervisors and employees. For example, in the United States of America, commercial housecleaning service companies and agencies control almost 30 percent of paid domestic service (Ehrenreich, 2000: 64). Similarly, in France, the demand for domestic services has almost doubled from 190 000 in 1990 to 350 000 in 2005, due to the growth of housecleaning service companies and agencies (Devetter & Rousseau, 2009: 298). Actual figures of housecleaning service companies in South Africa could not be found, but housecleaning service companies are visibly a growing trend across the country.

Unique to housecleaning service companies is the transformation of personal employment relationships into formalized service work that occurs between client (former master/madam), domestic employee (former domestic servant/maid) and manager (Mendez, 1998: 114). Housecleaning service companies typically advertise themselves as providing “clients with a standardized and professional cleaning service” (Meagher, 1997: 9). In other words, housecleaning service companies change what society considers as unskilled, low-status work, into skilled and professional service even though in essence, the work stays the same.

In terms of services, service delivery is also speedy and efficient, due to training, specialisation and division of tasks amongst the team of domestic employees (Mendez, 1998: 121; Ehrenreich, 2000: 66). Managers decide on division of tasks amongst teams, by giving one domestic employee the kitchen to clean, while another one cleans the bathrooms and the third one does the ironing. However, they clean up to three houses a day.

Given these professional services, one could argue that domestic employees’ skills are improved by housecleaning service companies due to training and specialization (Edgell, 2006: 62-63). But training and specialization in the domestic sector does not equate domestic workers as being skilled labourers with autonomy. Doing repetitive tasks in three houses a day actually deskills domestic employees and this may result in alienation, burn-out and absenteeism. In addition, an extra burden of housecleaning service companies is supervision, which also relate to alienation.

Thus, an obvious question is whether this new type of employment relationship is preferred by clients and domestic employees, what the driving force behind this shift or transformation is and whether housecleaning service companies have changed domestic work for the better?

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature study commenced with a review of the key sources of how domestic work has changed internationally from a master-servant employment relationship to the formalized triangular employment relationship offered by housecleaning service companies. Some of the most useful sources on the master-servant employment relationship include Rubbo and Taussig (1983); Coser (1973); Srinivas (1995); Hansen (1989) and Gill (1990) who describe the unique nature of the master-servant employment relationship.

Rubbo and Taussig (1983) and Coser (1973) discuss the daily life, working conditions and demanding nature of this highly personal employment relationship, pointing out that many of those working as domestic servants come from lower class backgrounds. In this regard, Srinivas (1995) examines how this results in a unique relationship of distance and difference between masters and servants, which is often steeped in inequalities and hierarchy. Studies by Hansen (1989) and Gill (1990) point out just how these play out in reality with reference to domestic servants in Zambia and Bolivia, which are most useful for comparative studies.

In terms of power relations, domestic work is classified as being highly paternalistic. Studies by Rollins (1985); Cohen (1991); Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001) and Anderson (2000) describe exactly what this entails and were particularly useful in defining the terms of paternalism and maternalism. These studies also describe what this employment relationship entails for madams and maids¹, how it affects the working conditions and what benefits this holds for them.

In this regard, Rollins (1985) coined the term maternalism, which she argues is more relevant in the female orientated nature of domestic work. She argues that similarly to paternalism, where employers treat maids as children, maternalism is a more suitable term to use, because of women's sympathy, kindness, caring natural instinct and gestures of gift-giving. Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001: 11) argues that maternalism is an important mechanism of employer power, because such gestures encourage maids to work harder and longer.

¹ The terms, madam and maid as opposed to master and domestic servant are used under the maternalistic employment relationship, in order to make the transition from master-servant to maternalistic employment relationship clear. Cock (1980) amongst others also refers to madam and maid under the maternalistic employment relationship.

Relating to maternalism, Cohen (1991); Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001) and Anderson (2000) discuss how live-in and live-out domestic work is linked to becoming “one of the family” and how this enhances the exploitation of maids. All three these authors discuss how this benefits madams and maids, which are important to grasp the historic overview of the living arrangements of maid.

As concern arose over the exploitative nature of domestic work, more and more pressure emerged to formalise the employment relationship. One of the core sources on the formalization of domestic work is the special edition of the *ILO* journal on domestic work, titled *Decent work for domestic workers* (2010); and also Meagher (2000) and Vosko (1997). These articles showed how the standard employment relationship, working conditions and benefits for domestic workers and employers² became formalised.

Linked to the formalization of domestic work, is the growth of housecleaning services. Key texts in this regard include Mendez (1998); Ehrenreich (2000); Romero (1988); Meagher (1997); Salzinger (1991); Glenn (1992) and Devetter and Rousseau (2009). These articles provide an important background on the changing nature of the employment relationship between domestic employees (former maids/ domestic workers), clients (former madams/ employers) and managers (now employers)³.

Reflecting on this from an international perspective, Devetter and Rousseau (2009) show how housecleaning service companies in France have changed into an impersonal employment relationship between clients and domestic employees. However, numerous other scholars including Mendez (1998) and Ehrenreich (2000) indicate that this employment relationship remains maternalistic even though formalized and professionalized.

Domestic work in South Africa, similar to that observed internationally, is going through a period of transition. In this regard, the work of Ally (2010); Gaitskell *et al.*, (1983); Cock (1980); Cole (1992) and Grant (1997) have been particularly insightful for this study.

2 The formalization of domestic work saw the change of the terms, maids and madams into domestic workers and employers. However, although legally formalized, the employment relationship stayed maternalistic in nature.

3 The shift to a triangular employment relationship offered by housecleaning service companies saw the change from domestic worker into domestic employee, employer into client and manager, who now takes on the role of the employer. These changes with regards to the terms are necessary to make a clear distinction between the different transitions.

Ally (2010) and Cock (1980), for example, discuss the exploitation of domestic workers under the master-servant employment relationship during the Apartheid years. In addition, various other authors showed how the master-servant employment relationship of domestic work caused generations of underclass citizens (Grant, 1997: 61), psychological exploitation (Cock, 1980: 99); feelings of imprisonment and institutionalisation (Woolman & Bishop, 2007: 601); and abuse, violence, denial of freedom, and exploitative working conditions (Strobl, 2009: 166).

A feature of domestic work includes living-in and part-time servants. This was a general pattern in domestic employment relations during the Apartheid years. Many domestic servants lived at the houses of their employers.

King (2007); Makosana (1989); Preston-Whyte (1976); Ally (2010) and Cock (1980) outline the history of the employment and living conditions of domestic workers in South Africa and the racial nature of this employment.

Since the early 1990s, South Africa has seen an increase in housecleaning service companies. Core readings for this section include Ally (2010); Fish (2006); and the Sectoral Determination Seven: Domestic Workers Sector (2011)⁴.

Given that no secondary data could be found on housecleaning service companies in South Africa, primary data was used. Advertisements of housecleaning service companies were searched on *Google* and other online databases. These advertisements were used to shape the last section of this chapter in terms of working conditions, employment relationships and benefits for employers and domestic workers.

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES

The key research question is: “Has the transition of domestic work from a master-servant and maternalistic employment relationship to a more formalized triangular employment relationship affected employment relations in the domestic service sector for better or worse”?

⁴ Complete copy of Sectoral Determination Seven: Domestic Worker Sector. 2011. [Online] Available:<http://www.labourguide.co.za/conditions-of-employment/sectoral-determination-seven-domestic-worker-sector-546>.

The research objectives are as follow:

1. To assess what domestic work entails and what are the unique characteristics of this sector of employment.
2. To establish how the employment relationship of domestic service has changed over time in general terms.
3. To determine how this has changed in South Africa over time and what factors are driving this.
4. To establish whether domestic workers prefer working for housecleaning service companies and
5. To determine why clients (formerly employers) have begun to choose housecleaning service companies above private domestic employment relationships.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

This study made use of a case study design. This method allows the researcher to combine quantitative and qualitative techniques to conduct an in-depth investigation into single social cases (Orum, Feagin & Sjoberg, 1991: 2). For these reasons, a case study design seems the most appropriate research design to use in terms of the aims and objectives of this study. Two case studies were selected for this study to determine why housecleaning service companies are preferred by some clients (former employers) and how employees (former domestic servants) are experiencing this employment relationship. The profile of the two case studies selected for this study is as follows:

The cases selected for this study are two distinct housecleaning service companies in Stellenbosch area, which are typical of other housecleaning service companies found in South Africa in terms of their employment relationship between managers, clients and domestic workers. The first selected housecleaning service company operates in Stellenbosch, employs eighteen Black female employees and has a predominately White middle-class clientele of 475 a month. The other one operates in Somerset West, employs thirty-nine employees, which consist of both Black and Coloured women and one Coloured man and has a predominately White middle-class clientele of 195. The two companies, work in the predominately White, middle-class neighbourhoods of Stellenbosch and Somerset West.

These two cases were selected on the following criteria: The racial profile of these two cases is different. The one housecleaning service company employs only African Xhosa-speaking women, while the other one employs only Afrikaans-speaking Coloured women. Both these two cleaning companies have a predominately white middle class clientele. The reason why housecleaning service companies and not char services⁵ were chosen is because in the former, domestic workers work in teams.

In terms of similarity, both housecleaning service companies offer services in Stellenbosch in similar neighbourhoods. Therefore, the class, race and status of clients of both housecleaning service companies are similar. Travelling with managers and employees in their vehicles to different clients was an opportunity for informal observation and discussion to determine who their clients were and where they lived. Both housecleaning service companies also deliver similar services. Other housecleaning service companies in Stellenbosch were not selected because they specialize in different services such as care work or cleaning of construction sites.

In order to respond to the research question that deals with the transition of domestic work from a master-servant to a more formalised bureaucratic employment relationship, it was necessary to interview three groups of respondents, namely managers, clients and domestic workers.

1.5 INTERVIEWS

Interviews were conducted with three groups of respondents: managers of housecleaning service companies and the clients and domestic workers of these housecleaning service companies.

1.5.1 Interviews with Managers

Formal face-to-face interviews were conducted with two managers of housecleaning service company A and B. Interviews were scheduled for a specific day and time in March 2011. The manager of housecleaning service company A was interviewed in her office at her house in

⁵ Char services is when only one domestic worker is provided to clients. Housecleaning service companies typically provide teams of workers to clients. For complete definition, please refer to *Marvellous Maids*. [Online], Available: <http://www.marvellousmaids.co.za>

Somerset West. The interview with the manager of housecleaning service company B was held in a coffee shop in Stellenbosch.

The interviews were semi-structured and focused on four broad themes: Firstly, the nature of the housecleaning service company in terms of specialization of services, size, age and race of workers, price, clientele, teamwork and workload. Secondly, the interview focused on the employment relationship between the managers and domestic workers. A discussion on the formalization aspect of housecleaning service companies followed in order to determine exactly how they operate within a legal framework. Thirdly, questions were asked regarding the working conditions of domestic workers. The aim was to establish how housecleaning service companies change the working conditions of domestic work in terms of wages, working hours, sick leave, maternity leave, skills development, division of labour, and how conflict is resolved within the company. The last section of the interview focused on the benefits of being a manager of a housecleaning service company.

The interview with the manager of housecleaning service company A took two and a half hours and for the manager of housecleaning service company B, two hours to complete. These two interviews were tape recorded which made it possible to transcribe detailed responses of respondents. The interview provided the researcher with detailed information on the daily activities and dynamics of both housecleaning service company A and B. It also shaped the interview schedule intended for both domestic workers and clients.

After the data were transcribed, it was necessary to interview managers again in order to clarify certain aspects. For example, the manager of housecleaning service company A did not give clear answers in terms of the demographics of her workers and number of clientele. Gaps surrounding conflict resolution within the housecleaning service company also needed to be filled in order to have a clearer understanding of the employment relationship between managers and domestic workers.

1.5.2 Interviews with Domestic Employees

Prior to the face-to-face interviews with domestic employees, I had the opportunity to drive several days with managers of housecleaning service company A and B to meet all the employees and some of the clients. This gave me the opportunity to see how tasks were divided amongst them by their manager.

Thirty nine domestic employees and eighteen domestic employees are employed by housecleaning service company A and B respectively. Since the size of the workforce of the two housecleaning service companies differs, systematic sampling appeared to be the best option to select domestic employees. In order to obtain a representative sample, a third of the domestic employees from each housecleaning service company were chosen. A list of all the names of domestic employees employed by housecleaning service company A were ordered according to team numbers, while the list of housecleaning service company B were ordered randomly. Semi-structured interviews with thirteen domestic employees from housecleaning service company A and six domestic from housecleaning service company B were conducted. All chosen domestic employees agreed to be interviewed.

The reason why systematic sampling as opposed to simple random sampling was used, was to be more accurate. If simple random sampling was used, then it could have meant that no team leaders were chosen from housecleaning service company A. Systematic sampling of domestic employees was assumed to be the best possible sampling method for this population, as it guaranteed different respondents.

Formal face-to-face interviews with the selected domestic employees of housecleaning service company A were held at the end of May 2011. Interviews took place between 06:45 and 07:30 at the manager's house in Somerset West. It was decided that this would be the best possible time to interview them, as all employees have to be at the manager's house at 06:45, before leaving at 07:30 to go to clients' houses. Domestic employees were interviewed in the office of the manager, without the presence of other people. It took approximately twenty minutes per interview and was tape recorded. Thus, numerous visits to the manager's house at 06:45 had to be made in order to interview the selected sample.

The manager and of housecleaning service company B gave permission to interview domestic employees at clients' houses, at the beginning of June 2011. Clients gave permission for domestic employees to be interviewed during cleaning time. Interviews took place either in their homes or in the Combi and were done in private. This secured that all respondents were comfortable reflecting on their employment relationship with the manager, without feeling intimidated or ashamed by responses. All interviews with domestic employees were tape recorded and varied between fifteen to twenty minutes.

Interviews with domestic employees focused on four broad themes: Firstly, reasons for working for housecleaning service companies as opposed to private arrangements. Secondly,

the interview focused on the employment relationship between domestic employees and managers and between domestic employees and clients. The aim of this section of the interview was to establish whether domestic employees find the triangular aspect of housecleaning service companies beneficial or not. Thirdly, working conditions offered by housecleaning service companies were covered in the next section of the interview. Here, domestic employees' views on remunerations, working hours and other aspects such as UIF, sick leave, maternity payments and conflict resolution were gathered. Lastly, domestic employees were interviewed in terms of benefits offered by housecleaning service companies and whether they will work under private arrangements again. Data obtained during these interviews were vital to understand whether they feel housecleaning service companies are 'for better or worse'.

1.5.3 Interviews with Clients

Clients were chosen at random with the help of managers. Since the managers know the clients, they provide a list of possible clients to be interviewed. The requirement was that the clients should be as diverse as possible from students to pensioners. From this list, ten clients⁶ from each housecleaning service company were chosen at random. Clients were called or emailed to inform them of the research and asked whether they would be willing to participate in the study. All the chosen clients, without exception agreed to be interviewed.

Face-to-face interviews with clients took place in mid June 2011. Most of these interviews took place in the houses of clients. Each interview took between thirty and forty minutes per client.

The semi-structured interviews with clients focused on four broad themes: Firstly, why they make use of housecleaning service companies. This gave the researcher useful insight as various different themes appeared. Secondly, the interview focused specifically on the employment relationship between clients and domestic employees. Thirdly, working conditions were discussed such as specialization of services, standard of cleaning, time management and bonuses for domestic employees. This highlighted the transformation of domestic work from employing one permanent domestic work, to having teams of domestic

⁶ All clients interviewed were White women, with the exception of one White man. Clients' aged varied from early twenties to late eighties.

employees delivering a service. Lastly, the main benefits of housecleaning service companies from a client's point of view were discussed.

1.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1.6.1 Confidentiality and Anonymity

To insure confidentiality and anonymity, respondents were informed that no names, addresses or any other recognisable personal characteristics would be taken during interviews and that all responses were strictly confidential. Respondents were ensured that electronic transcriptions of interviews were only to ensure accuracy of interviews and would not be distributed to anyone else. Respondents also had the right to withdraw at any time during the interview or to refuse to answer specific questions.

1.6.2 Access

Approaching the different respondents - that is managers, clients and domestic employees - may had an effect on the power relations between the researcher and respondents and this needs to be accounted for. The manager of housecleaning service company A was interviewed in her office at her home, while the manager of housecleaning service company B was interviewed in a local coffee shop in Stellenbosch. Approaching the managers was relatively easy and interviews were conducted without much difficulty.

Access to clients posed some problems. Interviews took place in their homes and as a researcher two problems arose. First, the idea of being a stranger in someone's home caused both researcher and respondent to be somewhat nervous and this may have had an effect on the interviews as some clients were reluctant to openly express themselves. Second, some interviews took place while domestic employees from the company cleaned client's homes. It is difficult to determine whether this had any effect on responses.

Approaching domestic employees posed several difficulties. Firstly, the identity of the researcher, being a white male, could have a profound impact on domestic employees' perception of the type of questions asked and the aim of the study. Secondly, the language barrier also had implications on how well domestic employees understood questions.

Specifically, some domestic employees of housecleaning service company B had difficulty in understanding English or Afrikaans, as their first language is Xhosa. This may have impacted on richness of the data.

1.7 CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

In the one housecleaning service company, the main challenge was language as many domestic employees first language is Xhosa and they sometimes found it difficult to understand English. Many questions had to be rephrased, but this did not appear to be a major problem except perhaps that domestic employees were not able to effectively express themselves as well as they could have during interviews.

Another challenge was the time when interviews with domestic employees were scheduled. Most interviews took place between 06:45 and 07:30, when domestic employees were preparing for their daily tasks. As a result, some of the interviews were rushed and this allowed little time for more in-depth probing.

The next challenge involved interviewing clients, especially older clients who spent lengthy periods discussing personal details about their families. This meant that some interviews had to be cut short and not all aspects could be discussed in detail.

Lastly, the nature of this sector makes it difficult to draw a representative sample, as the population of the clients is not homogenous. There are too many factors such as level of income, occupation, age, race and gender that are involved in identifying, for example, the clients who have shifted from employing full-time domestic workers to utilising housecleaning service companies. Thus, it was decided with the help of managers to use purposive sampling to ensure a spread of age and other profiles such as family size, level of income and years of employing housecleaning service companies to name a few. These varieties are essential to understand whether selected clients and domestic employees make use of and work for housecleaning service companies. Since only twenty clients were interviewed, the results cannot be generalized. Although this is a limitation, the aim of this study was not to generalize results, but to understand why clients and domestic employees make use of and work for housecleaning service companies. These findings could be useful for the purposes of comparative studies in this field.

1.8 VALUE OF STUDY

A literature review on this subject indicates that this is a relatively under-researched area. Most studies focus on the exploitation of domestic employees in housecleaning service companies and not on reasons why domestic employees and/or clients prefer housecleaning service companies as opposed to the traditional personalistic employment relations. Previous research on this specific issue could not be found in the literature and therefore, this study hopes to fill this gap in a small way.

1.9 POSSIBLE SOURCES AND CONTROLLING OF ERROR AND LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

One of the main problems associated with case studies, is the ability to generalize. When a case study is studied, it is usually difficult to distinguish between what is considered as unique to the study, and what is considered as general (Adler & Clark, 1999: 167). This study only focuses on two pre-selected housecleaning service companies in the Stellenbosch area. When a case study is undertaken, results cannot be generalized to the population, because the sample size is too small.

When the researcher only uses one method such as semi-structured interviews to collect data, it may become problematic, because every method has its own weaknesses and limitations. There are many variables that are to be studied within a case study, so it is recommended to use more than one method to collect data (Amaratunga & Baldry, 2001: 99). Although semi-structured, as well as probed interviews were mainly used in this study, the researcher also did some unobtrusive observation by listening to managers speaking to domestic employees. Interestingly, the way in which managers spoke to domestic employees emphasized distance and authority and this also came out in the interviews.

Some of the limitations of this study include the focus of the sample. The sample only included domestic employees who work for these two selected housecleaning service companies and not private domestic employees. Thus, to understand why domestic employees prefer working privately as opposed to working for housecleaning service companies is beyond the scope of this study and is a clear limitation. This study also did not take age or years worked by the domestic employee into consideration, which may have been a factor influencing why domestic employees work for housecleaning service companies.

Another limitation may be the sample size. Only nineteen domestic employees, two managers and twenty clients of housecleaning service company A and B were interviewed. It is necessary to have a bigger sample to obtain more conclusive results.

1.10 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Since the sample only included housecleaning service companies that offer services in terms of teams and not char services, it can be useful to ask why domestic employees work as chars and why clients employ char services as opposed to private servants and teams. Future research may also be needed to determine what effect housecleaning service companies are having on employment and unemployment rates of domestic employees, since housecleaning service companies take up a lot of potential clients of private domestic workers.

1.11 CHAPTER PROFILE

Chapter two discusses the transformation from the master-servant employment relationship into a formalized triangular employment relationship offered by housecleaning service companies. The aim of this chapter is to conceptualize key changes that occurred in domestic work. The nature of domestic work and reason for employing domestic workers are discussed, the master-servant employment relationship, paternalism, maternalism and the formalization of domestic work.

The third chapter focuses on the transformation of domestic work in South Africa. Similar to chapter two, the key changes are discussed but with reference to domestic work in South African.

Chapter four outlines the findings of two selected housecleaning service companies in the Stellenbosch area. These findings are presented from three perspectives, namely those of the managers, clients and domestic employees making use of and working for housecleaning service companies in the Stellenbosch area. These responses are divided into three broad themes namely nature of employment, employment relationship and contracts, working conditions and benefits.

Chapter five presents an analysis of the findings in chapter four. Specific references to the unitary perspectives, Foucault's "Discipline and Punish" (1975), and the theory on master-

servant, maternalistic and triangular employment relationships are made. The focus of this chapter is to discuss whether housecleaning service companies have changed domestic work “for better or worse”.

Chapter six concludes the main trends in the transition of domestic work from a master-servant and maternalistic into a triangular employment relationship offered by housecleaning service companies. Whether housecleaning service companies have changed domestic work on the micro and macro-level “for better or worse” is also concluded in this chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: DOMESTIC WORK IN HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL CONTEXT

2.1 BACKGROUND OF CHAPTER

Just like employment in other sectors, domestic work has changed fundamentally over time. Where once employment was fulltime, over time, it has become more part-time and externalised or outsourced. Many factors have driven these trends such as costs, clients' needs and legislations. In this chapter a brief background as to the nature of domestic work and the historic gender, class and racial construction of domestic work is discussed. The aim of this chapter is to outline the historical and theoretical transitions of domestic work internationally. This chapter begins by describing the transitions from a master-servant employment relationship to a maternalistic employment relationship, to the formalization of domestic work, and lastly to housecleaning service companies.

2.2 What is Traditional Paid Domestic Work?

Traditionally, paid domestic work is recognized as part of “the informal shadow or under the table economy” because it typically lacks regulation (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001: x). This occupation is further regarded by many as “the worst job of all and something other than employment”, as it takes place in the private space of peoples' homes (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001: 9).

In addition, domestic workers are considered as the “doers of dirty work” as the primary job is cleaning the dirt or mess created by others (Anderson, 2001: 28). This entails, among others, tidying up houses, sweeping floors, vacuum cleaning, washing dishes and cupboards and polishing furniture, laundering dirty clothes of other people, preparing meals for employers, caring for the elderly, children and pets of employers (Srinivas, 1995: 271; Anderson, 2000: 15).

Traditionally, those employed in this sector received no formal service benefits such as pensions, bonuses or annual increases in salaries. There was also no chance of promotion and job security was minimal (Romero, 1988: 321). Another feature of this work is the class, racial and gender constructions. Most employed in this sector are women who come from underprivileged or marginalised groups within society. They are considered inferior and

suiting to this type of work, which explains why asymmetrical employment relations between employers and domestic workers occur.

2.2.1 Class, Racial and Gender Construction of Domestic Service

Historically, paid domestic work was not restricted to women of colour or from lower social statuses. In Canada, for example, from the early 1900s to the 1960's, white European women, usually from the United Kingdom were favoured as domestic workers, many of whom strived to become the wives and mothers of white Canadian men and children. However, as other employment options opened up with the growth of industrialization, the number of white European women as domestic workers for Canadian households gradually declined. This trend was also found in many other countries (Bakan & Stasiulis, 1995: 318-319).

In terms of the racial construction, paid domestic work is often performed by migrants from developing countries, who are overwhelmingly Black, Mexican or Aboriginal (Goncalves, 2010: 64; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001: 16-17; Meagher, 1997: 5). Poor social backgrounds and lack of education contribute to these trends (Goncalves, 2010: 62). In general, these people are also prepared to work for much lower wages than the residents of host countries and their dependency on the work increases their vulnerability to exploitation.

In terms of the gender construction, domestic service was not exclusively for women only. In Zambia, for example, domestic service was predominantly performed by African men. Hansen (1989: 52) reports how the growth of the mining industry where many whites were employed influenced the employment of male African domestic servants. White employers preferred male servants to female servants, because the former were perceived as working harder than women (Hansen, 1989: 54).

By employing domestic workers from different ethnic, religious, racial and social backgrounds, the idea that certain races or class-groups are responsible for cleaning houses of higher-status people is reinforced (Anderson, 2001: 26). This also creates an idea that some people or groups in society are more suitable for certain jobs than others (Anderson, 2000: 2).

2.2.2 Reasons for Employing Domestic Workers

There are several reasons why people employ paid domestic workers. Paid domestic workers relieve domestic chores and child care from employers, enabling them having more leisure time (George, 2008: 1234; Moras, 2009: 379; Glenn, 1992: 7). The rising standards of

cleanliness, larger homes and the physical drudgery of household work also create a demand for paid domestic workers (Glenn, 1992: 7). As more women have entered the labour market and pursue well-paid careers, it has become difficult to balance domestic responsibilities and careers, necessitating the employment of domestic help (Cox & Watt, 2002: 41; Moras, 2009: 379). Apart from cleaning, many domestic servants serve as carers such as for children and the elderly (Baxter, Hewitt & Western, 2009: 5). Lastly, many employers prefer having domestic workers care for their children in their homes as opposed to the cold, institutional-like child care centres (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001: 4-5).

Thus, domestic work is in demand for various reasons and continues to be in demand as more women have careers outside the home. It is also clear that domestic work is not only physical in nature, but often involves caring for others, which also involves the use of emotional labour⁷.

2.2.3 Domestic Work, Care Work and Emotional Labour

Traditionally, women are responsible for taking care of their own children and elderly. These responsibilities are often given to domestic workers, because the state provides minimal or no services for childcare to parents and childcare centres and old age homes are expensive (King, 2007: 48; Anderson, 2000: 16). Frequently, migrant domestic workers are employed to care for children or elderly relatives (King, 2007: 48; Colombo, 2007: 227), because they are perceived as being cheap, providing flexible labour and are “a suitable strategy for families in need of full-time carers” (Anderson, 2000: 16).

Frequently, taking care of children and the elderly is often done in conjunction with other tasks such as preparing the right food, giving children nutritious snacks and teaching children table manners (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001: 153). In Hondagneu-Sotelo’s (2001) study on Latina housekeepers in the United States of America, for example, domestic servants often complained that they are solely responsible for these tasks and find it very difficult to fit in the housecleaning tasks and childcare simultaneously, which leads to high levels of stress, frustration and physical exhaustion (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001: 38-39; Parrenas, 2001: 184).

⁷ Generally, emotional labour refers to the “the modification of emotional expression which may involve faking and suppressing” (Grandey, 2000: 95) in order to express “organizationally desired emotion during interpersonal transactions” (Morris and Feldman, 1996: 987).

Besides this, employers also expect emotional engagement from domestic workers, especially when they take care of their children or elderly relatives. King (2007: 38) states that employers value emotional characteristics such as nurturing and motherliness in their domestic workers. Thus, domestic workers who care for children and the elderly engage not only in physical labour, but also emotional labour. In this regard, Parrenas (2001: 183) found that many domestic workers perceive the act of “pouring love” as essential in care work, but find this exhausting (Parrenas, 2001: 183).

2.6 TRANSITIONS

2.6.1 Master-Servant Relationship

2.6.1.1 Nature of Employment

Since the 14th century, the master-servant employment relationship, with its origins in slavery and servanthood was characterized by subordination (Srinivas, 1995: 269; Sansbury, 2004: 36). Servants were required to be faithful and show absolute devotion to the personal interests of the individual master as their livelihoods depended entirely on it (Srinivas, 1995: 269; Sansbury, 2004: 36). During this period, domestic servants lived in their masters’ houses and served as cooks, cleaners, childminders, wet nurses, security guards, secretaries, laundresses and dog walkers to name but a few (Rubbo & Taussig, 1983: 15, 18; Gill, 1990: 122; Barnes, 1993: 28). Under the master-servant employment relationship domestic servants were multi-tasked workers and required to devote all their time and energy to serve their masters.

Typically, their daily lives required them to get up at five in the morning to squeeze orange juice for the master, then prepare and serve breakfast, wash the dishes afterwards, make the beds, arrange furniture, wash floors, prepare lunch, do the laundry, cook dinner, wash the dishes afterwards and then iron clothes until 22:30 for six or seven days a week. They were often judged and even punished if coffee was served slightly cold or eggs were boiled too hard (Rubbo and Taussig, 1983: 11, 18).

Often their working conditions were as harsh as their living conditions. Barnes (1993: 28) reports how domestic servants in Virginia slept on bare floors near mistresses to serve them during the night if necessary. Similarly, Coser (1973: 34) shows how masters would demand that domestic servants serve them a glass of water if they woke up during the night. This

emphasizes the complete subservience and control masters and mistresses had over the activities of their domestic servants.

Furthermore, not only were domestic servants expected to be loyal and humble towards masters, and serve them for as many years as possible (Gill, 1990: 122), but they were also expected to give up their personal lives, be unmarried and even asexual (Coser, 1973: 35). Masters even restricted house servants' contact with the outside world and bound them to the household in a totalistic manner (Coser, 1973: 31). It can therefore be argued that for domestic servants, the house of masters became like a "total institution", where every movement of their body became the object of control by masters.

In *Asylums*, Erving Goffman (1961: 6) gives several characteristics of total institutions, which becomes a metaphor for the masters' household. In a total institution, every part of the inmates' life is performed in the same place and under the authority of a particular person or others. Activities are tightly scheduled to prearranged times controlled by someone in power and are carried out for the sake of the institution. Similarly, domestic servants became like inmates as they were under the authority of a single family, where all activities were repetitively undertaken under tight schedules in order to serve the needs of masters and their families.

2.6.1.2 Employment Relationship and Contracts

The nature of the master-servant employment relationship is one of servitude, which increases the subordinated social status of domestic servants (Sansbury, 2004: 36). Superiority and inferiority are the basis of the master-servant employment relationship, where control and coercion are exercised by masters. For example, the total personality of servants is selfishly absorbed by masters' families in order to enhance the subordinate position of servants, which is expressed in terms of hierarchy, distance and difference (Coser, 1973: 32; Srinivas, 1995: 275).

In terms of hierarchy, domestic servants are inferior by virtue of their unfree status, their lower class backgrounds, race or debt bondage (Srinivas, 1995: 271). This reinforces the superior status of masters who have the authority to control servants. Hansen (1989: 50), for example, reports how masters in Zambia used harsh discipline such as whipping in order to improve efficiency and obedience. Spatial hierarchy is enhanced by the lack of private space, where domestic servants often slept under tables in kitchens. When they had living quarters,

it was often under stairs, similar to dog kennels or in cramped confines (Srinivas, 1995: 276; Rubbo & Taussig, 1983: 15). Living inside masters' houses, added to the personalized nature of this occupation.

The personal nature of the master-servant employment relationship also caused ambiguities and contradictions. Domestic servants were neither part of the masters' families, nor complete outsiders. On the one hand, they had to be considerate to the changing moods of masters and serve them unconditionally, on the other, their presence was frequently unnoticed and ignored (Gill, 1990: 128). This distance and difference were enhanced by the obligation of domestic servants to wear uniforms and to use different cutlery and crockery. Hansen (1989: 67) reports how male domestic servants in Zambia were not permitted to wear shoes while working in the houses of masters, to sit on sofas, to listen to the radio, to read newspapers, or to use toilets of masters. Difference and distance are also enhanced by the use of language to evoke inferiority and subordination. For example, Gill (1989: 129) reports how masters in Bolivia required domestic servants to call them "senora", while domestic servants are addressed by their first names. Similarly, in Zambia, domestic servants were called "Kitchen Kaffirs", while domestic servants had to address their masters as "missus", "madam" or "Bwnana" (Hansen, 1989: 67).

In terms of the employment relationship, master-servant contracts were informal, verbal agreements. Implied in these agreements were that servants should be obedient to and avoid damage of masters' interests during service (Pilarczyk, 2001: 500-501). Few written contracts existed between masters and domestic servants and they were seldom registered at official authorities. Verbal agreements were usually confirmed by certain ceremonies such as a handshake (Lundh, 2004: 82). Breaching of contracts were serious, and masters had the legal right to punish domestic servants by taking away wages or through physical abuse (Coser, 1973: 32; Lundh, 2004: 83; Anderson, 2000: 462). They could even face imprisonment if they breached contractual obligations (Strobl, 2009: 166).

Characteristics of the master-servant employment relationship are the degree of commitment, compliance and co-operation required of servants (Sansbury, 2004: 57). The master-servant relationship therefore requires domestic servants to be altruistic in the furtherance of the master's interests and needs. For example, Coser (1973: 32) states that when servants enter into an agreement with masters, they do not only agree upon work load, but also submit themselves to the will of the master.

After years of total subordination, unfair dismissals and abuse an adjustment to the *Master-Servant Ordinance* in 1910 was implemented to protect servants by setting down basic requirements for employers in terms of servants' welfare. However, this gave employers more power as punishments against servants increased and fines against employers who withheld wages, decreased (Anderson, 2000: 462-463). Although domestic servants were protected in terms of unfair dismissals, those who left employment without being formally signed off, were fined and could face imprisonment (Pilarczyk, 2001: 521; Anderson, 2000: 462).

In addition, with reference to Anderson's (2000) study in the United States of America, the *Registration of Domestic Servants Ordinance* of 1926, regulated the movement of domestic servants between employers. This Act was catastrophic for domestic servants as it ensured that domestic servants who lacked employment satisfaction, be denied labour permits and were forced to return to their home areas (Anderson, 2000: 466). In Nairobi, for example, it was estimated that for every job offered, six domestic servants were available. Employers kept wages below the minimum wage and had little pressure to improve working conditions (Anderson, 2000: 466).

2.6.1.3 Working Conditions

Not only were tasks performed by domestic servants perceived as being tedious and below the dignity of masters and their families, but the working conditions were highly oppressive (Coser, 1973: 32). Most domestic servants lived in the houses of masters, which made observation and intensive control possible. Domestic servants had little privacy and working hours were never formally regulated (Hansen, 1989: 69; Coser, 1973: 32-33). There was no such thing as an eight hour workday, minimum wage, or even union rights (Gill, 1990: 124). Domestic servants were also often denied the rights to belong to trade unions. For example, in Germany up until 1918, domestic servants were subjected to a special law, namely "Gesindeordnung", which prevented domestic servants from belonging to trade unions. Without legal protection from the state and trade unions, domestic servants were powerless and vulnerable to extreme exploitation (Wierling, 1982: 48). Domestic servants commonly complained that masters did not pay them any wages, punished them by withholding wages or got rid of them by accusing them of theft or laziness (Gill, 1990: 123, 130; Strobl, 2009: 174).

Even though domestic servants became legally protected in terms of contracts in the nineteenth century in Europe, asymmetric employment relations continued to exist in favour of masters here and elsewhere (Coser, 1973: 32). In Bahrain, for example, Strobl (2009: 174) reports how judges and the police did not follow up non-payments of domestic servants. Masters also had the legal right to withhold wages if domestic servants were dismissed prematurely, were lazy or careless (Pilarczyk, 2001: 502). Clearly, masters enjoyed several benefits under the traditional master-servant employment relationship, but various authors argued that domestic servants also benefited from this employment relationship.

2.6.1.4 Benefits of Master-Servant Employment Relationship

For masters, the master-servant employment relationship was beneficial for several reasons. Not only were domestic servants perceived as being “status-givers”, by reinforcing the superior status of masters, but masters also created their identity in opposition to domestic servants’ identity, which reproduced social hierarchy (Srinivas, 1995: 274). For example, Gill (1990: 129) reports how masters in Bolivia perceived their domestic servants as “physically misshapen and the antithesis of feminine beauty and grace of the dominant society”. Language was also used to provide superior status to masters. This reinforces the superior status of masters by assuring them that there is always another person who is more vulnerable and powerless than themselves (Gill, 1990: 130).

Masters commonly prohibited domestic servants from marriage, which relieved masters from the burden of caring for domestic servants’ families (Pilarczyk, 2001: 502). In a highly patriarchal society, white women in particular benefitted from this employment relationship. White women could employ and dismiss domestic servants as they pleased, which gave them a profound sense of power (Hansen, 1989: 70). As domestic servants did all the domestic chores, it enabled mistresses to spend more free time to engage in prestigious activities such as administrating the home or gossiping with friends (Gill, 1990: 131). Masters are in a powerful position to observe and control every part of domestic servants’ lives, as they lived in masters’ households (Coser, 1973: 35).

Although it seems empirically dubious to say that domestic servants could also benefit from the master-servant employment relationship, various authors claimed that they did. Coser (1973: 35) argues that domestic servants observed the behaviours of their masters, gained intimate knowledge of them and their secrets. Domestic servants thus had the power to betray masters by revealing secrets to interested outsiders. In relation to this argument, Gill (1990:

133) argues that domestic servants retain self-respect by learning about masters' household problems, weaknesses and shortcomings. Petty theft and deliberate negligence is another way in which domestic servants dealt with injustices of masters such as withholding payments. Limited contracts enabled domestic servants to disappear after masters paid them, which often irritated and overwhelmed masters who had become depended on them (Gill, 1990: 133).

Clearly, intimacy and dependence are important factors in the master-servant employment relationship, which is evidently beneficial for both masters and domestic servants. Tellis-Nayak (1983: 69) argues that the asymmetrical mistress-servant employment relationship was rendered more benevolent and given strength and legitimacy by a familial relationship between mistress and domestic servant. In order to maintain this benevolent employment relationship based on trust and dependence, domestic servants were treated in a paternalistic manner by employers.

2.6.2 Paternalism, Maternalism and Living Arrangements

Although the master-servant employment relationship never formally ended, domestic work underwent a major transition. Domestic servants started to move out of masters houses, but still lived on their premises. This changed servants into maids, and masters, into madams, which emphasizes "a measure of oppression of women by women" (Cock, 1980: 1) However, the work stayed in essence the same and maids were still exploited as the employment relationship was still remained on a personal level.

2.6.2.1 *Nature of Employment*

Paternalism is often used by employers in highly personalized employment relations in order to remain in control of workers. Paternalism broadly refers to when "white [madams/employers] see themselves in a parental role in their relationship to black [maids/workers], because the 'child' is incapable of making independent choices" (King, 2007: 12). Through means of paternalism, madams often care for, reward and discipline their employees, just as parents would do with their children (Wray, 1996: 702). Paternalism is used by madams as a mode of power, which situates them in a superior position to their inferior maid (Ally, 2010: 14).

However, Rollins (1985: 179) argues that the most suitable term for this unequal personal relationship between madams and maids is not paternalism, but maternalism. The author (1985: 179) argues that in particularly Western countries, women have made out the majority of employers of maids and this makes the employment relationship more feminine. Maternalism is similar to paternalism, but not identical (Rollins, 1985: 179). Rollins (1985: 179) argues that paternalism is part of the patriarchal authority, which extended from the head of the household to leaders of the church. Paternalism is one aspect of a “political-economic-ideological power base” (Rollins, 1985: 179), which proposes patriarchal protection in exchange for work, respect and reliability from workers (Anderson, 2000: 145). However, women’s sympathetic, interfamilial role of encouragement, kindness, caring and emotional involvements with maids refer to maternalism and it remains the central characteristic in the unequal employment relationship between madams and maids (Rollins, 1985: 179,187; King, 2007: 12). For these reasons, the term maternalism, rather than paternalism is used to describe the intimate, but unequal employment relationship between madams and maids.

What makes domestic work one of the most exploitative occupations is the highly personal and intimate relationship between maid and madam (Cock, 1980: 31). This personal relationship is not only limited to physical exposure to the madam’s “stained underwear”, but also emotional exposures such as “family quarrels” (Cock, 1980: 88) and child care (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001: 195).

2.6.2.2 Employment Relationship

In maternalistic employment relations, the madam becomes the mother-figure who guides, disciplines, protects, cares and supports her servants in a similar way as her children (Foster, 2007: 305). Many maids recognize their madams as being “just like their mothers” (King, 2007: 12). This strongly supports the maternalistic nature of the madam-maid relationship, which is based on a “super-ordinate-subordinate” relationship (Anderson, 2000: 144). Similarly, Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001: 207) argues that maternalism is a one-way relationship where the madams’ gestures of gift-giving, care, financial and emotional support obliges maids to react with loyalty. The exchange of goods and services is highly asymmetrical as one party gains significantly at the expense of the other (Abercrombie & Hill, 1976: 415).

Thus, similar to paternalism, the key element of maternalistic employment relationships is the perception and treatment of maids as being perpetual children, which again reinforces the

inferiority of maids (Rollins, 1985: 198; Gill, 1990: 128). Maternalistic employers often use language to emphasize the subordinate position of maids by speaking to them as if they are children (Abercrombie & Hill, 1976: 418). Through the imposition of certain linguistic customs, madams differentiate themselves from their maids. For example, in Bolivia, maids are commonly addressed as “chica” or “hija”, which indicates that they are childlike. Furthermore, maids have to address their madams as “senorita” or “nino” (Gill, 1990: 129). Furthermore, in many instances, maids do not speak the language of madams well, and therefore are often corrected by madams, just like mothers or teachers do with children (Gill, 1990: 129). For example, maids are often called “stupid”, “retarded” or “not intelligent” (Tellis-Nayak, 1983: 70). For these reasons, maternalistic employers offer guidance and protection in turn for obedience and service from maids (Anderson, 2000: 145). This enforces the superiority of madams and the inferiority of maids. Thus, nothing much has changed from the master-servant employment relationship, as maids are still inferior and exploited. The only difference is that madams see maids as children.

Another key element in the unequal maternalistic employment relationship is gestures of gift-giving. Maids often receive the madams’ second-hand clothes or unwanted household goods as a gift. However, maids could never give her second-hand clothes to their madams. The unequal employment relationship is further strengthened by madams by creating the idea that maids are “part of the family”. Being “part of the family” often coincides with the important shift from the master-servant to a maternalistic employment relationship in terms of living conditions of maids. Maids no longer live in the houses of madams, but they are given living quarters on the premises of their madam. “Live-in” domestic work is ascribed to this transformation.

2.6.2.3 Live-in, Live-out and Part-time Domestic Work

Traditionally in the second phase of domestic work, maids lived on the premises of madams, but apart and no longer in the house. Although still part of the family, the relationship remains highly dependent, as the rooms are more frequently furnished by their madam’s second-hand furniture and they are often clothed in their madam’s discarded garments (Goncalves, 2010: 41). Although provided accommodation is an improvement from the master-servant employment relationship, the conditions are still infinitely inferior to that of the madam (Gill, 1990: 129). However, under this maternalistic employment relationship, madams provide maids with furniture, clothes, household goods and other materials, which

they would be unable to otherwise afford. This goodwill of madams is dependent on the obedience and personal loyalty from maids (Abercrombie & Hill, 1976: 418).

Although it may be seen that maids becomes “one of the family”, in reality, this has been regarded as merely “a mask for their exploitation” (Goncalves, 2010: 41). Madams switch from considering the relationship as contractual or familial, depending on what is most suitable for them (Anderson, 2001: 31). The fact that maids were on the premises of their madam for 24 hours a day, also meant that they were often exploited in terms of the hours they worked, often having to come in and clean when madams had functions, or look after the children when they went out.

Under this dispensation, maids had little personal life and as time progressed, more and more maids opted for more independent employment relations. Not only were maids trying to obtain more freedom from madams, but they also wanted to spend more time with their families.

The “first revolution” in paid domestic work replaced live-in by live-out domestic work (Devetter & Rousseau, 2009: 312). Many maids often prefer live-out work to live-in work, in order to escape exploitative employment relationships. The nature of live-out domestic work remains similar to live-in domestic work, that is, housecleaning responsibilities and caring for children and elderly, but they are more pressured for time. For example, they have to be at work before eight in the morning to prepare breakfast for their madams and her children, or they have to take her children to school in the morning (Anderson, 2001: 45).

Although it may be perceived as being beneficial for maids to not live on the premises of madams, the employment relationship remains personal, because they are still mostly employed by one madam. This personal relationship enables madams to remain in control of maids’ output and performances. Thus, maids still lack autonomy and control over the workload and tasks (Salzinger, 1991: 153).

In addition, another shift happened. Full-time work was gradually replaced by part-time work as madams saw it as yet another strategy to exploit maids around the globe.

The growth of part-time work is mainly due to madams’ needs to cut costs as part-time workers typically cost less in wages and particularly in fringe benefits. In addition, difficulty with legislations also causes madams to opt for part-time maids rather than full-time maids.

For example, full-time maids are entitled to various benefits such as paid leave and bonuses (Kalleberg, 2000: 344).

In domestic work, this was typically the case around the globe, as many madams opt for part-time maids in order to save money and bypass fringe benefits. Maids also started to do more part-time work to limit dependence on madams. However, the working conditions did not change much.

2.6.2.4 Working Conditions

The working conditions of maids are similar and different from the master-servant employment relationship in terms of the following aspects.

Similar to the master-servant employment relationship, maids under live-in arrangements experience high levels of isolation and lack of privacy. Many live-in maids live far from their families and do not see their families and friends often, which lead to feelings of confinement, entrapment, alienation, imprisonment and loneliness (Anderson, 2001: 43; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001: 31; Cohen, 1991: 199). For example, many live-in maids complained that their madams enter their rooms when they want to and demand that they do certain tasks (Anderson, 2001: 40-44; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001: 31). This emphasizes the madams' privilege of having the right for their own privacy, but denying maids' rights (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001: 174). Live-in maids' needs are also often denied, while they have to attend everything their madams request them to do (Gill, 1990: 128).

Thus, in terms of accommodation, this is regarded as a "service benefit" and justification for low, irregularly paid wages (Anderson, 2001: 31). Similarly, gifts that maids receive are seen as supplementing their insufficient wages. In this regard, maids were often required to work extra unpaid working hours for this benevolence (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001: 171; Anderson, 2001: 31).

Similarly to the master-servant employment relationship, live-in maids, under maternalistic employment relations have limited control over their working hours as they had to be permanently available to serve madams and their families (Anderson, 2001: 42). For example, maids have to prepare breakfast early in the morning or care for children or elderly relatives late at night, which is similar to master-servant employment relations. Similarly, Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001:31) found that many Latina live-in maids in the United States of America, complained that madams have little respect and consideration regarding their

working time. Live-in maids frequently complained that they are treated like “non-human objects or animals” (Cohen, 1991: 200). The only difference between master-servant and maternalistic employment relations is that in the latter, madams use kindness, goodwill and gifts to mask the exploitative working conditions (Miles, 1999: 207).

Just like under the master-servant employment relationship, live-in maids often complain that they are constantly given tasks to do, because madams do not like it when they relax. Many maids are required not only to clean their madam’s houses, but also to care for elderly, disabled relatives and pets. Thus, they are not only housecleaners, but also caregivers (Colombo, 2007: 227).

Thus, although it may be perceived that live-in maids are “one of the family”, it becomes clear that many aspects of their lives are controlled by madams. Live-in maids have no control over their working hours, salaries or even their private space. This highly personal relationship is only a way to “mask their exploitation” and is a place where “inequalities are reproduced” (Goncalves, 2010: 41). It is clear that maternalistic employment relations are similar to master-servant employment relations, with the exception that in the former, madams use benevolence to mask exploitation and inequality.

2.6.2.5 Benefits of Maternalistic Employment Relationship

The benefits for madams and maids under the maternalistic employment relationship are similar to those under the master-servant employment relationship in the following aspects.

Similar to the master-servant employment relationship, under the maternalistic employment relationship, madams have more power than maids as they are often treated as children. Knowing the details of their personal lives, having the power to support or withdraw support, or awarding gifts are important mechanism of control, because such gestures encourage maids to work harder and longer for no extra money (Anderson, 2000: 145; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001: 184, 186). This is seen to reinforce racial and class inequality and hierarchy (Anderson, 2000: 145; Gill, 1990: 128).

However, the personal nature of maternalistic employment relations may also be beneficial for maids. Hondagneu-Sotelo’s (2001) study on Latina immigrant maids in Los Angeles found that they prefer a personal relationship with their madams. Many of these immigrant maids have sacrificed a lot of their own personal lives. For example, many of them left their children and husbands at home and do not see them often. As a result, many of these

immigrant Latina maids feel that they have no sense of belonging and yearn for personal interest from their madams, which is perceived as “expressions of genuine care” (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001: 193, 203). The relationship for many coming from underprivileged backgrounds, such employment has been uplifting, both personally and financially, depending on their madams.

Maids also benefit from madams’ gestures of gift-giving. Gifts, such as second-hand clothes, unwanted household appliances and materials improve the lives of maids (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001: 185). Maids often purposely encourage madams to give them gifts, used clothes or bonuses. For example, when madams go shopping, maids may hint to buy them something. Also, across the board, live-in maids receive gifts on their birthdays, weddings, Christmas and Easter (Cohen, 1991: 208). Gifts are therefore seen as “service benefits” of this maternalistic employment relationship.

One should also not lose sight of the fact that maids were not powerless in this relationship, where they experienced this as exploitative or abusive. For example, Cohen (1983: 207) reports how a maid intentionally damaged a vacuum cleaner, because her madam demanded that she move all furniture such as beds and drawers twice a week to vacuum under it. Similarly, Harris (1982: 30) reports how a maid handled the silverware of her madam carelessly, in order to avoid being asked again. They could also work slower to reduce workload (Cohen, 1983: 207-208). They also got some satisfaction from joking and gossiping about madams’ behaviours which they shared with other maids (Cohen, 1983: 204). However, they had little influence over real issues of pay and working hours, for if they resisted, they could easily be dismissed.

Under both the master-servant and maternalistic employment relationship, there was little formal recourse. Maids were often exploited in terms of irregular payments, unpaid extra hours of work and other emotional tasks such as caring for children and elderly. The exploitative nature of this relationship resulted in pressures from labour unions to formalize domestic employment relationships in order to protect maids from various forms of abuse.

2.6.3 Formalization

2.6.3.1 *The Importance of Formalization in Domestic Work*

Since domestic work takes place in private homes and not in factories or offices, it remains informal, undocumented and excluded from labour market regulation as domestic servants are not classified as employees under labour laws. Similarly, who the employers are in terms of this relationship is defined differently (Decent work for domestic workers, 2010: 11). For example, in Brazil, section 3 of Decree 71.885/1973 identifies employers as being “the person or family that admits into its service a domestic employee” (Decent work for domestic workers, 2010: 35). In Bulgaria, for instance, employers include the “whole household” and not just a singular person, while in Barbados, an employer is anyone who employs a domestic worker for remuneration (Decent work for domestic workers, 2010: 35). These trends are quite universal and it took a long time before the domestic sector became formally regulated by law.

In terms of legal protection, in many countries, domestic workers are still not legally protected. Domestic work is considered to be “too casual and informal for legal protection” (Decent work for domestic workers, 2010: 11).

As a result, domestic workers commonly lack forms of organization in unions to protect and regulate this sector. In the United States of America for example, it is illegal for domestic workers to organize under the National Labour Relations Act (NLRA). Even today, they remain unprotected in terms of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) and under civil right laws (Decent work for domestic workers, 2010: 12). Consequently, domestic work is one of the most precarious, low-paid and unprotected forms of employment in the United States of America even today.

Fraser (1995, in Meagher, 2000: 12) argues that unregulated domestic work causes domestic workers to be economically and culturally exploited. Economic injustices occur when domestic workers are forced to accept payments and workloads below the market norms. Income insecurity is another economic problem, as employers may not stick to the agreed upon wages. Conditions and durations of contracts are usually unspecified, which causes domestic workers to be easily dismissed by employers. Other features of this exploitative relationship include cultural injustices such as disrespect, lack of appreciation, autonomy and overbearing supervision from employers, which contribute to the oppressive working

conditions of domestic work. Without formalization, maids are still treated like servants and not employees and remain undervalued, which contributes to their low status (Meagher, 2000: 13-15).

The exploitative working conditions underlie the push for this sector to become more legally protected and formalised. In the United States of America, this happened in 1974, with the Fair Labour Standard Act (FSLA), when the labour law alter to increase protection for domestic workers. For example, as recently as 2009, regulation of the domestic sector in the United States of America in terms of minimum wages and federal overtime payment requirements were requested by fifteen US senators. In New York, if the Bill of Rights is passed, then domestic workers, nannies and housekeepers will enjoy the same rights as other workers (Decent work for domestic workers, 2010: 12). One way to regulate and improve working conditions of the domestic sector is by implementing working contracts.

2.6.3.2 Nature of the Work Contract

The contractual employer-employee relationship derives from various sources of rules, which include laws, collective and personal agreements between employers and employees that are voluntary undertaken by both parties (Persson, 2006: 408). According to Persson (2006: 409), employment contracts improve employment relationships in various ways.

A major transformation from the master-servant relationship to a modern employment relationship is that the decision to work is undertaken voluntarily by employees. An important feature of entering voluntarily into the employment contracts, employees' consent to the conditions of the contract. Employees know the conditions and relevant aspects of the job that involve different regulations and specified tasks (Persson, 2006: 410). Thus, employment contracts are only justifiable if employees enter the employment contract voluntarily and have specific information regarding the nature of the job.

Employment contracts also regulate the relationship between employers and employees in terms of remuneration. This means that employees do not sell themselves, but merely their labour power. Once an employment contract is signed, it means that employees commit themselves to exchange labour power for fixed remuneration and for specific work tasks (Persson, 2006: 411-412). The terms of employment requires employers to specify the list of duties and rates of pay with maids (Decent work for domestic workers, 2010: 36).

Furthermore, in order to be justifiable, employment contracts must be prescriptive concerning the working hours and/or purposes. This means clearly set out “duties, hours of work and rest periods in writing” (Decent work for domestic workers, 2010: 36). Thus, by signing an employment contract, employees know exactly the specified working hours of their job and its purpose and employees have mutual influence and power over this aspect. This differs from the master-servant and maternalistic employment relationship, where masters/madams control servants’/maids’ working hours and tasks. The more formal, contractual employment relationship thus strives for a more symmetrical power relationship between employers and employees (Persson, 2006: 412).

In addition, employment contracts give rise to mutual rights, responsibilities and obligations. For example, employees commit themselves to exchange labour power for remuneration, but are liable and obliged to perform certain specified tasks and employers have certain expectations of employees’ performances. In terms of employers’ liability, employers have the right to command employees to pursue job tasks that are specified in the contract. However, employment contracts should be managed by liable employers to the extent that employees have a certain degree of influence and negotiating power in terms of the manner in which tasks are performed (Persson, 2006: 412-413).

From these dimensions, it is clear that basic employment contracts formalize employment relationships resulting in a more symmetrical relationship where employees gain more negotiation power in accepting and determining their employment condition. While this may be so in terms of legal prescriptions, the question may be asked whether this has really changed the employment relationship given the uniqueness of domestic service work? In many respects it has.

2.6.3.3 Nature of Employment Relationship

The formalization of domestic work has resulted in a more standardised employment relationship where domestic workers are employed by a singular employer on a full-time or part-time basis, in return for a specific wage. Even where employment contracts are open-ended, domestic workers are protected against unfair dismissals as they can now rely on the law to protect them. If found guilty, employers can now either be forced to reinstate or compensate them for losses. Similarly, termination of services is subject to certain prescripts and payments and cannot occur at the whim of employers (Vosko, 1997: 43; Bronstein, 1991: 291-292).

Unlike before, where domestic servants and maids had little service benefits or protections, domestic workers who engage in standard employment relationships are now normally entitled to comprehensive social benefits, which include unemployment insurance, pension coverage, sick pay and maternity leave. The main feature of this type of employment relationship is stability (Vosko, 1997: 47). In reciprocation, domestic workers have the duty to work, obey rules of work-related orders and prospects and not to be insincere and dishonest. All these employee obligations are formalized by contracts between employers and employees. Informal and social dimensions of the standard employment relationship include tacit undeclared expectations of one another in terms of day-to-day interaction and respect (Swanepoel, 1999: 14). For example, there is a mutual respect for each other in terms of differences based on personal matters such as race, religion and sexual orientation.

2.6.3.4 Working Conditions

In terms of minimum wages, internationally the practice of enforcing minimum wages differs significantly. Although maids are protected by a minimum wage in many countries, in countries such as Zimbabwe, Lebanon, China and India among others, they are not (Decent work for domestic workers, 2010: 40). Minimum wages for domestic workers are crucial in order to ensure a decent living wage for them and their families (Decent work for domestic workers, 2010: 40).

The regular payment of wages is also important in order to protect and improve living conditions of domestic workers. In the United States of America, The Recommendation (no 85) stipulates that domestic workers whose wages are calculated by the hour, day or week, must be paid twice a month, while those whose wages is based on a monthly or annual basis must be paid every month (Decent work for domestic workers, 2010: 43). The regular payment of wages also differs considerably from country to country. In Malaysia, for example, domestic workers' wages are calculated on a monthly basis and they are paid on the seventh day of every month, while in Cote d'Ivoire, they are paid every fifteenth day (Decent work for domestic workers, 2010: 43).

Not only are wages regulated, but working hours too. The regulation of working hours in terms of restrictions and rest periods is crucial to preserve maids' health, safety, as well as sufficient time to devote to their families. Research done by International Labour Office (ILO) compared 71 countries' regulation of working hours of domestic workers. In this study, a mere 20% of domestic workers work a standard 40 hour a week, while 15% work between

41 and 47 hours a week. Four countries stipulate a maximum of 48 hours a week, while five countries' limit is above 48 hours. The other 49% of the countries have no limits on working hours for domestic workers (Decent work for domestic workers, 2010: 48-49). Hence, the majority of countries still do not regulate domestic workers' working hours, which contributes to exploitation and vulnerability. The formalization is crucial to transform the working conditions of the domestic work sector from an informal into a formal employment relationship. There are, however, various advantages and disadvantages for both employers and domestic workers if the domestic sector is formalized.

2.6.3.5 Advantages and Disadvantages of Standard Employment Relationship

Employment contracts enable employers to control domestic workers' abilities to leave their job. In many situations, domestic workers are obliged to give up to 90 days' notice in order for employers to find and train suitable replacements. Although employers cannot force domestic workers to keep working for them, domestic workers are likely to obey the terms of conditions if there is a penalty involved for breaching contract agreements.

In terms of domestic workers' performances, employers have more control. For example, if contracts specify standards for domestic workers' performances and they do not adhere to these specifications, it may give employers significant reasons to dismiss domestic workers. However, it can be argued that in many cases, employers can abuse these opportunities and domestic workers may suffer unfair dismissals.

On the contrary, disadvantages of employment contracts involve limited flexibility as it binds employers and domestic workers. For example, if employers do not need their domestic workers after a while, they cannot simply dismiss them, if a contract is signed by both parties. Similarly, if employment contracts include health benefits and bonuses at the end of the year, employers cannot withhold these.

Based on these arguments, employers may want to avoid having standard employment relationships with domestic workers, as they face risky consequences if contracts are breached. Also, domestic workers may feel that employers can bend the contract in their favour. Rees and Fielder (1992: 356) argue that open-ended contracts are a disservice to domestic workers, as it means that employers can easily give domestic workers notice. As a result, domestic workers may experience a constant risk of redundancy and they have no confidence of continual employment.

Thus, both employers and domestic workers may benefit by shifting from an employer-domestic worker relationship to a customer-vendor relationship. The latter is made possible by outsourcing responsibilities and tasks to a third party, namely housecleaning service companies.

2.6.4 Triangular Employment Relationship of Domestic Service

2.6.4.1 Background of Housecleaning Service Companies

Various forms of housecleaning service companies and agencies can be found from “nation-wide franchises” to “one-women cleaning services” (Mendez, 1998: 118). Reasons why housecleaning service companies and agencies are in such great demand include the elimination of the master-servant employment relationship and the rise of standardization of domestic service (Ehrenreich, 2000: 64).

2.6.4.2 Nature of Housecleaning Service Companies

In many countries, there is a massive growth in outsourced domestic service companies and agencies (Mendez, 1998: 118). The key component of housecleaning service companies is the transformation of personal employer-domestic worker relationship into a customer-vendor relationship (Romero, 1988: 319). The employment relationship has also become triangular between domestic employee⁸, client and employer (Mendez, 1998: 118). This results in minimum personal contact between client and domestic employee and more regulated working hours and wages. Some claim that this has modernized the employment relationship in the domestic service sector as it has become more structured and controlled by housecleaning service companies (Romero, 1988: 319).

The size of housecleaning service companies vary considerably. Many are small, employing between five and twenty domestic employees (Devetter & Rousseau, 2009: 300). The companies provide clients with a team, which generally consist of three to five “uniformed” domestic employees, depending on the size of the house and tasks performed. Hence, the team of domestic employees takes over the various tasks of the traditional maid/domestic

⁸ In housecleaning service companies, the term domestic worker is changed into domestic employee, in order to make the transition from a standardized employment relationship between domestic worker and employer into a triangular employment relationship between domestic employee, manager (now employer) and client (former employer) clear. Ehrenreich (2000: 65) and Salzinger (1991: 156) amongst other scholars argue that housecleaning service companies upgrade domestic workers’ status to domestic employees.

worker. Unlike the previous employer-domestic worker employment relationship, the manager or a team leader has the authority to speak to the client about the specific service that needs to be delivered (Ehrenreich, 2000: 64). There is also no direct responsibility towards the domestic employees' payments, their physical, financial and emotional problems are not the concern of clients, but the company's. Furthermore, if there is a complaint on either the clients' or domestic employees' side, it is addressed through the company owner (Ehrenreich, 2000: 64).

In terms of service delivery, housecleaning service companies guarantee quality domestic service by "targeting specific types of client needs" (Mendez, 1998: 118), by using special equipment (Devetter & Rousseau, 2009: 306; Meagher, 1997: 22; Ehrenreich, 2000: 67). Mendez (1998: 120) argues that "professionalism is a big part of the housecleaning service companies' sales pitch". Furthermore, domestic employees are trained to pay special attention to detail such as to fluff-up pillows (Meagher, 1997: 14), to leave all shampoo bottles and jam jars with their labels facing outwards and to fold the loose ends of toilet paper in a special way (Ehrenreich, 2000: 67). Service delivery is also speedy and efficient, because domestic employees are trained to use the housecleaning service company's cleaning techniques, which is fast and effective (Mendez, 1998: 121). Ehrenreich (2000: 66) reports that speedy domestic service is due to the division of tasks amongst the team of domestic employees. For example, one domestic employee washes the dishes and cleans the kitchen, the other one cleans the bedrooms and the third one cleans the bathrooms. Each of these rooms, for example, is cleaned from the left to the right and from the top to the bottom (Ehrenreich, 2000: 66). This emphasizes the standardization of cleaning methods used in housecleaning service companies.

In relation to this standardized service delivery, Mendez (1998: 131) found that domestic employees often feel that housecleaning service companies "treats [them] like robots". In contrast, Ehrenreich (2000: 67) reports that domestic employees who are employed by housecleaning service companies are thankful to move "robot-like from surface to surface", because they are relieved from the thinking process. However, the key aspect of these "robot-like" movements of domestic employees in housecleaning service companies, are due to constant supervision by managers and clients.

2.6.4.3 Employment Relationship

In housecleaning service companies, there is a transformation from a personal relationship to a structural triangular relationship (Glenn, 1992: 22). A triangular relationship arises when “employees of an enterprise (the service provider) perform work for a third party (the user enterprise or client) to whom their employer provides labour or services” (Theron, 2005: 618-619). This hierarchical, triangular employment relationship between employer, domestic employee and client is based on a particular contractual requirement and limits the exploitation of domestic employees (Glenn, 1992: 23). Domestic employees of a service provider are usually employed on a fixed-term contract, which may be either full-time or part-time (Vosko, 1997: 43). These contractual employment relations affect the working conditions of paid domestic work, because the owner of the house is no longer the employer, but the client (Mendez, 1998: 119). Therefore, service delivery is based on mutual agreements between the clients and employers of the housecleaning service company, and not between the clients and domestic employees.

Figure 1: Traditional Domestic Service Employment Relationship

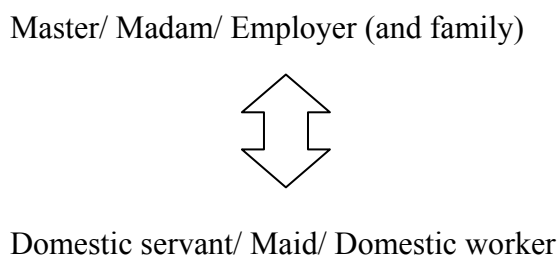


Figure 2: Triangular Domestic Service Employment Relationship

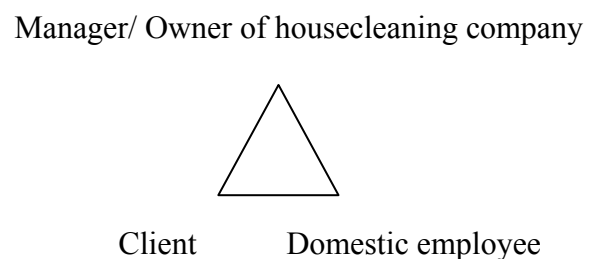


Figure 1 illustrates the traditional employment relationship between employer and domestic worker. This relationship is typically maternalistic in nature, as the Madam/ employer controls the maid’s/ domestic worker’s workload and wages, which results in inferiority and exploitation. Figure 2 illustrates the hierarchical, triangular employment relationship that occurs in housecleaning service companies. The role of the owner of the house is changed from being an employer into a client, who pays for the service provided by the housecleaning service company, who now controls the domestic employees’ workload, wages and working time. This results in the employment relationship to become triangular.

Triangular employment relations enable managers to exercise discipline and control over domestic employees. In some respects, independent domestic workers, who work for one family, have more autonomy than domestic employees who are employed by housecleaning service companies, because they have more freedom to choose where to start cleaning (Ehrenreich, 2000: 66). In contrast, the rules of housecleaning service companies are clearly set out in terms of how to clean rooms, or where to start cleaning. Ehrenreich (2000: 66) found that housecleaning service companies had one 10 minute break for lunch, because managers considered the driving time between clients as a break. Watching television and listening to the radio in the houses of clients are also not allowed (Ehrenreich, 2000: 66). There is also little slack time and work is quite pressured and bound to strict times allocated to specific jobs.

In order to enforce these rules, domestic employees are constantly supervised by either a team leader or the manager. Managers often ask domestic employees to “redo a room or the entire job” if they are not satisfied with the standard of cleanliness (Mendez, 1998: 130). In addition, the client also exercises control over the domestic employee’s service delivery by rating services through means of feedback forms. If the work done is not up to standard, clients can let managers know and domestic employees may asked to redo a room. This is how clients stay in control of domestic employees’ service delivery.

2.6.4.4 Working Conditions and Service Benefits

In terms of financial benefits, housecleaning service companies often offer domestic employees a week’s vacation and health insurances and/or bonus at the end of the month for good quality work performances (Ehrenreich, 2000: 65; Devetter & Rousseau, 2009: 304).

Unlike the previous arrangements, there are also opportunities for promotion. For instance, middle management positions are offered to some domestic employees in order to enhance loyalty and commitment. This also increases the status of domestic employees, because they are responsible for supervisory tasks (Devetter & Rousseau, 2009: 306). Many of these housecleaning service companies also foster a “culture of care” by acknowledging birthdays and anniversaries by providing gifts or bonuses. This helps to foster employee loyalty, identification and solidarity with housecleaning service companies (Mendez, 1998: 124).

Although clients may lose control over the domestic employees in terms of the transformation from employer to client, there are several benefits for clients and domestic

employees. Firstly, the impersonal relationship frees clients from supervision and management tasks (Mendez, 1998: 120). Supervision is carried out by either team leaders or managers who carry out random check-ups to prevent theft and to ensure cleaning is performed according to specific standards (Meagher, 1997: 16). Because supervision is done by managers, there is no need for clients to be at home when the team cleans their house.

Secondly, many clients prefer this impersonal relationship, because they are no longer involved in “time-consuming and emotionally-draining personal relationship” with their domestic employees (Mendez, 1998: 123). This is an important indicator why clients choose housecleaning service companies, because personal contact is reduced, which increase distance between clients and domestic employees (Devetter & Rousseau, 2009: 308; Mendez, 1998: 123) to such an extent that clients would not recognize those who work in their houses (Ehrenreich, 2000: 65).

Thirdly, clients no longer have to support their domestic employees financially or give their second-hand clothes, used household appliances, Christmas or birthday gifts to the domestic employees and their families (Ehrenreich, 2000: 65). This may be unfavourable to some domestic employees employed by housecleaning service companies, as they are less likely to receive free lunches, cast-off clothing or gifts (Ehrenreich, 2000: 65).

From domestic employees’ perspectives, impersonal relationships with clients may also be attractive. Firstly, by working for different clients every day allows domestic employees more independence and decreases chances of exploitation (Romero, 1988: 322). Secondly, domestic employees do not deal with the clients directly. For example, criticism of cleaning methods and demands for other spontaneous household tasks is directly referred to the manager or housecleaning service company owner (Ehrenreich, 2000: 65). Thirdly, this impersonal, contractual relationship between domestic employees and clients protect domestic employees from abuse (Romero, 1988: 332). Housecleaning service companies have specific contracts with clients, which states explicitly what is expected from domestic employees in terms of workload (Devetter & Rousseau, 2009: 307). Fourthly, domestic employees develop friendships with their colleagues, which reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness. This is often cited as a reason for choosing to work for housecleaning service companies (Mendez, 1998: 131; Glenn, 1992: 23; Cohen, 1991: 204).

Lastly, impersonal employment relationships in housecleaning service companies transform domestic workers to domestic employees (Salzinger, 1991: 156). Meagher (1997: 21) argues

that domestic employees are lifted out of their subordinated position when they are paired with clients and not with masters, madams or employers. This may be another reason why housecleaning service companies are attractive to both clients and domestic employees.

2.7 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ON DOMESTIC SERVICE

If one takes a labour process approach to the study of domestic work, one can clearly see that domestic service has followed similar patterns as the labour market, moving from more permanent to part-time to external forms of labour. The aim of this section is to provide a brief background of domestic service from a theoretical perspective which will assist in determining whether in fact, domestic work under the triangular employment relationship is 'for better or worse'.

Although there appeared to be a shift from permanent to more part-time domestic work after the master-servant to maternalistic employment relationship era, domestic work in essence stayed the same. Domestic servants, maids and domestic workers can be associated as being craft-labourers in a certain sense, as they were expected to be multi-tasked. They also had some degree of autonomy or discretion as to how and when to do certain tasks. You were a good domestic servant, maid or domestic worker if you could do a range of tasks well, even if they were not necessarily highly skilled.

In recent years, externalised forms of domestic work, in the form of outsourced housecleaning service companies, started growing as there are more benefits linked to it for clients (former masters and madams) and domestic employees (former domestic servants, maids and domestic workers). For clients, externalisation means access to expertise, as domestic employees are trained to deliver professional services, the flexibility and quality of service is improved on and there is a reduction in costs due to competition. For domestic employees, externalisation means that they become expertise in their field as they receive training, which again improves skills (Burnes & Anastasiadis, 2003: 357, Kremic, Tukul & Rom, 2006: 467).

From a manager's (now employer's) perspective, one sees a classic application of the principles of scientific management. The first principle of scientific management is to gather the traditional knowledge and skills of workers and to classify and tabulate them to a set of rules and regulations. For example, where domestic employees previously cleaned the entire house of a family, now tasks are divided amongst teams. This enables managers to enforce

speedier cleaning methods, as “time is no longer passed, but spent” (Webster, Buhlungu & Bezuidenhout, 2003: 12). The second principle is the removal of all thinking from the execution of tasks. For example, domestic employees now are trained to clean rooms in a standard, professional manner by starting to clean from the top to the bottom. The work is repetitive and boring as the manager does the planning of execution. The third principle is the knowledge to control every step of the work process. Domestic employees receive detailed instructions of how to execute tasks and how long it takes to complete them. For example, teams spend a specific time in each house, where they clean according to fixed rules and time schedules (Webster *et al*, 2003: 14; Braverman, 1974: 112-120). Thus, with scientific management comes the notion of deskilling, as domestic employees’ skills are fragmented by managers to increase speed and profits (Webster *et al*, 2003: 14).

There are many consequences of scientific management for employees. Doing repetitive work, making just a small part of something (in this case, cleaning just a room in a house) and being too closely supervised, result in feelings of insecurity, alienation and boredom (Watson, 1995: 144). One typically finds these trends in housecleaning service companies as various scholars such as Mendez (1998), Ehrenreich (2006) and Devetter and Rousseau (2009) have indicated.

One could also argue, however, that domestic employees go through a process of upskilling. If one uses Bell’s upskilling thesis as background, training and specialization provide positive qualities such as diversity in skills (Edgell, 2006: 62-63). Bell (in Edgell, 2006: 63) also argues that service work involves interacting with people rather than with machines, which in fact limits boredom and create job satisfaction. But training and specialization in the domestic sector does not equate domestic employees as being skilled labourers with autonomy, because they are constantly supervised by both managers and clients, which give rise to a triangular employment relationship.

Yet, what must be realised is that in essence, the employment relationship is still personal in nature, even though it is formalised and triangular between managers, domestic employees and clients. Many of the housecleaning service companies still operate on the principle that “we are one family” and on what can be typically classified as unitarist employment practices.

Unitarism refers to the notion that employees identify with the company’s goals and values, which leads to organizational success, harmony and cooperation amongst employees and

employers (Blyton & Turnbull, 1994: 23; Farnham & Pimlott, 1990: 4; Dekker, 1990: 350; Venter, Levy, Conradie & Holtzhausen, 2009: 7). This is achieved by means of employees' acceptance of their positions within the company and loyalty to the exclusive leadership and authority of the employer (Blyton & Jenkins, 2007: 168; Salamon, 1992: 31; Green, 1994: 4). Since employees are regarded as the company's most important resource, and profit is made by selling their labour power, it is important to have cooperation, affective communication and teamwork between employees and employers (Dekker, 1990: 350; Blyton & Turnbull, 2004: 40; Storey & Sisson, 1993: 199).

Although domestic employees are now permitted to join trade unions, it does not appear as if many do because managers perceive it as unnecessary. Conflict is typically dealt with by trying to solve it within the company and not by external forces. However, although domestic employees now have the external support from The Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA), it appears as if housecleaning service companies try to obviate the need for trade unions, by portraying themselves as caring employers.

Union avoidance is usually successful where trade unions are weak or unable to organise employees successfully, which is typical of the domestic work sector. They do this by using unitarist principles such as giving employees uniforms and opportunities for taking part in social functions to create identification and loyalty with the goals and aspirations of the company (Finnemore, 2002: 216-217). For example, in housecleaning service companies, domestic employees are typically paid more than the minimum wages, they receive training, wear uniforms with the company's name, have opportunities for grievance⁹, and often go on social outings. In housecleaning service companies, rendering a service to a client, loyalty and trust is critically important, as without this, the company's image can be severely tarnished. It is important to establish identification with company goals, since housecleaning service companies are service work.

Just like other service organizations, housecleaning service companies change domestic work from being ordinary housework into service work. Service organizations, especially those who provide similar services, have to distinguish themselves from other organizations by

⁹ Grievance procedures allow employees the opportunity to tell the manager or owner of a company if they are dissatisfied with the management within the workplace. The manager will attempt to resolve the grievance, which is acceptable to employees concerned and the company (Klaas, 1989: 450-451).

providing good services to clients in order to survive in a highly competitive marketplace. One way to ensure good services is through supervision of employees.

Supervision in housecleaning service companies takes on several forms. Managers and domestic employees use feedback from clients as a tool to judge the quality of services (Pugh, Dietz, Wiley & Brooks, 2002: 82). Satisfied clients lead to loyalty, which leads to an improvement in sales, profit and possible rewards for the organization and service employee (Pugh *et al.*, 2002: 73). As a result, many managers use feedback from clients to monitor the services. For examples, in housecleaning service companies, managers often use client feedback to determine whether domestic employees deliver professional services. If clients' ratings are bad, then managers confront domestic employees and can potentially lose clients.

Apart from client feedback, managers or team leaders often do spot checks to ensure professional services. In housecleaning service companies, managers often ask domestic employees to redo a room, if they are not satisfied with the standard. Thus, it can be argued that domestic employees have become even more controlled than before. Here, reference is made to Foucault's theory of "Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison" (1975). Foucault focuses on the body which is "manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds [and] becomes skilful" (Foucault, 1975: 136). Through supervision, one is able to observe the worker's presence and application, and the quality of the work that is done by the worker. This enables managers to compare workers with one another, and to classify them according to skill and speed (Foucault, 1975: 145). For example, in housecleaning service companies, managers allocate certain tasks to certain domestic employees, because supervision enables them to know who work faster than others.

Furthermore, according to Foucault (1975: 136) the body is seen as something that is passive, submissive, transformed and improved on. As a result, the body is treated as an object and is therefore a target of power. The body is manipulated to such an extent that all its elements, gestures and behaviour are calculated. Very strict powers are imposed onto the body with its various constraints, prohibitions and obligations (Foucault, 1975: 136). Disciplinary coercion establishes in the body "an increased aptitude and an increased domination" (Foucault, 1975: 138). Discipline enables one to have a hold over others' bodies to such an extent that they operate as one wishes with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. At many organizations, particularly those that focus on service work such as housecleaning service companies, it is expected from domestic employees to adhere to specific rules. For

example, domestic employees employed by housecleaning service companies are dominated by a set of rules and moral codes and are monitored to enforce appropriate behaviour. It is crucial for employers to maintain a sense of collective identity, because it will increase employee loyalty, which again is related to organizational success.

Thus, two key issues emerge out of the changed employment relationship and that is the effect on skill and the impact on control. Whether this is “for better or worse” remains debatable. On the one hand, housecleaning service companies change domestic work “for better” as domestic employees gain knowledge and improvement in skills due to training. This also limits feelings of boredom as they can do a variety of tasks. On the other hand, housecleaning service companies change domestic work “for worse” as domestic employees lose control over tasks as managers typically applies scientific management principles. They are closely controlled by managers and clients, which increases feelings of boredom and lack of job satisfaction.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter conceptualized the main transitions that occurred in domestic work internationally, from a master-servant employment relationship to a formalized, triangular employment relationship offered by housecleaning service companies. The aim of this chapter was to discuss reasons for this transition from a historical and theoretical point of view. It can be concluded that domestic work underwent a major transformation in the last few decades and that housecleaning service companies are a revolutionary new development in domestic work.

However, one can argue that formalized triangular employment relationships are just another form of exploitation and control, giving rise to other pressures such as increased workload, lack of job satisfaction and boredom, which is associated with scientific management and maternalism.

CHAPTER THREE: PAID DOMESTIC WORK IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.1 BACKGROUND OF CHAPTER

Domestic work is one of the most important employment sectors in South Africa, as over a million people are employed as domestic workers (Fish, 2006: 108). Just like elsewhere, domestic work in South Africa has undergone several transitions over time.

The aim of this chapter is to provide a brief background of the changing nature and racial construction of domestic work. Then the main transitions of the domestic sector, from a master-servant employment relationship to a maternalistic employment relationship, to formalization and lastly, the triangular employment relationship, are discussed.

3.2 Nature of Domestic Work in South Africa

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act¹⁰ in South Africa, defines a domestic worker as a person who performs domestic service or taking care of the elderly, disabled and/or children (Woolman & Bishop, 2007: 600). In South Africa, domestic work has followed similar patterns and has been highly differentiated by gender, race and class, which is not unlike domestic work elsewhere, excepting that Apartheid legislation added another dimension of exploitation.

In terms of the gender construction of domestic work, women mostly perform paid domestic chores. Gaitskell *et al.*, (1983: 87) provide three reasons why domestic work is mostly performed by women. Firstly, domestic chores such as washing, cleaning and childcare, are generally assumed to be part of the women's domain. Secondly, these tasks are usually performed in the household and thirdly, the personal and caring characteristic of this labour resonate with feminine characteristics (Gaitskell *et al.*, 1983: 87).

In South Africa, however, domestic work was not only performed by women, but the use of Zulu men as servants was found in the 1800's in Natal as well (Gaitskell *et al.*, 1983: 99-100). Similarly, in the Witwatersrand area, African men were employed as domestic servants,

10 For complete reference of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, see: Department of Labour. 2009. *Basic Conditions of Employment Act and Amendments*. Available at <http://www.labour.gov.za>

because they preceded women in migrating to the Rand. The term “houseboys” were given to male domestic servants who did everything from cooking and cleaning to washing laundry and nursing infants (Ally, 2010: 28; Van Onselen, 1982: 18).

As the mining industry picked-up, Black male labourers were employed, creating a gap for women to be employed as domestic servants. By 1946 more than 80% of domestic servants in the Cape were African women (Boddington, 1983: 90) and this has remained the case since the twentieth century (Gaitskell *et al.*, 1983: 88). When White women moved out of this sector to other commercial and industrial sectors, Coloured women formed a significant percentage of domestic servants in the Western Cape. Boddington (1983: 91) argues that African women had little other employment options available to them, which explains their continued dominance in domestic service.

On the contrary, Ally (2010: 29) argues that the demographic transformation of this sector in Johannesburg is due to the fact that African female migration only started to develop in the 1920s¹¹. African women only started to dominate the domestic service by 1936 (Ally, 2010: 29).

The relationship between class and race is complex, as class and race have historically been closely aligned with domestic service generally performed by Black servants for White employers (Hickson & Strous, 1993: 109; Gaitskell *et al.*, 1983: 88). However, some White women have historically, performed domestic work for other White women. Furthermore, domestic service is not a working-class activity in the sense that this sector is characterized by low status, education and union membership, but also that many domestic workers are dependent on working for others in order to survive. They do not have independent means of production in a strictly Marxist sense. For these reasons, the relationship between race and class in the domestic sector remains a complex matrix and contributes to an unequal class construction as it is labour intensive and unskilled (Gaitskell *et al.*, 1983: 87; Grossman, 2009: 208).

What makes South Africa unique to other countries is the effect of Apartheid, which accentuated the master-servant relationship in terms of race. The Apartheid government

¹¹ Between the periods of 1921 and 1936, African female migration rose to 245.3 %. Most of these migrated African women were incorporated into the domestic service. By 1936, more than 90% of African women were employed as domestic servants in Johannesburg. See Ally, 2010: 29.

played a vital role in shaping the master-servant employment relationship within the domestic sector of South Africa.

3.3 Domestic Service and State Control during Apartheid

By the 1950s, the Apartheid state introduced administration boards and labour bureaus to regulate both the supply of cheap African male workers for the mining industry, and African female workers for the domestic service sector. All African workers needed work permits to remain in the White urban areas and employers had to register their African workers at one of the Bantu Affairs Administration Boards. These bureaus helped the state to regulate and distribute domestic servants among masters and to prevent an oversupply of domestic servants in one area (Ally, 2010: 39).

During the 1970s, domestic servants were forced to fulfil a number of requirements before they could legally work as domestic servants in White urban areas. They had to ask for permission to work in a White urban area from the tribal labour bureau and if married, asked their husbands permission to work in cities. Only then could masters register them at the Bantu Affairs Administration Board (Ally, 2010: 40). However, many masters bypassed this means of state control by simply hiring domestic servants off the streets. Interestingly, many African women seeking employment often risked “illegal” status rather than conforming to difficult requirements set out by the state (Ally, 2010: 41-43).

For these reasons, it can be argued that attempts by the state to regulate domestic work caused domestic service to be unregulated as both masters and job-seeking African women bypassed these requirements. The state tried to prevent this by threatening masters with heavy fines if they failed to register their domestic servants at the Bantu Affairs Administration Board.

3.4 TRANSITIONS

3.4.1 Master-Servant Relationship

3.4.1.1 Nature of Employment

Cole (1992: 74) gives an example of the daily life of domestic servants in South Africa under the master-servant employment relationship in South Africa. She documented the following story of a domestic servant in Apartheid South Africa:

“I work very hard. I must start work at seven o’clock in the morning and I only finish at 8:30 pm after they have finishing eating supper and I have washed up the dishes. Every Friday I have to work until 10:00 pm, because my madam had people for supper. On Saturday nights, I have to come in and look after the children, because the madam and master go out. I don’t get paid any extra money for doing it”- Edlah Mthuludi (Cole, 1992: 74).

From this statement, it is clear that during Apartheid¹², domestic servants were employed to devote all their energy for the furtherance of their masters and their families. Tight schedules for domestic servants around household chores were common in Apartheid South Africa.

Under the master-servant relationship, Coser (1973: 35) reports how masters expect domestic servants to be unmarried and asexual. Similar instances were found during the Apartheid years in South Africa. Below is an extract of a domestic servant who was forced to undergo examinations against her will after she complained about stomach pains. She tells the story of how White doctors and medical students had discussed in front of her whether or not to remove her womb so that the students could gain practical experience:

“They just tell me there are students who must see this operation. No permission. You don’t ask apparatus what you are going to do. Because they don’t talk. Here we are just ... apparatus for White doctors ... It was only White students. So they used, it’s how they learn from us. You are like animals”-Mama Ethel (Grossman, 2009: 212).

Clearly in the above statement, domestic servants in Apartheid South Africa were controlled and treated to the level of animals by masters. Experience of domestic servants in Apartheid South Africa is similar to domestic servants’ experiences in other countries under the master-servant relationship. Domestic servants in Apartheid South Africa were also treated as inmates, where all activities were tightly scheduled and controlled by masters.

12 The Afrikaans word, Apartheid, means in logical terms, separateness. Apartheid was part of the South African legal framework from 1948 to 1994, whereby people were classified into different racial groups: White, Black, Indian and Coloured.

3.4.1.2 *Employment Relationship*

During Apartheid, the unequal master-servant employment relationship, domestic servants were required to do tasks beyond the normal duties. A domestic servant reports:

“The boss can also tell you what to do around the house. For example, she’ll say wash the dogs even though it’s not your job to do that. Then she’ll tell me to put sunscreen on the dogs, because they get burnt. Now the dogs run away from me when they see me, because they hate sunscreen. Have you ever seen a dog that uses sunscreen?” – Domestic servant in Johannesburg (Motala, 2010: 1).

Cock (1980: 117) reports in her study of how the unequal employment relationship between domestic servants and masters promoted inferiority among domestic servants. For example, one domestic servant reported that masters buy better food for their dogs than for them and that dogs are allowed to eat off dishes, while they are not (Cock, 1980: 117). These examples show how domestic servants during Apartheid were treated worse than masters’ pets. “We are slaves” and “treated like animals”, a domestic servant reported (Cock, 1980: 117, 120).

Language was also used to enhance distance and difference. Similar to Hansen’s (1989: 67) example of how domestic servants in Zambia were obliged to address their masters as “madam” while in return being addressed as “Kitchen Kaffirs”, in Apartheid South Africa they addressed masters as “boss” (Motala, 2010: 1), while in return being addressed by generic terms such as “ousie”, which dehumanized them (Ally, 2010: 178).

Besides the racial ideologies of Apartheid, the lack of employment contracts restricted paid domestic servants’ abilities for formalized employment, as the state did not offer protection (Ally, 2010: 101). White employers had the power to dismiss domestic servants whenever they felt like it (Ginsburg, 2000: 88-89). Domestic servants were also often subject to physical, sexual and verbal abuse (Grant, 1997: 62). Slapping and racial slurs were common (Ginsburg, 2000: 88). The Apartheid legislation and the lack of formalization of the domestic sector contributed to harsh working conditions for many.

3.4.1.3 *Working Conditions and Benefits*

The master-servant relationship dominated the domestic employment in Apartheid South Africa and was reproduced in various ways. Subservience was enhanced by differing standards where masters prohibited domestic servants from drinking out of their cups, sitting

on furniture, etc (Cock, 1980: 134). This reproduces the idea of difference among masters and domestic servants in Apartheid South Africa.

In terms of wages, only a few got paid a living wage and this was left to the decision of masters (Cock, 1980: 28). Increases were only given “when [masters] feel like it” (Cock, 1980: 29). Domestic servants tended not to ask for an increase in wages, because they were afraid of being fired and accepted these terms without negotiation. Domestic servants had no bargaining power in terms of wages, which emphasize their vulnerability and powerlessness (Cock, 1980: 30).

The working hours of domestic servants during Apartheid were also not regulated. Apart from farm labourers, domestic servants worked longer hours than any other worker in Apartheid South Africa. Many masters even took domestic servants to their holiday houses on the coast, where they continued to cook, clean and look after employers’ children. Many masters considered this as the domestic servants’ holiday (Cock, 1980: 48).

Finally, domestic workers lacked any form of collective bargaining and legal protection (Cock, 1980: 73; Grant, 1997: 61). Domestic servants were excluded from the Unemployment Insurance Act 30 of 1966, which provides maternity, illness and unemployment benefits. Domestic servants were also not included in the Wage Act 5 of 1957, which regulated minimum wages for workers who did not have collective bargaining power (Grant, 1997: 61). There was also no opportunity to belong to trade unions as Black unions were banned during Apartheid. Domestic servants were paid the lowest wages without any social legislative protection, which results in generations of economical under classes (Grant, 1997: 61).

3.4.2 Paternalism, Maternalism, and Living Arrangements

Although the master-servant employment relationship never formally ended in South Africa, it slowly started to change as domestic servants started moving out of their masters’ houses and “madams” started to employ “maids”. This gave rise to maternalistic employment relationship between madams and maids. This was a typical feature of the employment relationship of domestic work during Apartheid.

3.4.2.1 Nature of Employment Relationship

In the domestic service sector in South Africa, maternalism occurs when White madams see themselves in a parental role toward Black maids. Genovese (1976 in King, 2007: 12) argues that maternalism is used by White madams as a form of “moral justification for the institution of slavery” (Genovese, in King, 2007: 12). This promotes racial parental and child analogy, where the Black maid becomes inferior and unable of sustaining a civilized life on her own (King, 2007: 12). For example, in Makosana’s (1989: 105) thesis on the working conditions of maids in Cape Town in the 1980s, she reveals that maids are treated “like a child, and not an adult”. In King’s (2007: 12) study, maids report how “madams were just like their mothers”.

3.4.2.2 Employment Relationship

In this regard, Cock (1980: 90) gives various accounts of maids’ perspectives of the maternalistic employment relationship. One maid said that “she (the White madam) thinks I am not fully grown. She treats me like a baby”, while another one said that “she looks down on me and does not see me as a woman” (Cock, 1980: 90). Madams also indicated in Cock’s (1980: 134) study that “maids think I’m her mother”. For example, madams often share information about contraceptives and sex with maids just like she does with her daughter (Makosana, 1989: 118). Madams’ children often call maids on their name, even though maids are almost the same age as their mother, which emphasizes that maids are perceived as being on the same level as children (Makosana, 1989: 97). Incidences such as these are strengthened by live-in arrangements.

3.4.2.3 Domestic Servants’ Living Arrangements

The central trend of paid domestic work under Apartheid is that of live-in domestic work, where madams are White and live-in maids, Black (Preston-Whyte, 1976: 71). Live-in maids were often given rooms in the back of the madam’s gardens that were characteristically “squalid, bare and cramped in comparison with the standard of furnishings in the employer’s (madam’s) living quarters” (Cock, 1980: 62). Some madams provided accommodation in their garages with broken windows, described as being “worse than dog kennels” (Makosana, 1989: 97). Thus, madams of live-in maids showed kindness by providing their living quarters with basic necessities such as a bed, a table and chair. Although these standard living quarters

may be seen by maids as a vast improvement from their own homes, live-in domestic work gave rise to severe oppressive employment relations.

Cock (1980: 60) states that during Apartheid, live-in maids were required to address their employers as either “master” or “madam”, while they are addressed as “the servant” or “girl”. Furthermore, live-in maids in the Apartheid years were often required to enter and exit at the back door of their madam’s houses. They were often given left-over food that the madam found unsuitable for their own family and use separate cooking and eating utensils (Cock, 1980: 60; Preston-Whyte, 1976: 86). Preston-Whyte (1976: 86) makes the provocative claim that White families saw their African maids as “dirty or unhygienic, which demands that they sleep separately from the White family and use separate toilets”. It is clear that racial inequality is characteristic of live-in domestic work in Apartheid South Africa.

Another characteristic of live-in domestic work during the Apartheid era in South Africa is the arrangements of family separation from maids. During Apartheid, it was illegal for Black people to be on the premises of White people, unless they were a registered employee. The lives of live-in maids were controlled to the extent that they could not raise their own children, or see their husbands (Ally, 2010: 47, Makosana, 1989: 107). Isolation is part of live-in arrangements, as many accommodation provided by madams is often bare with minimum furniture and walls are without photos of family members (Makosana, 1989: 107). Preston-Whyte (1976: 73) states in her case study of live-in maids in Durban, that they were given only one day off per week. The fact that live-in maids’ identities were controlled by madams and that any form of access to normal life beyond that of the service, contributed to unequal employment relationships.

As these extreme burdens of live-in domestic work became too much for some maids, they started to negotiate live-out working conditions. The main reason for this shift from live-in to live-out domestic work was that the latter enables them to care for their own families (Ally, 2010: 47). On average, live-out maids worked for at least 40 hours a week, while live-in maids for more than 60 hours (Cock, 1980: 41).

By the mid-1970s, live-out domestic work became an identifying category in paid domestic work in South Africa. Although the diminishing of residence permits for African workers at the end of the Apartheid era facilitated the live-out movement, Ally (2010: 48) argues that maids also shaped this trend. She argues that maids negotiated ways with madams so that

they can have individual lives outside of their work. This emphasizes the desire of maids for self-worth and dignity by being able to take care of their own children.

The nature of the work, however, did not change. Live-out domestic work did not change the fact that maids remained in the serving class and did not eliminate servitude. They were still treated harshly by madams and their families. Non-White people in Apartheid South Africa did (and some still do not) not have adequate provisions of housing, toilets, running water and electricity. This made live-out maids' lives much harder than live-in maids who at least had acceptable living quarters with electricity and running water. Those living out, whose wages were generally not much higher, had the additional burden of transport and lengthy commuting times. Ally (2010: 51) reports in her study that live-out maids travel every day up to three hours to and from madams' and their houses. This results in constant tiredness. So while live-out domestic work has given maids some form of autonomy to maintain individual lives outside of employment, it did not change their status as domestic servants or make employment any easier (Ally, 2010: 52). However, Ally (2010: 52) makes another important statement. She states that maids restructured their work yet again by shifting from being full-time to part-time maids.

3.4.2.4 Part-time Work

Although many scholars such as Rees (1998) and Flint (1988) argue that the shift from full-time to part-time work is a key characteristic of post-Apartheid domestic employment, Ally (2010: 52) argues that this shift of part-time work in domestic service sector can be drawn back to the 1970s. Ally (2010: 52-53) gives examples of how a government survey in 1972 and a Survey of Household Expenditure (SHE) in 1975, established that the number of full-time and part-time maids were the same. Ally (2010: 53) states further that by 1985, more part-time than full-time maids were employed. There are two types of part-time work arrangements. Maids can either be employed as part-time maids by one family or by different families.

There are various reasons why there has been a shift from full-time to part-time paid domestic work. Ally (2010: 54) states in her study that it was a strategy for many maids in the Apartheid South Africa to try to change a full-time "work-by-time" to part-time "work-by-task" arrangement. The main aim for this transformation was to gain some control over the work process, to create an idea of skilled work and to obtain some form of independence (Ally, 2010: 55).

From employers' perspectives, part-time work is also seen as a means to cut costs and gain control over maids. Ally (2010: 56) reports in her study that employers expect part-time maids to clean the whole house in one day. This diminishes part-time maids' perception of "work-by-task" arrangements. Part-time domestic work remains in fact "work-by-time". Many part-time maids argue that this is a coercive strategy of madams to gain control over them and to demand more labour from them (Ally, 2010: 57). Employers also do not have enough money to employ maids on a full-time basis. Thus, they employ part-time maids for one or two days a week. Racial issues in Apartheid South Africa were another factor contributing to employers' choice of having part-time maids. In Ally's study (2010: 56) many part-time maids stated that madams do not want Black people in their houses, and therefore only employ part-time maids for one day a week.

Based on these reasons, part-time domestic work in Apartheid South Africa may be perceived as undesirable, because it was one of the most exploitative service sectors. This is due to the fact that the domestic sector was not regulated in terms of minimum wages, working hours and other legal protection from the state.

With regards to this statement, Grossman (2011: 135) argues that South African society see domestic work as "just domestic work", which degrades and devalues this sector. Thus, apart from the Apartheid legacy, the way in which South African society sees domestic work results in poor wages, lack of formalisation and generations of underclass citizens.

3.4.2.5 Working Conditions and Benefits

During Apartheid, madams used payments in kind and gift-giving as a strategic tool to enhance dependency and mask the low wages of maids. Clothing was often a "token for good service" (Makosana, 1989: 91). Some received other benefits as revealed in Martha's statement:

"[The salary] is a very small amount, but when I think about the grocery allowance that I get every month and the payments she (the employer) makes towards my daughter's education, I do not complain" (Makosana, 1989: 145)

The goodwill of the employer not only contributes to loyalty and dependency of the maid, but a way of control as madams can easily withdraw these benefits.

Live-out work appears to improve working conditions slightly as maids can “knock off”, to be at home with families after work (Ally, 2010: 49). This allows maids to be workers and mothers, but it does not improve working conditions. Live-out maids do similar tasks as live-in maids. For example, a maid who commutes on a full-time basis reveals the following:

“Domestic work is a gradual killer. I start work at 8:30 am until 2 pm and have no rest hour in between. I have to clean a five-roomed house...I start with the bedrooms as both my employer and her son are lazy. Clothing is always scattered all over the house. I do washing and ironing by hand” - Thelma (Makosana, 1989: 117-118).

In terms of part-time work, there are various negative consequences for maids. Part-time maids travel from one house to another and often complain of work overload. The workload is more intense and work pace is faster, as they are expected to clean madams’ houses in one day for similar low wages (Makosana, 1989: 117).

As previously indicated, maids often receive gifts such as old clothing or bonuses at Christmas. Cock (1980: 95) argues that maids were often dependent on the kindness of madams, since their daily lives involved various forms of restrictions. Similarly, Ally (2010: 14) argues that maids in Apartheid South Africa also used the intimate relationship with madams to their benefit. This emphasizes maids’ dependency on madams’ kindness.

3.4.3 Formalization

3.4.3.1 Nature of Domestic Work in Post-Apartheid South Africa

In 1996, labour rights were extended to the domestic sector (Ally, 2010: 68). The Basic Conditions of Employment Act was the first Act to formalize domestic work as a “protected sector within the legislative framework” (Fish, 2006: 116). Here they were legally defined as employees and domestic work as employment. Furthermore, they were given access to state agencies such as The Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA), which gives domestic workers legal protection in case of unfair dismissals and treatments (Ally, 2010: 68).

Trade unions, especially COSATU, played an important role to promote and establish minimum wages and other working conditions for domestic workers. In 2002, after a conference with several stakeholders, the Minister of Labour gazetted the Sectoral

Determination Seven: Domestic Workers Sector¹³, which set out clear conditions of domestic work in South Africa. Employers became legally obliged to pay specific hourly wages and annual increases as determined by the state.

The employment relationship became more formalized as employment contracts were set up to regulate overtime payments, leave provisions and provide domestic workers with pay slips at the end of the month. The main aim of the state's efforts was to transform the highly exploitative working conditions of domestic workers and to prohibit the use of child labour under the age of 15 years as domestic workers (Finnemore, 2002: 67).

3.4.3.2 Working Conditions and Benefits

The Sectoral Determination Seven: Domestic Worker Sector formalized domestic work in post-Apartheid South Africa in terms of key variables, namely wages, overtime payments, working hours, leave provisions, termination of employment and belonging to unions. Wages¹⁴ were formalized to the extent that domestic workers who work for less than 27 hours per week are entitled to a fixed wage, and those who work more than 27 hours receive another amount.

The Sectoral Determination Seven: Domestic Workers Sector has made several permissible and impermissible deals for deductions to employers. Permissible deductions include medical insurances, savings, pension funds, trade union subscriptions, order of account payments to

13 *Sectoral Determination Seven: Domestic Worker Sector*. 2011. [Online], Available: <http://www.labourguide.co.za/conditions-of-employment/sectoral-determination-seven-domestic-worker-sector-546>.

14 In terms of wages, domestic workers in Stellenbosch receive the same as other domestic workers nationally. Those who work for more than 27 ordinary hours per week, are paid R7, 72 on an hourly basis, R347, 79 on a weekly basis or R1506, 34 on a monthly basis from 1 December 2010 to 30 November 2011, while those who work for less than 27 hours per week are paid R9, 12 on an hourly basis, R246, 30 on a weekly basis and R1067, 14 on a monthly basis. Domestic workers are also entitled for overtime payments. According to the S.D.S.D.W.S., domestic workers receive one and a half times the hourly wage for overtime work. For example, domestic workers in Stellenbosch will receive R7, 72 + R3, 86 for every extra hour worked. For complete list, see: *Sectoral Determination Seven: Domestic Worker Sector*. 2011. [Online], Available: <http://www.labourguide.co.za/conditions-of-employment/sectoral-determination-seven-domestic-worker-sector-546>.

financial institutions, rentals and loans. Impermissible deductions include breakage of crockery and electrical appliances, damages to clothes, meals provided during working hours, clothing and work equipment.

In terms of working hours, employers may employ domestic workers for a maximum of forty-five hours per week, maximum nine hours per day on a five day basis. Domestic workers may work for a maximum of eight hours, when employed for more than five days. Overtime may not exceed more than three hours a day or fifteen hours a week. Standby working hours include a time between 20:00 and 06:00 for R30 per hour, which is the national rate. A meal interval of one hour is permitted when working for more than five hours continuously.

Domestic workers are also entitled to annual leave for up to three weeks per year or one day off every seventeen days. Sick leave includes a cycle of thirty-six months, while maternity leave includes four consecutive months of unpaid leave. Domestic workers are also allowed to take five days off per year for family responsibilities. Termination of employment requires a notice of one week if domestic workers are employed for six weeks or less. When domestic workers are employed for six months or more, a notice of four weeks is required. Live-in domestic workers are allowed to live on the premises of employers for a month, after a notice has been given.

If employers have to dismiss employees on the basis of economic, technological and/or structural set-up, they are responsible for compensation payment to employees. This include at least one week of pay for every completed twelve months. Domestic workers are also entitled to a certificate of service.

In terms of unions, domestic workers formed the South African Domestic Workers Union (SADWU) in the early 1970s, but were not recognized as a union. However, it was officially launched in 1986 and became one of the largest and most supported domestic workers' unions in South Africa. By 1989, SADWU launched a campaign, which included marches, protests and petitions to legitimize domestic work in terms of a minimum wage. However, although the National Manpower Commission responded to SADWU's demands, it started to lose members due to leadership disputes and mismanagement and SADWU dissolved (Ally, 2008:2).

In 2000, veteran leaders of the dissolved SADWU established another union, namely the South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union (SADSAWU). SADSAWU is the only national union for domestic workers that organizes and protects them. However, the density of this union remains weak, as there are only a few thousand members nationally. The ability to maintain the vitality and human resource capacity of this union is limited due to workers having widely disappeared (Ally, 2008: 5-6). Thus, although both SADWU and SADSAWU helped to formalize domestic work in South Africa, they failed to sustain its purposes.

Although domestic workers are now more legally protected than in the past in terms of minimum wages, working hours and leave provisions, it appears as if the transition of the domestic sector from an informal to a more formal sector based on contracts is difficult for both employers and domestic workers. Some employers remain unaware or unwilling to adhere to labour laws (Fish, 2006: 118).

Fish's (2006: 116) study on the protection of paid domestic workers in Cape Town, found that of the seventy-five domestic workers she interviewed in 2000 and 2001, only three domestic workers were protected by formal labour contracts and only five employers supported the minimum wage standard. Employers blamed language barriers as the reason why they have not set up contracts with them. Another employer said that her domestic worker was reluctant to sign the contract due to "the long history of casual labour" (Fish, 2006: 116). This employer stated that she did not sign a contract with her domestic worker, because it will make her feel "uncomfortable and sceptical about the overall job" (Fish, 2006: 116).

From domestic workers' perspectives, the majority in Fish's study indicated no changes in working environments after Apartheid and that their rights only existed "on paper" (Fish, 2006: 117). Domestic workers also indicated that although attempts were made to formalize this sector, domestic work "continues to be considered as informal labour" (Fish, 2006: 117).

A major challenge is that the provisions in law are difficult to enforce and as a result, employers do not adhere to these laws. This means that the employment relationship remains unequal (Fish, 2006: 117). Hence, many remain unprotected and exploited due to difficulty and unwillingness of employers to sign contracts with domestic workers and the state's inability to enforce laws. It appears that employers avoid transgressing laws by turning to housecleaning service companies.

3.4.4 Housecleaning Service Companies in South Africa

Housecleaning service companies and agencies have increased all over South Africa. Some are nationwide franchises or area-based franchises, while others are one-women owned cleaning businesses. A key characteristic of housecleaning service companies is the triangular and contractual employment relations between the manager (now the employer), domestic employee (former domestic servant/ maid/ domestic worker) and client (former master/ madam/ employer).

3.4.4.1 Nature of Housecleaning Service Companies

Housecleaning service companies offer weekly, bi-weekly or monthly cleaning services, where one to a team of up to five domestic employees offer a “professional cleaning service aimed at the niche market of domestic clients who wanted the convenience of having their houses professionally cleaned, without the worry of employing permanent domestic cleaning staff”¹⁵. Another housecleaning service company presents themselves as offering “a full range of professional cleaning services to suit the requirements of owners and tenants in all office and retail buildings and homes by creating fresh, clean, pleasant and environmental friendly spaces for people to live and work in”¹⁶. Another housecleaning service company specializes in “professionalism, thoroughness and great customer satisfaction”¹⁷.

Apart from offering clients a professional cleaning service, housecleaning service companies also train their domestic employees. For example, a housecleaning service company in Gauteng advertises employing “specially trained employees” using “the most modern and effective cleaning techniques”¹⁸. One housecleaning service company provides domestic employees with training, which is divided into three sections: Domestic employees are trained in terms of basic cleaning which consists of how to wash dishes, how to clean a bathroom thoroughly, and how to use a vacuum cleaner and cleaning products amongst others. They are also trained in terms of general issues such as cross-cultural communication

15 *Jackie's Cleaning Services*. 2009. [Online] Available: <http://www.jackies.co.za>

16 *Daisy Nteta Cleaning Services cc*. [Online] Available: <http://www.daisyclean.co.za>

17 *Broomstix: For all your cleaning needs*. [Online] available: <http://www.broomstix.co.za>

18 *Maids and Mops: Domestic & Commercial Cleaning Services & Staff Training*. 2009. [Online] Available: <http://www.maidsandmops.com>

skills, and personal hygiene. They also receive training in how to do laundry, use washing machines and iron of clothes¹⁹.

Thus, the nature of housecleaning service companies in South Africa ranges from offering clients with once-off, weekly, or bi-weekly professional cleaning services by trained and specialized domestic employees. Services include a range of tasks such as ironing, general cleaning of bathrooms, kitchens, bedrooms, studies, windows and floors, furniture, blinds, pictures, floors and walls” and also “vacuuming, dusting, polishing and mopping²⁰.

3.4.4.2 Employment Relationship

Housecleaning service companies offer a customer-vendor relationship between employers, clients and domestic employees (Glenn, 1992: 23). The customer-vendor relationship liberates clients from various responsibilities such as supervision and inspection. Most do “onsite inspections and customer surveys” and “monitor workers closely”²¹. Another housecleaning service company in the Western Cape emphasizes the following in terms of supervision and inspection:

“We check before they start working that they know exactly what they are supposed to do, and when they are collected we check again that everything was done satisfactorily, especially when the client is not present to give us assurance that everything has been to his/her satisfaction. We also check that everything is locked up and alarms are set”²².

Apart from taking over the task of supervision and inspection, housecleaning service companies prevent clients from getting involved with personal issues of domestic employees. For example, one housecleaning service company in the Westerns Cape clearly states that “domestic employees are not supposed to discuss any personal or medical problems, and if

19 *Marvellous Maids*. [Online] Available: <http://www.marvellousmaids.co.za>

20 *Daisy Nteta Cleaning Services* cc. [Online] Available: <http://www.daisyclean.co.za>

21 *Maids and Mops: Domestic & Commercial Cleaning Services & Staff Training*. 2009. [Online] Available: <http://www.maidsandmops.com>

22 *Broomstix: For all your cleaning needs*. [Online] available: <http://www.broomstix.co.za>

they should, clients are requested to report it immediately to the person in charge of the relevant team”²³.

Housecleaning service companies also pay into Unemployment Insurance Funds (UIF), offer sick leave, pension and other medical funds. This means that clients can “forget about the hassles of UIF, pension, medical aid, salary, sick leave [and] annual leave” as this is the responsibility of the housecleaning service company²⁴.

3.4.4.3 Legitimization

The legal status of the employee and user enterprise or client and the type of service provider involved in the triangular employment relationship, have to be clearly articulated (Vosko, 1997: 64).

In terms of contracts, generally there are two contracts. A commercial contract is signed between the service provider (which is in this case the owner or manager of the housecleaning service company) and the user enterprise or client. The other is between the employee (domestic employee) and the service provider (owner or manager of housecleaning service company). The employment contract sets out the terms and conditions of employment and working conditions such as wages, benefits, working hours and holidays (Vosko, 1997: 66).

In terms of clients, housecleaning service companies offer them different types of employment contracts. Some housecleaning service companies offer clients “two contract options that don’t tie them down for lengthy periods”²⁵. Generally, employment contracts are flexible, as clients need not to pay for services if they go away for a period of time¹³.

Contracts also ensure that both domestic employees and clients know what is expected in terms of services and workload. For example, employment contracts stipulate that domestic employees in a specific housecleaning service company are responsible to carry out certain tasks such as the cleaning of bathrooms, while they are not supposed to clean swimming

23 *Broomstix: For all your cleaning needs*. [Online] available: <http://www.broomstix.co.za>

24 *Locanto: Rub ‘n Scrub Home/Office Cleaning Services*, Pretoria, Gauteng. 2011. [Online] Available: <http://pretoria.locanto.co.za/ID.118209569/Rub-n-Scrub-Home-Office-Cleaning-Service.html>

25 *Maids on Wheels*. 2008. [Online] Available: <http://www.maidsonwheels.co.za>

pools or wash pets. Employment contracts, therefore, protect domestic employees in terms of workload and tasks.

Based on this, it appears as if the client is not directly involved with domestic employees. However, Davidov (2004: 736) argues that this is an illusion and creates a “superficial impression” that the service provider is the employer. Theron (2005: 619), for example, indicates that the role of clients is not that static as they still decide what labour or service they require. There would be no employment at the client’s workplace, if the client does not want the service. Theron (2005: 619) argues that the role of the client is dominant in the triangular relationship and establishes the parameters of the employment relationship. Housecleaning service companies are one example where clients still have control over domestic employees, as they determine whether domestic employees have cleaned their houses according to certain standards and expectations. Some housecleaning service companies state that if clients are not satisfied with the cleaning, they “will re-clean the specific area at no charge”²⁶.

3.4.4.4 Working Conditions and Benefits

Generally, housecleaning service companies in South Africa offer their cleaning service in two and a half to three hours for a team of workers²⁷, and a minimum of six and a half hours for a char²⁸. For a team of domestic employees, it means that they clean up to three houses a day while a char, generally only cleans one house per day.

Most housecleaning service companies state clearly that they “comply fully with the Basic Conditions of Employment Act”²⁹, which means that domestic employees are guaranteed a minimum wage. For clients, prices of services are determined by the size of the house, requirements and preferences they have³⁰. There is thus double surveillance by the manager and the client.

26 *Broomstix: For all your cleaning needs*. [Online] available: <http://www.broomstix.co.za>

27 *Broomstix: For all your cleaning needs*. [Online] available: <http://www.broomstix.co.za>

28 *Super Char: The Reliable Office and Domestic Cleaning Service*. 2007. [Online] Available: <http://www.superchar.co.za>

29 *The Clean Environment: Professionals in the Cleaning Business*. [Online] Available: <http://www.cleanenvironment.co.za>

30 *Daisy Nteta Cleaning Services* cc. [Online] Available: <http://www.daisyclean.co.za>

Housecleaning service companies offer various benefits to clients. Firstly, housecleaning service companies offer clients “a cleaning service program that suits their individual needs and budget”³¹. Secondly, many housecleaning service companies guarantee quality and professional service delivery, as they use “products, equipment, and staff of the highest standards” and clean houses “with the utmost attention to detail”¹⁹. Thirdly, clients are also guaranteed “trustworthiness”¹⁹, as many housecleaning service companies “check, scrutinize and investigate” past references of domestic employees before employing them³². Furthermore, domestic employees are also allowed to take only their lunchboxes with them into clients’ houses, which minimize chances of theft.

From the domestic employees’ perspectives, many housecleaning service companies’ aim is to uplift the status of the domestic employee by “giving her pride in their work that they perform in clients’ houses”³³. Domestic employees also receive training from managers of housecleaning service companies on a regular basis, which uplifts their status to “professional employees”²². Domestic employees are also assured that they receive unemployment insurance funds and other benefits such as paid leave, sick leave and maternity leave, which may not always be the case if they work privately, because housecleaning service companies need to comply with the Basic Conditions of Employment Act.

3.5 Conclusion

The history of domestic service in South Africa has undergone various transitions from predominantly private and permanent to increasingly part-time as well as more commonly externalised employment. It transformed from a highly unregulated, exploitative and unequal employment relations during the master-servant and maternalistic employment relationship to greater legal protection under post-Apartheid and in outsourced housecleaning service companies.

State regulations of the domestic sector in post-Apartheid South Africa involve set minimum wages and working hours, leave provisions and overtime payments for domestic workers in order to improve the working conditions of this sector. These interventions aim to improve

31 *Maids on Wheels*. 2008. [Online] Available: <http://www.maidsonwheels.co.za>

32 *Marvellous Maids*. [Online] Available: <http://www.marvellousmaids.co.za>

33 *Maids and Mops: Domestic & Commercial Cleaning Services & Staff Training*. 2009. [Online] Available: <http://www.maidsandmops.com>

the highly unequal relationship between employers and domestic workers. One of the main transformations of the domestic sector in post-Apartheid South Africa has been the shift from a master-servant employment relationship into an employer-domestic worker employment relationship. But is this enough?

This chapter tried to explain that although the domestic sector in post-Apartheid South Africa has improved significantly, there are still numerous accounts of exploitation. Although employers are forced by law to have contracts with domestic workers and to register them for unemployment insurance funds, many employers are unwilling or find these processes difficult. As a result, domestic workers are still not completely protected by the state. The formalisation of domestic service has also meant that many employers now no longer wish to enter a formal employment relationship with domestic workers, given the restrictions and obligations placed upon them by law. This in part, has led to the growth of housecleaning service companies that relieve employers of this burden. That question that is asked is whether this arrangement benefits only former employers (now clients)? Has this improved the working conditions of domestic employees fortunate enough to be employed by these companies? This is the central question addressed by this study in the forthcoming chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

4.1 BACKGROUND OF CHAPTER

The literature on the main transitions of domestic work provided a general background to the factors that underline this growth in housecleaning service companies. However, a deeper understanding of this growth of housecleaning service companies in South Africa is required. The aim of this chapter is therefore to present primary data on two housecleaning service companies in the Stellenbosch area. Data is presented from three perspectives, namely the managers, clients (formerly employers) and employees (formerly domestic servants). Four broad themes are discussed, which includes the nature of housecleaning service companies, employments relations and contracts, working conditions and benefits.

4.2 MANAGERS' PERSPECTIVE

4.2.1. Nature of Housecleaning Service Company A and B

4.2.1.1 Background of Housecleaning Service Company A and B

Housecleaning service company A is located in the Somerset West area and operates from the White female manager's house. Thirty nine domestic employees are employed by this company. Teams are divided into three and stay together. Clients get the same team of employees every time. The youngest domestic employee is 21 years old and the oldest one, 54 years old. The reason why there are so many domestic employees employed in this housecleaning company, is because they deliver services in Somerset West, Strand and Stellenbosch. All domestic employees are female, except for one Coloured male. The female domestic employees are predominately Coloured, but there are a few Xhosa workers. All domestic employees wear similar uniforms, with the company's name printed on the back. There are four male drivers, one White man, and three Coloured men. Domestic employees are transported to various houses in white Ventures, with the company's name clearly visible on the sides of the vehicle. All the domestic employees and drivers arrive at 06:45 in the morning at the manager's house in Somerset West, where the supervisor, who is also one of the domestic employees, marks everybody's name off on an attendance list.

During this time at the manager's house, they make themselves coffee, while others smoke cigarettes and socialize with one another. Every team has a team leader, who makes sure that the workers fill their empty bottles with different cleaning chemicals, collect vacuum

cleaners, buckets and cleaning cloths. After this is done, the manager has a short meeting with the whole group in her garage, where the requests by clients, such as not to wake the baby or let the dog out when they leave or that they should make sure that the alarm is set again after they have left, are made.

Housecleaning service company B is located in Stellenbosch and operates from the White female manager's house. The size of this housecleaning service company is much smaller, as there are only eighteen domestic employees employed. All of them are Xhosa women. The age of the workers ranges from 22 years of age to over 50 years of age. There are no extra drivers in this housecleaning service company. The manager drives one vehicle and her husband the other. Domestic employees are transported to clients in a white Combi with the company's name clearly visible on the sides. All domestic employees wear similar uniforms with the company's name engraved on the left side of uniform. The clientele is around 475 a month. The manager of housecleaning service company B collects workers every morning at 07:30 at a specific place in Stellenbosch. After roll call, they leave for the first client at 08:00.

4.2.1.2 Growth of Housecleaning Service Companies

Housecleaning service companies are a growing trend in South Africa. Consequently, I wished to establish why this demand for housecleaning services is increasing. The manager of housecleaning service company A responded:

People leave their houses early in the morning and come back late at night. They do not have the time to fetch workers at post offices or bus stops. When there is a taxi-strike, they (domestic workers) cannot come to work and when she (the employer) comes back from work, the pile of washing is standing as it was in the morning before she left her house. If you have a permanent domestic worker in your house, employers need to provide food and cleaning chemicals and they don't know what they are doing the whole day. What we do, we offer a service to people. We provide the cleaning chemicals and vacuum cleaner. All that clients provide, only if they want, are something to drink and biscuits. They (domestic employees) bring their own food. Also, many older people choose us, because then they can go to their children for three or four months, without having to worry about their domestic employee. Then there are also the people in higher income groups who have a permanent domestic worker, but choose us once every two weeks to clean the house properly. People also choose housecleaning companies, because they do not want to get involved in the drama of the CCMA, unemployment insurance benefits or the hiring and firing of domestic employees. It is a lot of stress if you get involved with this and with housecleaning companies, clients avoid this stress. And when there are strikes, we pick

them (the domestic employees) up at the police station or post office. People also don't want to have somebody in their house for the whole day. If you have one domestic worker, she will be in your house for the whole day. Because we have a team of three workers, our team cleans a house in two and a half to three hours and then we pick them up again. Clients can then have their privacy, without someone being in their house the whole day.

Similarly, the manager of housecleaning service company B stated:

It is the times we live in today, people work more and they cannot keep an eye on domestic workers any more. They don't want the responsibility of domestic workers anymore. A cleaning company takes over all the legal aspects, social and financial and medical aspects. The client knows that everything becomes the responsibility of the company. They don't have any responsibility regarding the workers such as sick leave, pension payments and holiday leave. And I think it is a trusting relationship between clients and the company. Another important aspect is security. They know they can give their keys to us and we will look after it carefully.

It is clear from these two statements that housecleaning service companies take over all "legal, social, financial and medical aspects". Also, clients do not need to be concerned about strikes affecting workers coming to work, or they do not need to provide cleaning chemicals or food to domestic employees. Apart from the transformation of these responsibilities to managers of housecleaning service companies, housecleaning service companies also train their domestic employees. Training of domestic employees may cause specialization of services and good service delivery and that may also be a reason why there is a growth of housecleaning service companies.

4.2.1.3 Service Delivery, Training and Specialization of Services

Housecleaning service company A, deliver services in two and a half to three hour sessions. Tasks include cleaning, dusting and ironing a maximum of twenty-five articles of clothing per session. However, cleaning is sometimes extended to the outside. The manager of housecleaning service company A said the following in terms of service delivery:

They only clean inside the houses and sometimes on the porches too. I usually say to them to clean the porches and garden furniture. Some people live on their porches, and it becomes like another room. When I see spider webs at the front door, then I ask them to clean it. Because it is the entrance of the house and it needs to be cleaned too. We clean barbeques sometimes too. They don't do any child care. It is not part of our

work and clients know it from day one. We also don't pick up dog poop from the floor.

Managers of housecleaning service companies also assure that services provided by them are always up to standard. There are various rules in terms of service delivery in housecleaning service companies that domestic employees need to adhere to. Domestic employees should make sure that their cloths are up to standard and that the manager does regular spot checks whether workers adhere to these rules. In housecleaning service company A, team leaders have the responsibility to ensure that "they have enough stock and that vacuum cleaners are cleaned".

In terms of training of domestic employees, the manager of housecleaning service company A responded:

I had to train them. I held meetings, where I trained them. I taught them that they cannot clean the toilet and the basin in the kitchen with the same rag. You cannot clean the bathroom floor and the windows with the same rag. So I had to train them to use different rags for the floor, basins and toilets. And that they should use certain chemicals on certain surfaces. You cannot use the same chemicals to wash a tile floor and use it to clean wooden furniture.

Apart from this, training in housecleaning service company A also focuses on the specialization of cleaning. The manager of housecleaning service company A responded:

Like the fusty in the shower. Spray the tile floors and walls with a spray chemical and close the shower door. Then clean the rest of the bathroom, so that the chemicals can eat the stuff. When you are finished with the rest of the bathroom then you can finish cleaning the shower. This is what we teach them in the meetings. They are taught to wash the tiles from the top to the bottom. You don't wash the floor and then dust. It does not make sense.

Similar to housecleaning service company A, housecleaning service company B delivers services in two and a half hour sessions. Tasks include cleaning, dusting and ironing. The manager of housecleaning service company B said the following in terms of services:

We only clean inside the houses. We do clean patios too and make sure that there are not any spider webs. We don't do any child care. That is not part of their job. We also don't do any gardening and I don't expect that my workers to wash clothes with their hands. We also don't wash out the dogs bowls or wash their blankets. That is not part

of my workers' job. I will protect my workers in terms of this. They know what their job description is.

Domestic employees in housecleaning service company B also receive training. The manager of housecleaning service company B said that she “personally train[s] workers from the beginning and especially during November and December, so that when the New Year starts again, [she] know[s] that they are trained and capable of doing their job properly”.

Training involves various key factors in order to improve services and specialization of services as explained by the manager of housecleaning service company B:

Clients expect a professional job, that workers are trained professionally and that they are able to do the job well. Workers also know that some clients put oil on their furniture, while others use *Mr Minn*. One client uses *Handy Andy* on her floors, while another one uses other sorts of floor cleaning chemicals. I usually have an interview with clients before we start working there, in order to make sure what the client wants and expects from us in terms of cleaning. I also transfer this information to workers and then they know what clients expect. They also know the methods of cleaning. They know where they have to start and where they need to end in order that the work is done fast, effective and professional. They (domestic employees) know the order of it.

Similar to housecleaning service company A, domestic employees in housecleaning service company B are trained to use different chemicals on different surfaces. Also, domestic employees are trained how to clean a room in order to maintain “fast, effective and professional” services. In order to maintain this, the manager of housecleaning service company B said that domestic employees “should work with each other in teams”.

In order to make sure that the service is up to standard, the manager or team leaders inspect services. In terms of spot-checking, in housecleaning service company A, the supervisor is responsible to make sure that the service remains on standard, as been explained by the manager:

She (the supervisor) is also involved with the spot-checking and she looks that everything runs smoothly. She (the supervisor) knows exactly what my standards are. She was first a normal leader in one of the teams, but she showed potential. Now she is paid more than any of the other workers, because of her position.

Not only is the supervisor responsible to ensure that services remain up to standard, but team leaders too. For example, the manager of housecleaning service company A said that “team leaders do spot checking and there are certain rules in my company. That is why there are leaders in a team”. In terms of leadership positions, the manager of housecleaning service company A said:

They show potential for leadership positions. They show that they are intelligent. For example, Sana³⁴ is a young Black woman. The ability how she dealt with certain situations, the way she cleans and ordered stuff on shelves. That is a leader. Also the way she thinks. For example, she reminds me to take the keys, and that we must do that thing and remember this. This is an example of a leader.

Unlike housecleaning service company A where there are team leaders and a supervisor are responsible for inspection, in housecleaning service company B, the manager does it herself. If not satisfied with the standard of cleaning, the manager will ask them to redo a room:

Yes, I do it (the inspections). When I do my inspections, then I will specifically pay attention to their weak points. I know what my workers’ weak points are. So I know what to look out for when I do my inspection. Then I will ask them to clean under the beds for example, I will also wait until it is done. Then the team has to work together, because they do not want to be behind schedule and come late at home. If a client complains about a certain issue, then I will make sure I pay attention to it the next time that we visit.

4.2.1.4 Teamwork

Every member of the team has a specific task to do. In terms of teamwork, the manager of housecleaning service company A responded that: “one worker cleans the bathroom, one cleans the kitchen and the leader does the vacuum cleaning and dusting. If one is finished with her tasks, she needs to help the others in the team”. There is no rotation in terms of performing of tasks in housecleaning service company A. The one who cleans the bathroom, cleans bathrooms in every house and the one who cleans the kitchen, cleans the kitchen in every house, because services need to be “fast, effective and professional”. There is thus a strict division of labour where each does a specific task.

34 Pseudonym given to keep confidentiality.

Unlike housecleaning service company A, there is rotation in terms of execution of tasks in housecleaning service company B. The one, who cleans the bathroom in the first shift, will clean the kitchen in the second shift and will do the ironing in the third shift. This is done to prevent burnout. In fact, the manager housecleaning service company B said the following in terms of rotation of tasks:

I make sure that they (domestic employees) do not do the same tasks in all three shifts. For example, if one worker has done the ironing in the 8 o'clock shift, then she must clean the bathrooms in the next house. I like it when they do a variety of tasks during the day. The one won't do ironing the whole day or clean kitchens the whole day.

Unlike housecleaning service company A, where all teams consist of three employees, teams in housecleaning service company B differ. The manager of housecleaning service company B said that "not all workers who start together at 8 o'clock in a team will be together throughout the day. Some clients need one, two, three or four workers to clean their house. It all depends on the size of the house and what the client wants". Also, the manager of housecleaning service company B said that she gives specific tasks to certain domestic employees, because she knows their "strong and weak points" in terms of cleaning or ironing.

4.2.1.5 Competition

When asked what makes this housecleaning service company attractive in a highly competitive environment³⁵, the manager of housecleaning service company A responded:

There are a lot of housecleaning service companies in the area and they come up like mushrooms and go down like mushrooms. You have to know how to work with workers. You have to speak their language. Not that it is a different language than Afrikaans, but there is a certain body language that you need to know. I am very strict with mine. But so strict that I am, so kind I am.

Clearly, the role of the manager as a mediator between clients and domestic employees is very important. The relationship between the manager and domestic employees is crucial for

³⁵ Prices of housecleaning service companies differ. Housecleaning service company A asks between R195 and R230 per session, while housecleaning service company B, asks R110 for one domestic worker, R175 for two domestic workers, R225 for three domestic workers and R275 for four domestic workers.

the success of the housecleaning service company. This will be discussed in more depth under the section on employment relationships.

When asked about competition, the manager of housecleaning service company B responded:

I (the manager) have contact with the clients. I contact clients regularly. If there is a problem, then I speak to the client. I have an open relationship with clients. I listen to and communicate with them and know when they have a problem with a worker. Also, the ability to trust my workers is good. I don't have problems with stealing and slow productivity. I am very strict with my workers to portray a good name, because [housecleaning service company B] is a well-known name in this area. I believe they choose it because I have control over the workers. I'm not just a drop and go business.

The relationship between the manager and clients needs to be managed well, as it gives the housecleaning service company a competitive advantage above other housecleaning service companies in the area. Trust between the manager and team of domestic employees also contributes to the image and success of the housecleaning service company.

4.2.2 Employment Relationship and Contracts

This section is divided into three sections. Firstly, the relationship between the manager and the domestic employees in housecleaning service companies A and B is explained. Secondly, the relationship between the managers and their clients is explained. Lastly, the different contracts or employment agreements of the two selected housecleaning service companies will be verified.

4.2.2.1 Employment Relationship between Managers and Domestic Employees

When the manager of housecleaning service company A was asked to reflect on her relationship with the domestic employees, she responded:

It is definitely personal. I know about most of their problems at their homes. One worker had a drinking problem so I took her to the alcohol anonymous (AA). I also told her that if she does not stop drinking then she will not work for me anymore. But I have to be strict. If you give a pinkie, then they take a hand.

Apart from getting drawn to the personal matters of domestic employees in terms of their drinking behaviour, the manager also told how she gets involved with household problems of her workers. The manager of housecleaning service company A said:

I know a lot of them have problems in their homes. I have one worker that was hit by her husband every weekend. I wrote him a letter and told him if he hits his wife again, I will fire her, because I cannot allow her to work in clients houses with a swollen face. It is a year that she works here and he never hit her again. But they know if they have problems in their homes, they can tell me. I will support them where I can. The clients see that my workers are happy.

Similarly, in housecleaning service company B, the manager stated that the relationship between her and the domestic employees is personal:

It is personal. They need someone to look after them and that they can trust. It is very important, because they need to know that I care when they have a sick child. Someone who has knowledge of their problems, but it has limits. Throughout the year I have trust in them and they in me, because I don't treat them as pawns. They are people with their own interpersonal problems and they will come to me if they have a problem. But they won't come with every "nitty-gritty" problem to me.

Not only do managers get involved with the personal problems of their domestic employees but also with their financial problems. Domestic employees in housecleaning service companies often borrow money, as the manager of housecleaning service company A expressed:

If they have problems when they cannot pay their bill, then I help them. If they have to pay the crèche for their child, they ask an advance of R400 on their salary and I give it to them. They know it. Some of them have to visit clinics, then I give them the day off and get someone in their place for the day. So I try to be human whenever I can. But they know there are certain rules. They know they will be in trouble if I catch them out that they lie to me.

Similarly, the manager of housecleaning service company B said:

In January, they often tell me that they don't have any money left and I know that their children need to go to school and that they must buy new shoes and pens and suitcases for their children. Then I will give them an advance on their salary, but we have an agreement in terms of how they will pay it back. They know how it works. I don't want them to go to these loan sharks. It will cost them extra money, which they don't have.

It is evident that both managers of housecleaning service company A and B have a maternalistic relationship with their domestic employees. This personal relationship is also based on the kindness of the two managers. The manager of housecleaning service company A said: “My heart is very soft for the workers. When they have problems at their homes then they sometimes go away for a while, but I take them in again, because I know they know what they do”.

The employment relationship between the managers and the domestic employees goes beyond a personal level. Both managers indicated that they have the authority to teach their workers certain behaviours and expect them to adhere to these expectations. The manager of housecleaning service company A said: “I try to show kindness where I can. I told them to stop drinking at 6 o’clock on a Sunday evening, in order to be fresh on a Monday morning”.

Similarly, the manager of housecleaning service company B said that the domestic employees know that she has a medical background and that she helps them whenever she can. Apart from that, she also said:

It is an educational task, because they are raw from the field, and they do not know the White culture that well. I need to educate them in that aspect. That they know what is acceptable and what is not. It’s an uplifting task and I get gratification from it.

Just like a mother to a child, the managers of both housecleaning service companies express how they speak to their domestic employees on a lower level. The manager of housecleaning service company A said that “you have to speak their language. Not that it is a different language than Afrikaans or English, but there is a certain body language that you need to know. I am very strict with mine”. Similarly, the manager of housecleaning service company B said that the domestic employees in her company “need to know that I am the owner and boss of the company. They need to know that they work according to certain rules and that this is a professional cleaning company. I demand respect from them”.

4.2.2.2 Employment Relationship between Managers and Clients

Since domestic work involves the cleaning of peoples’ houses, which is a personal space, it was interesting to establish whether the relationship between managers and clients is personal or formal. When the manager of housecleaning service company A was asked if the relationship between her and her clients is personal or formal she said that it is formal and that she does not make any friends with clients, because “business is business”.

The manager of housecleaning service company B responded similarly:

It is formal, because I treat my clients on a service delivery relationship. I try not to become too personally involve in their lives, but one cannot help it. One does get involved at some point. For example, the client will tell me that her child is getting a degree or that her son has fallen and broke his wrist or that their grandchildren are coming to visit them this weekend. It is all basic stuff. But I will never share my personal problems with clients, because that is very unprofessional. But clients are not a cashier like those at *Checkers* where you only push your food over the counter. There is more than that, because you clean their private homes every week.

In the above statement, the manager of housecleaning service company B explained why the relationship between her and her clients are formal, but to an extent it is personal too, because they do inform each other of their children's accomplishments or when they got hurt, but they do not share personal problems such as financial or sexual problems. The difference between housecleaning service company A and B is that the manager of housecleaning service company B goes to the clients' houses and does the inspection herself, while in housecleaning service company A, the manager hardly sees any clients. She has an office at her house where she does all the administration work in terms of answering the phone and making new appointments for teams at clients' houses.

4.2.2.3 *Employment Contracts*

In housecleaning service company A, domestic employees are all employed on a "full-time permanent basis". The manager of housecleaning service company A said that there are a few employees who are not employed permanently, because they are still in their "training period". The manager informed me that the "training period lasts three months then they will become permanent employees". With the help of the supervisor, the manager of housecleaning service company A, decides when temporary employees are "good enough to become permanent workers". As the manager expressed:

Sometimes she tells me that Cindy³⁶ is as dumb as dirt and that she will be a lot of trouble for us. Sometimes we give that person a black leader. Many times, they improve if they have a black leader. When they show potential, then they can stay.

36 Pseudonym given to keep confidentiality.

Nina³⁷ had three things wrong in the past few weeks. “Slow productivity. Not neat, smells bad. She does not have a decent rag to clean. Sorry for her. She is on thin ice”.

Similarly, in housecleaning service company B, most domestic employees are employed on a permanent basis. There are also domestic employees who are employed on a part-time basis, but when the manager thinks they have enough potential, she employs them on a permanent basis. The manager of housecleaning service company B said that domestic employees “need to prove themselves first” whether they are “capable of working fast and effective”.

However, the manager said that she does not have a contract with her domestic employees, but that she has “an agreement with them that is established by law”. Whether this is a contract or not, I am not sure.

In terms of the dismissals, the manager of housecleaning service company A said that they work according to disciplinary codes, which is based on labour laws. When asked to elaborate on the disciplinary codes, the manager of housecleaning service company A responded:

If they (the domestic employees) steal anything, then they are immediately fired. Absent from work: not more than two days in a row. Alcohol on premises is prohibited. One worker drank a client’s alcohol and she became very drunk. I simply had to let her go. They need to contact me if they cannot come the next day.

The manager of housecleaning service company B also said that she dismisses workers immediately when they are caught stealing. So far, only two employees have been dismissed because of stealing. The manager also works on a disciplinary code system as “established by labour laws”. All domestic employees know what the disciplinary code involves. Domestic employees can be dismissed if the “standard of cleaning continues to be weak or when they stay away from work too long”.

In terms of breaking goods of clients, the manager of housecleaning service company A explained that she tries to protect domestic employees as far as possible. She described one recent incident where a domestic employee broke a tap of a client:

37 Pseudonym given to keep confidentiality.

I had an incident now. One of the clients asked one of the workers to clean the blinds above the sink. She had to stand on a small wooden counter to reach the blinds. But she somehow lost her balance and step on the tap and broke it in the process. It cost R270 to repair the tap. I have to pay it, because I feel that it was not the worker's fault. The clients should have given her a step-ladder to stand on.

Hence in both housecleaning service company A and B, there are disciplinary codes for transgression, which indicate the formalization and professional character of housecleaning service companies.

4.2.3 Working Conditions

In this section, working hours, remuneration, paid leave, bonuses and gifts that domestic employees are entitled to and receive from managers and clients in housecleaning service companies A and B will be discussed.

4.2.3.1 Working Hours

In housecleaning service company A, workers arrive from 06:45 at the manager's house in Somerset West. Between 06:45 and 07:30, they get all cleaning materials such as buckets, vacuum cleaners and fill bottles with cleaning chemicals. All teams leave around 07:30 and then go to their first client. Teams clean three houses a day, in two and a half hour shifts. The manager said that they "work right through the year and close on 17 December for the Christmas break". However, during the normal working day, the manager stays in her office the whole day, but she is in radio contact with all drivers and has control over them, as she explained:

The driver knows that he has to go to these houses on certain times. They spent two and a half hours per house. The leader signs a time sheet. If they are picked up 15 minutes early, then I want to know what happened there. Why this has happened? Everything is controlled by me. We are in radio connection with all the drivers, and if the drivers say that they do not come out of the house when expected, then I call them (domestic employees) on their cell phones and say that they must come out. The driver is waiting for them. Sometimes there are problems such as they struggle to set the alarm. Then I call the driver and ask him to help them. So I'm 24hours in radio connection with them.

In housecleaning service company B, the manager picks domestic employees up at parking lots across the post office or supermarket at just before 08:00 and then drives them to different clients at 08:00. Domestic employees work “three shifts a day and fifteen a week, and a shift is two and a half hours long”. The manager also said that all domestic employees in housecleaning service company B have paid leave over Christmas.

4.2.3.2 Remuneration

In housecleaning service company A, “all employees are paid R2032, 88 per month. They are paid on a monthly basis”. Domestic employees in housecleaning service company B, on the other hand, are paid per shift, but they receive money every fourteen days. Not all of them receive equal salaries. Senior employees, who work three shifts a day and fifteen a week, receive R800 every fourteen days, while junior employees, who fill gaps when new clients make use of their services and who do not work a full fifteen shift per week, receive R700 every fourteen days. The manager said that she prefers paying employees every fourteen days, in order to “teach them how to work with money and to protect their shifts.”

4.2.3.3 Paid Leave

In both housecleaning service company A and B, domestic employees are entitled to maternity leave for up to four months. Both managers deduct UIF payments from all workers’ salaries. In terms of sick leave, managers require a letter from the clinic or doctor, before workers get paid for the day. In housecleaning service company B, domestic employees are entitled to take up to twenty two shifts paid sick leave annually.

In terms of lunch breaks, in both housecleaning service company A and B, domestic employees eat during the driving time between clients. As the manager of housecleaning service company A said, employees “have almost fifteen minutes break between houses [and that] clients know that they can sometimes take a break to eat before they start working”. Similarly, domestic employees in housecleaning service company B take their lunch break “during transit times” and that the manager “cannot wait for them to finish eating and then go to a client’s house, because clients pay for a two and a half hour working time”.

4.2.3.4 Conflict Resolution

When the manager of housecleaning service company A was asked how conflict is resolved between her and domestic employees, she said:

I have a supervisor and each team has a leader. I discuss the situation and ask their opinions about the case and from that decision, the worker is sentenced. Sometimes they are too scared to talk, but other times they do talk to me especially when they are not personally affected by it. Only one worker has gone to the CCMA in the five years that I have this business. I then had it lucky, because the incident occurred in front of everyone. So when she decided to go to the CCMA, some of the workers decided to come with me as witnesses. But when it is not such a serious issue, then only the one team and the supervisor is called in and we try to solve it between us. Then we decide whether to give such a person a verbal, written or final warning. But if it is serious, then a hearing with the right documents from the law and correct procedure is followed.

Similarly, the manager of housecleaning service company B said that she resolves conflict with domestic employees herself, but when it is a serious matter, then rules are followed as “established by law”. Furthermore, both managers and domestic employees confirmed that neither they nor domestic employees “belong to any trade unions”. Managers see trade unions as “unnecessary” and “pointless”, because they feel they treat domestic employees “fair”. Conflict is resolved within the companies between managers and domestic employees and sometimes clients too.

4.2.3.5 Bonuses

In housecleaning service company A, domestic employees receive cards and sweets on Valentine’s Day and Mother’s Day, because the manager believes that they “are not treated by their husbands”. On their birthday, domestic employees receive a small present from the manager. Domestic employees in housecleaning service company A do not receive any Christmas bonuses or parties, but the manager takes all employees on an “uplifting outing”. The manager described “uplifting outings” as:

At the end of the year, we take them to the Aquarium, for example, or we take them up on Table Mountain. They were hysterical about going up Table Mountain. Many of them don’t see anything else than the houses they clean, or the shops close by or their own environment. They asked us already in February what we are going to do this year. Last year we wanted to take them on a boat trip to Robben Island, but due to windy circumstances we couldn’t go. This year we want to take them to a nice buffet restaurant. We have nine months to teach them how to use a knife and fork (lots of laughs). And they are very excited about that.

In contrast to housecleaning service company A, the manager of housecleaning service company B does not give her domestic employees any bonuses. The manager said that her “business is too small to give them a bonus at the end of the year”. However, the manager gives workers something small on Easter and “a *Coke* when it is forty degrees”. The manager does not give domestic employees gifts on their birthdays, but explained that when it is her birthday she treats them by “buying cake and sweets and having a small party”. However, domestic employees receive bonuses and gifts from clients throughout the year and especially at Christmas.

In terms of the gifts that domestic employees receive from clients, the manager of housecleaning service company A explained:

At the end of the year, they receive a lot of presents. They receive more now than they would have got when they worked privately. The one team received R200 for the leader, R150 for the kitchen cleaner and R100 for the bathroom cleaner. At another client, this same team received R30 each. At another client they received R40, R30 and R30. This is just the money. They receive clothes, wine and a lot of other stuff too.

Similarly, in housecleaning service company B, clients give domestic employees “a bonus at the end of the year”. The manager also said that during the year, clients give employees “chocolate, biscuits, small presents and old clothes. It all depends on how they work. Some of them also receive fridges, microwaves and television sets. If students move away, then they receive a lot of stuff”.

However, both managers said that they teach their domestic employees to be grateful for the gifts they receive from clients. As the manager of housecleaning service company A said whether they receive “eggs or R10”, they teach them to be “grateful, because at least they get something. If they don’t get something, they know they don’t work to get something. It is a privilege to receive something. That they have to understand very clearly! We force that into their heads”.

In terms of sharing presents, the managers said that the team of domestic employees who work for a specific client receive the presents and they do not share it amongst all employees in the company. If they want to, they can. However, as a result, some teams receive more presents and financial bonuses from clients than others. As the manager of housecleaning service company A said that there is jealousy between employees, “but that is how it is. They

get clients according to the driving route. Clients are not divided amongst income groups”. Clients do sometimes request managers to share everything amongst all employees in the company, as the manager of housecleaning service company B said: “I get the bag [of clothes] late afternoon and just before all of the workers are done, I give them the bag. Thus, nobody knows whose client gave the old clothes; otherwise there may be jealousy and conflict [between workers]”.

4.3 CLIENTS’ PERSPECTIVES

This section of the chapter provides an overview of clients’ views on housecleaning service companies. The main question was why clients employ housecleaning service companies in preference to employing a domestic worker. Various trends came out from the responses of clients and are divided into privacy of home, legislation, employment relationship, standard of cleaning and training, bonuses for domestic employees and benefits for clients. In order to keep confidentiality, clients are coded A1 to A10 and B1 to B10.

4.3.1 Reasons for Employing Housecleaning Service Companies

4.3.1.1 Privacy of Homes

Client A1, a woman in her mid-fifties, said the following in terms of why she employs housecleaning service company A: “I found that by using this cleaning company, I have my house back to myself. I don’t have someone around me the whole day, which is wonderful. I have my privacy back”. Similarly, client A3, an elderly woman in her late seventies, responded:

I have a husband of 83years, and when he wakes up in the morning and he sees that it is a lovely day, then he wants us to go to Franschoek to have some tea or go to the sea. If I had a permanent worker, that would not have been possible. I have more freedom with this company. They only come every fourteen days.

Client A7, a forty year old woman with two young children, responded: “I also don’t like it when someone is under my feet the whole day. They need to come in, clean and then leave again. They come once a week and it works out perfectly”. Client A9, a man in his early forties with two young children said: “If you have someone that is here for the whole day, then you need to make arrangements where they can get the key, or who will give her food”.

Client B4, a woman in her late forties with two teenage children, gave a detailed response why she does not want a domestic worker the whole day in her house:

I work from the house, so I have the need to be alone during the day and not to be bothered. It is a choice and it is practical. It is nice for me that they only come once a week for a few hours. There isn't someone the whole day in your house. I find the old regime that someone that stays the whole day in your house in case you can make her coffee tiring. Now the workers in the company are more goal orientated.

From these statements, it becomes clear that one of the reasons why clients employ housecleaning service companies, is to limit the invasion of their private space. Also, clients do not need a domestic worker in their house for the whole day anymore, due to difficulty arranging keys or working responsibilities.

4.3.1.2 Legislation

A major trend found in almost all of the responses of clients was that they find it tiring to deal with the legislation regarding domestic work. By employing housecleaning service companies, clients avoid dealing with legislations that involve payments of unemployment insurance funds (UIF), sick leave and dismissals of domestic employees. As client A2, a woman in her sixties explains: “[By employing a housecleaning service company A], I don't get involved with the laws and UIF anymore. I just pay the manager of this company a certain amount and that's it. All the administration is given to her”. Similarly, client A4, a woman in her early fifties, responded: “The biggest thing is that the workers are no longer my problem. I am so fed-up with all the UIF's and laws and stuff”. Client B1, a female PhD student in her twenties, said:

For me, it is the schlep of the legislation. If you employ a housecleaning company, then they handle the legal aspects. I also don't need to worry about the UIF and all those stuff anymore. I only give them (the manager of the company) money and they do all the administration work.

Not only do clients no longer want to deal with legislations regarding domestic work, but they find it extremely unfriendly towards employers, as client B6, a female lecturer in her late forties explained:

First of all, because of the new legislation. I wanted to get rid of my domestic worker. I suspected her of stealing things. I couldn't proof it and yet, I wasn't happy, because

the laws made it very difficult to get rid of her. After I finally got rid of her and I decided that I would not go again on a private route, because if there are any problems, then I understand that the owner of the housecleaning company will sort out the problem. It was a painful process and costly to get rid of her. I even had to go to a lawyer, because my husband said that I cannot just act on my own. I have to get legal advice and that's costly. Because once you have decided that she has actually stolen, you are supposed to give her a month's notice and then they are supposed to work in that month. Now that you have proved that she has stolen, you don't want her to work for you.

While legislation is therefore designed to protect domestic employees, it has served as a deterrent to employment. This leads to a major growth in housecleaning service companies.

4.3.2 Employment Relationship

Apart from preferences of avoiding legislation such as UIF and dismissals of domestic employees, clients also express their preferences of having an impersonal relationship with workers. As explained by client A10, a woman in her late fifties: "I don't get involved in their personal issues anymore, which is too stressful for me". Client B10, a woman in her early twenties, also said: "In terms of personal problems, I don't discuss any of that with them and they don't discuss of their problems with me. I don't even know if there are married or not".

Client B8, a woman in her fifties with one child at university confirmed that the employment relationship with domestic employees in a housecleaning service company is "professional and impersonal" and that she "like(s) it". Client A4, a woman in her early fifties, explained why it is better to have an impersonal relationship with domestic employees:

I ask them how they are and that is it. It is different when you have a permanent worker. You always get involved with their social and personal set-up. Even if you don't want to get involved with that, you always do. So it is much nicer not to be involved any more. If their child is sick, then they may ask you R100 or R200 and I can never say NO. Because I am the tree under which they sit, and now they sit under someone else's tree. That is very convenient for me.

Similarly, client A5, a woman in her late thirties with two children said: "I don't know anything of their personal lives. In the past, I was always part of their lives and knew all their personal problems. It is much nicer now". Similarly, client B5, an elderly couple in their late

sixties said: “I don’t need to worry when and if she is sick? Is there a problem at her home? Is she drunk? That is not my responsibility anymore. It is the owner of the company’s problem”.

Client B2, a woman in her fifties with two children at university, described in detail why she prefers to have an impersonal relationship with her domestic employees:

I had a private worker for many, many years and the emotional responsibility that I had with her was just too much. It is not about the money anymore, but rather the emotional obligations toward her. Such as I need to take her daughter to the doctor or I need to take her to someone to fix her teeth. That is just too much. Now I make a point of it not to get involved. If they are here, then I move to my office. I keep my distance.

Apart from finding the emotional responsibility of having a personal relationship with a domestic worker demanding, clients also do not want to teach domestic employees life lessons any longer as explained by client B9, a woman in her late forties with two teenage children:

We don’t want to do the mothering and fathering with them anymore. We want to employ them. And that is a mind-set that needs to change, because in the past we did the mothering and fathering. They lived with us in the houses and we gave them food just like our children.

Personal interaction with domestic employees is reduced to the extent that some clients only know some of the domestic employees’ names, as explained by client A3, an elderly woman in her seventies: “I know their names, but not everyone of them”. Similarly, client B7, a forty year old woman with two young children said: “I know the leader’s name, but they change a lot. No, I don’t know the other workers’ names”. These responses were found across the board.

In return, domestic employees address clients not on their names, but as *Mevrou* (Mrs). Some clients even said that they do not know whether domestic employees know their names and “don’t care” whether they know their names or not.

One benefit of having an impersonal relationship with workers is that clients can demand better work from domestic employees, as explained by client B4, a woman in her forties:

The previous relationship was much more of a friendship relationship that makes it very difficult. The area between employer and employee gets blurred. It is difficult to

demand stuff from them. Then she also says she has a sore ankle and the next day she cannot walk any more. And you have sympathy. Now with the company, if they cannot work, then they will make sure they provide me with a worker who can. It is not my problem anymore. It is very easy, because the standard of work is always good. And although it is always the same team, the standard stays good. It is a service that they deliver and I pay for that. They stay on their toes, because I don't have a personal relationship with them anymore.

4.3.3 Standard of Cleaning and Training

By having a personal relationship with domestic employees, the standard of cleaning and enthusiasm of the domestic worker drops, as explained by client A4, a woman in her fifties:

I had a cleaner for 17 years that was also a live-in domestic worker and when we moved to Stellenbosch, I had one for 12 years. And what I found is that their enthusiasm decreases with time. You know, do I have to clean that cupboard again? And then they start to drop their standard of cleaning and it is very difficult to get that up again. They also start to not be scared of me anymore, because we are like friends.

Thus, by having an impersonal relationship with domestic employees, clients are able to demand more in terms of service delivery. Since clients are no longer the boss of domestic employees, they have the benefit of calling managers to complain if they are dissatisfied with service delivery, as explained by client A5, a woman in her thirties with two children:

The standard of cleaning is really good. It is easier to say to them that I am not happy with how they cleaned the room and I can also tell their boss. It is much more difficult to be the boss, if you have someone every day in your house and the relationship becomes more like a friendship. This is like a business set-up.

Apart from having an impersonal relationship with workers, which makes it easier to demand good service delivery from domestic employees, housecleaning service companies in Stellenbosch are also part of a highly competitive environment. Client A4, woman in her early fifties explained:

You see, because there are so many companies out of which one can choose from, I expect that they deliver the best service. I need to see the difference after they have cleaned. I also expect that they are trained, because I don't want to train them. I want to know that they know how things work. I want to be able to call their boss if I am not satisfied with the service.

Clients also need to evaluate the standard of cleaning once a month and report whether they are satisfied with service, as client A6, an elderly couple in their sixties said: “We must sign a customer relations paper every month, where we need to evaluate the standard of cleaning. It’s good, because you can write there if the standard of cleaning is bad. You have to tick boxes; kitchen is super, bathroom good”. Apart from evaluation of service delivery from clients, managers or team leaders do regular inspection of service delivery. Client B3, a woman in her sixties explained: “[The manager] does the inspection. If there is a problem, I call her and she sorts it out. I don’t speak to the workers”. Although team leaders and managers do inspections of service delivery, clients still do it themselves, as explained by client A4, a woman in her fifties:

I usually check whether the rooms are cleaned afterwards. Then I won’t call their boss, but the next time when they come, then I will tell the leader that I am not satisfied and they need to sharpen up. I get a very good response from this. I think they are scared of their boss and they don’t like it when I call her (the manager). That is absolutely wonderful, because I know that there is someone else now who does the discipline. That is better for me, because I don’t like conflict.

There are various reasons why service delivery by housecleaning service companies remains consistently good. The impersonal relationship between clients and domestic employees results in better service. Also, customer evaluation forms and inspections from managers, team leaders and clients result in services remaining good.

4.3.4 Bonuses for Domestic Employees

While managers confirmed that domestic employees receive a lot of presents from clients during the year, some clients said that the impersonal relationship between them and the team of domestic employees means that they do not feel obliged to give domestic employees bonuses or presents. Client A2, a woman in her sixties, explained why she does not give bonuses or gifts to the team of workers:

I don’t give them gifts. I have a char that comes in on Wednesdays, and with her I have a much more personal relationship. I give her gifts on her birthday and also a thirteenth check in December. With the company, I don’t have that kind of responsibilities. With Easter, I will give them some Easter eggs. But that’s it. It is not my responsibility to give them stuff. All my old clothes I give to the char worker and not to the team.

Similarly, client A5, a woman in her thirties with two children said: “I haven’t given them anything yet. I am not that involved with them. And I am also not obliged to give them anything”. Similarly, client A7, a forty year old woman with two children said: “Not on a regular basis. We had a project at our school where we give old clothes to poor families. So now I choose who I want to give something. I am not obliged to give them anything anymore”. Client B3, a woman in her sixties also said that she is “not bothered to give them bonuses. The relationship is like a business”.

Although clients are no longer obliged to give bonuses or presents to workers, some clients did, as client B4 explained: “I give them all my second-hand clothes. I give it to them twice or three times a year. We also do a Christmas thing where I give them a bonus. If I have an overflow of food in the kitchen, then I will give it to them”. Similarly, client B5, a couple in their sixties, said that they “give them a small bonus at the end of the year. If we don’t use stuff anymore, then we will give it to them. For example, we give them table cloths, cushions or curtains”. Similar responses were found across the board. Clients now have a choice whether they want to give bonuses or presents to workers.

4.3.5 Benefits for Clients

It is clear that housecleaning service companies are beneficial to clients. When clients were asked what the main benefits of housecleaning service companies were, clients responded similarly. Most clients said that they no longer have to “deal with all the laws and UIFs and taxi strikes” and “extra payments and holidays and sick leave and all those kind of responsibilities anymore. It makes it much more convenient for us.”

The main advantage of employing a housecleaning service company according to client A3, a woman in her seventies, is that housecleaning service companies provide their own housecleaning chemicals. She explained why this is advantageous for her:

I had a permanent worker once, and I watched her how she used my Handy Andy. She used much more than she needed. She also used much more washing powder than what was required. I don’t have this problem anymore with the team of workers. Also they bring their own vacuum cleaners. Previously, my domestic worker kept on telling me to buy a new one as mine was constantly broken. Now I don’t have this problem anymore. This is really nice.

Another advantage is that clients know that the team of domestic employees arrive on time for their shifts and that they do not have to deal with problems, such as taxi strikes. As client A1, a woman in her fifties explained:

When there is a taxi strike, I know that they will still arrive on time, no matter what, because it is their responsibility and not mine. Previously, there was always the issue of waiting for the private domestic worker to arrive and sometimes she doesn't, because of strikes.

Also, some clients go on vacation for a few months a year and housecleaning service companies make it possible for them to stop services for the time when they are away and to continue when they are back as client A6, a couple in their sixties explained: "They know we leave for four months every year to go to our house in Greece, then we stop the services. When we come back, they work here again and we don't need to look for someone new".

Almost all clients said that the impersonal relationship between them and the domestic employees are the main advantage that housecleaning service companies offer. As client B2, a woman in her early fifties with two children at university explained: "The emotional aspect that is no longer there and I don't need to worry about that anymore". Similarly, clients B5, a couple in their sixties responded:

The child is sick and then she dies and then they ask me to lend them some money for the funeral. You know, I don't want to deal with that kind of stuff anymore. That is taken away from me. It is a professional service and I know that they will come.

Interviews with clients ended with a question whether they would employ a private domestic worker again and all clients said that they would never employ a private domestic worker again. Client A7, a forty year old woman with two children said: "There need to change a lot of stuff before I would ever employ one again. First, I need to have a lot of money. And number two, I would need to trust her 100%. I am very satisfied with the company".

Similarly, client B2, a woman in her fifties with two children at university, responded:

No, never again. I don't have the energy for the emotional bond with her. My children are out of the house now. Mary³⁸ knew everything of them. But now they have left the house. If I have a private worker, then I need to arrange for the transport. I need to

38 Pseudonyms given to keep confidentiality.

pick them up and drop them off again at the end of the day. I need to arrange someone to work when she is sick and is unable to come to work. I don't want that again. That is why I pay [the manager] to do those stuff.

Client B4, a woman in her forties with two teenage children responded similarly:

No, *flippit*. There has to be hell on earth. I just can't see my way through it. I would just completely stop. I also don't want to set my kids the example that there always will be someone to clean after them every day. If they have to go to university one day, then at least they know how to clean themselves.

Clients B5, a couple in their sixties: "No, never again. If it ever goes down under, then I will sell this big house and move to a smaller house where I can clean myself". Similarly, client A8, a retired female nurse said:

I would never employ one again. The brown people in the Western Cape are a problem. They have a manner. They want to become familiar with you, and then they will ask you: 'Madam, please can you give me R10 or you have so many of these things. Give me one'. They are too arrogant. And I become easily familiar with them, and I don't want to.

Thus, it becomes clear that clients have different reasons why they will never employ a private domestic worker again. Responses ranges from external forces such as the burdens posed by labour laws, to the stress posed by the emotional bonds of the master-servant employment relationship, to personal matters of convenience and values.

4.4 DOMESTIC EMPLOYEES' PERSPECTIVES

This section of the chapter provides an overview of domestic employees' view on housecleaning service companies. The main question was to establish whether domestic employees prefer working for housecleaning service companies as opposed to private arrangements. Various trends came out from the responses of domestic employees. These are divided into nature of employment relationships, working conditions and generic benefits for domestic employees and clients. In order to keep confidentiality, domestic employees are A1 to A13 and B1 to B6.

4.4.1 Nature of Employment

The difference between housecleaning service companies and traditional paid domestic work, is that housecleaning service companies provide domestic employees with job security and the workload is shared, amongst the teams. With teamwork comes specialization of services such as cleaning a room from the top to the bottom. Childcare work is also not part of the services in these two housecleaning service companies. All these trends are discussed from the domestic employees' perspective.

4.4.1.1 Job security

One of the main reasons why domestic employees prefer working for housecleaning service companies is because it provides job security. Domestic employee A1 explained:

I know I have a job and that I have certain responsibilities. Sometimes I don't want to get up in the morning and go to work, but then I think and ask myself: 'where will I get another job'? Then I just go to my job and go on. I want to work here.

Similarly, domestic employee A5 said: "I know that I have a job. If one of the families moves away, I know I still have a job". Domestic employee B4 responded: "It is not that I like working here, but it is not easy to find a new job. That is why I stay here". Most domestic employees said that housecleaning service companies provide them with job security and that it is difficult to find alternative jobs.

4.4.1.2 Teamwork, Specialization of Services and Workload

When asked if workers enjoy working in teams, all domestic employees said that they prefer working in teams as explained by domestic employee A2: "It is very nice for me to work in teams. You work together and it is very nice, because we are friends". When asked why workers like to work in teams, various responses were given. Domestic employees B1 said: "I like to work in teams. We help each other. When I'm finished here, I help her". Similarly, domestic employee B4 responded: "It is easy to work in teams, because we can help each other. It's not like heavy like when I work on my own". Similar responses were found across the board. Thus, domestic employees prefer working in teams as it decreases the workload as they help each other.

However, some domestic employees did not like team work, because they feel that not all workers work equally hard in teams, as explained by domestic employees B6: "I like to work

in teams. Sometimes it is nice, sometimes it is not nice. [I] don't trust all the workers, because sometimes one of them is not working hard enough and then I must help her every time".

Trust between workers is very important, as explained by domestic employee A7: "You need to have a good team leader". Domestic employee A1 also said: "When we have a problem with someone, we can just tell [the manager] or the supervisor about it". Thus, if workers have problems with other members in the team, they can tell the manager or the supervisor about it.

Part of team work is the allocation of workload. Since there is no rotation of tasks in housecleaning service company A, all domestic employees either said that they are the team leader, or they clean the kitchen or bathroom. For example, domestic employee A1 explained:

I am the leader. I take the machine and clean the carpets and I do the dusting. If I see the kitchen person takes too long or have too many things to do, then I will help her with the tasks. The kitchen person also has the responsibility to iron the clothes. We don't clean outside or clean the swimming pools.

Domestic employee A5 explained: "I clean the kitchen. I do the dishes, clean the kitchen and then do the ironing". Domestic employee A7 said: "I clean the bathroom. I first spray my shower, then I clean the bath and sink and toilet and then I go back to my shower. I mop the floor lastly". Clearly, domestic employees in housecleaning service company A have specific ways in which they clean rooms. They start from the top and work down to the bottom.

Although in housecleaning service company B, domestic employees do a variety of tasks, they also have specific ways in which they clean rooms, because they are trained to do so. Domestic employees A7 explained: "I feel like an employee and not like a slave, because I get training from *Mevrou* (Mrs) on how to clean, iron". Domestic employee B2 explains: "I start with dishes, wiping the cupboards, then the vacuuming and floors last". Similarly, domestic employee B1 said: "[In the bathroom], I first clean the windows and blinds, because then after I clean the windows first, the dust comes down. I start from the top and last the floor". Similar responses were found across the board.

The employment relationship between workers and managers is also a key reason why domestic employees work for housecleaning service companies. Both managers for

housecleaning service company A and B said that their relationship with workers remains personal.

4.4.2 Employment Relationships

In this section, domestic employees' perspectives of the employment relationships with managers and clients will be discussed.

4.4.2.1 Employment Relationship with Managers

All domestic employees said that they have a personal relationship with their manager. Domestic employee A1 said: "If I have a problem with my money and need maybe more, then I can just ask the manager and ask her that I need this". Similarly, domestic employee A4 said: "I only trust the manager. Only she knows if I have a problem. She helps me if I need help, money". Domestic employee B1 explained: "I'm going to my manager to speak about my problem ... money. If I'm sick, I tell her *Mevrou*, (Mrs) I'm not alright today". Thus, domestic employees trust their managers with their financial and medical problems.

In housecleaning service company A, all the domestic employees said that they receive gifts from the manager. Domestic employee A3 explains:

She [the manager] is very good to me. She gives me presents when it is my Birthday and with Mothers' Day, we get something and when it is Christmas, we get something from her. She has a lot of love inside her. And those things she gave us, us as people. She has God in her heart and that is why she has so much love that she gives us. I can see that and I enjoy my job.

Apart from receiving gifts from the manager throughout the year, domestic employees in housecleaning service company A also responded positively about the "uplifting" outings that the manager treats them with at the end of the year. Domestic employee A12 said:

I like it when we go to Robben Island. It was my first time on an island. It's nice, you see. It's nice. Is that what an island looks like? *Who!* If I work privately they will not take me to an island. That is why I like this company.

On the contrary of receiving gifts or outings from the manager, in housecleaning service company B, all workers responded that they do not receive anything from the manager. Domestic employee explains B4:

She [the manager] does not give us gifts. Except at Christmas. During the year, she does not give us anything. She doesn't give us anything on our birthdays. I can say she does know. Because she has (a copy) of our ID's (identity documents). Not even when I remind her of my birthday.

In housecleaning service company B, domestic employees also expressed that whenever the manager needs to buy medicine for them when sick, she does not give it as a gift, but subtracts the amount from their salaries, as domestic employee B4 explains:

I go to the manager when I feel sick and ask her for the money to go to the doctor. But she doesn't give me the money as a gift, but takes it away from my salary. If you ask for medicine, and she needed to buy it from the chemistry, she will take it from my payment, my salary.

Thus, the personal relationship that domestic employees have with managers goes beyond sharing financial and medical problems, as they expect benevolence in terms of gifts from managers too. It is clear that benevolence from managers has clear limits and it depends on the housecleaning service company.

4.4.2.2 Employment Relationship with Clients

All domestic employees in both housecleaning service companies said that they are not allowed to share their problems with clients. As domestic employee A7 explained: "They don't know my problems. It is better that way. I don't speak to them. If I have a problem I speak to my boss". Although domestic employees in housecleaning service companies A and B are not allowed to discuss personal matters with clients, some domestic employees prefer having an impersonal relationship with clients, as explained by domestic employee A12: "I don't tell my clients any of my problems. Aha. It is not their problem. I tell my boss. Not the clients. No, no. The clients are not my boss. I like it that way". When asked why they prefer not telling clients their problems, domestic employee B1 responded: "I'm scared of the family. I'm scared they will take my money when I tell her my problems, when I'm sick".

In some cases, the impersonal relationship between domestic employees and clients is reduced to the extent that domestic employees and clients never meet one another. Domestic employee B4 explains: "Some of the clients, some of our clients we don't meet them. We can only see that they have three girls, four girls, and maybe she knows the name, but she can't identify whose name it is".

When domestic employees were asked if they would prefer having a personal relationship with clients, different responses were given. Domestic employee B4 said: “I think it is nice to have one family, because then you are in their house and we understand each other. You see their faces every day. I would like to work for one family”. Domestic employee B5 explained: “It is good to have a relationship with [a] family, because when you work in teams, then sometimes the client lost something and someone else in the team took it, then I don’t know”. Domestic employee A6 responded: “It is not nice to work on your own. It is too quiet”.

Thus, there were different responses from domestic employees whether they prefer having a personal relationship with clients or not. Some said that they are “scared” of working for one family only, while others said it would be better as it eliminates confusion.

4.4.3 Working Conditions

In this section, domestic employees’ perspectives in terms of working hours, remuneration, paid leave, bonuses and gifts that they receive will be discussed.

4.4.3.1 Working Hours

All workers in housecleaning service companies A and B said that working hours are better regulated. In both housecleaning service companies A and B, domestic employees said that they “need to clean the house in two and a half hours” and that they “clean three houses a day”. Domestic employee A8 said: “I work from eight to five and then I go home”. Domestic employee A11 even explained how one of the drivers picks her up in the morning and that she does not have to struggle with taxi’s any more:

[The working hours] is good. I’m picked up at my door in the mornings and dropped off again after work at my house. That is very nice. I don’t need to work after hours. With my previous boss, I needed to take the train or taxi and that was very inconvenient, because those days the trains and taxis strike a lot, then I cannot go to work and then everybody is mad at you.

However, some domestic employees expressed the inconvenience of having to wait for the manager to pick up other teams, which means that they are picked up late and arrive late at home, as domestic employee B3 explains: “The working hours is from eight to four-thirty. But she picks up, some of them she picks up late, because there are a lot of us. Then she picks us up late, at five”.

4.4.3.2 Remuneration

In housecleaning service company A, domestic employees confirmed that they receive “R2032 something a month” and that they are “very satisfied”. In housecleaning service company B, domestic employees are paid every fourteen days, and that some receive more payments than others, because of their position in the company. As domestic employee B4 said: “We don’t get equal amount. [I get] R800 every two weeks”. While some domestic employees in housecleaning service company B said that the “money is okay” and “more” than the minimum wage, others said “it is not enough” [and they] “want more”.

4.4.3.3 Paid Leave

All workers in housecleaning service company A said that they are satisfied in terms of paid leave, as domestic employee A9 explains: “I know I will receive my UIF. It is subtracted every month by her [the manager]. We do get enough sick leave. We get all those stuff”. However, as the managers have said that workers need to prove that they have been to a clinic, before they get paid. Domestic employee B6 explains: “Yes, we get sick leave, but I don’t know about maternity leave. If I go to the doctor or clinic and must show her the paper from the doctor, then I get paid. But when I’m just at home, then not”.

However, not all domestic employees are satisfied in terms of paid leave and UIF, as domestic employee B4 explains:

I’m not sure. When she gives us the pay slip, it appears that she takes UIF, but we don’t get it. I was on maternity leave and she gave me a fake document and those documents were photocopied. I asked her about those documents and she said this is the documents she gets from the Home Affairs and Department of Labour. But when I applied for the UIF and maternity leave, they asked me about the original document. They said that this is a photocopied one. I’m supposed to give them the real document. So I end up not getting the money.

4.4.3.4 Bonuses and Gifts

All domestic employees said that they receive bonuses or gifts³⁹ from clients. When domestic employees were asked why they think they receive gifts and bonuses from clients, they responded similarly that they all “work hard” for it. When domestic employees were asked if

39 Gifts range from lotions to money, to food and second-hand clothing.

they receive more gifts by working for different families, all of them said “yes” and that this is why they “work for this company”. In housecleaning service company A, domestic employees also receive gifts and money on a regular basis from the manager, while in housecleaning service company B, they do not.

4.4.3.5 Benefits for Domestic Employees

In this section, domestic employees were asked if they would ever work privately. Different responses were given. Domestic employee A10 explains: “No, I will never work privately again. I don’t have the energy to work privately again. I like it to work in teams. I learn a lot from others”. Similarly, domestic employee A13 explains: “I will always work for this company. It is not nice to work on your own. It is too quiet. And in this company I know I will not be exploited”. In order to identify benefits that housecleaning service cleaning company A and B offer, it was vital to ask domestic employees’ perspectives on private work.

4.4.3.6 Private Work

There are various reasons why domestic employees prefer working for housecleaning service company A and B. Domestic employee A3 explained:

No. Private work I don’t want to do again. If you work in a company, then you don’t feel so tired. You are helped by the other people in your team. But if you work alone, then you have to do everything by yourself. You need to iron all the clothes. I’m very satisfied and happy in this company. There are people around me every day.

Similarly, domestic employee A6 said:

No. It is better in the company, because you see, we help each other. You have to clean all the bedrooms. Maybe there are five or six bedrooms. I must do the kitchen and the ironing. I must vacuum the house every day. Better to work in a company. I only clean the kitchen. The workload is not too much. I enjoy the company and I think everybody will enjoy it.

Domestic employee B2 explained: “Sometimes you work very hard in one house and in some houses you don’t work very hard. If you finish first, you help the other one. And if I work on my own (privately), you need to clean everything on your own”.

Thus, domestic employees prefer working for housecleaning service companies, because teamwork results in the allocation of tasks and less workload. Apart from this, domestic employees also said that they prefer working for housecleaning service companies, because they see different houses and clients every day. Domestic employee A3 explained:

Every day I see different stuff, different people and houses and that is so exciting for me. I can't talk enough of all the things I have seen throughout the years. I will never do private work again. I will stay here. If you work privately, then you have to do the same stuff over and over again. It is very boring. In this company you have different families and privately, you only have one family. That is very boring.

Similarly, domestic employee A6 said: "It is not nice to work on your own. It is too quiet". It becomes clear that domestic employees prefer working for housecleaning service companies, as opposed to working privately. Not only do housecleaning service companies divide the workload amongst domestic employees in teams, but they also offer domestic employees the chance to work for different families and see different houses every day, which makes domestic work less "boring".

4.4.3.7 Care Work

When domestic employees were asked if childcare was part of their job, all workers in both housecleaning service company A and B said no and that they prefer not having the responsibility of care work. Domestic employee A5 explained: "We don't need to look after clients' children and I am very happy about that. We also don't need to wash the dogs. We only need to make sure that the dogs don't get out when we leave the house". Similarly, domestic employee A1 said: "We don't do any care work. We don't look after the children and I like it". Likewise, domestic employee B1 said: "No, I only clean. I don't look after their children. It is nice, very nice. It is better this way". Thus, in both housecleaning service company A and B, domestic employees explained that they "like it" and find it "nice" and "better" not to be responsible for caring for clients' children.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented managers', domestic employees' and clients' perspectives on working for and employing housecleaning service company A and B. It was important to find out why there is a growth of housecleaning service companies and these respondents gave various reasons why they make use of or work for housecleaning service companies.

From clients' responses, it is clear that external forces such as dealing with labour laws and personal matters such as having a draining emotional personal relationship with domestic employees make clients opt for housecleaning service companies instead of private domestic workers. Domestic employees revealed that they choose housecleaning service companies, because wages are above minimum, working hours are regulated better and they benefited materially from managers and clients. Apart from this, domestic employees also explained that working in teams relieves the workload, because tasks are shared between them. Working for different clients every day also result in excitement and decrease levels of boredom and monotony associated with domestic work in the same place.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

One of the key research questions asked in this study is whether the transition from a master-servant to formalized, triangular employment has affected domestic work “for better or worse”? This chapter argues that although housecleaning service companies have formalized the employment relationship, (transforming the domestic worker into a domestic employee) it remains just another form of exploitation and control, with extra burdens such as increased workload and supervision. This chapter outlines the trends in the transitions from the master-servant to maternalistic employment relationships to triangular employment relationship offered by housecleaning service companies to explore how this relationship has changed.

5.2 Nature of Employment

Previously under the master-servant employment relationship, domestic servants lived inside the houses of masters. They were also required do various tasks and show absolute commitment to the masters’ interests as their livelihoods depended on it (Srinivas, 1995: 269; Sansbury, 2004: 36). In addition, they were required to look after children and elderly, while cleaning houses. This was typically the case under Apartheid in South Africa. The relationship was highly exploitative and also demeaning. Grossman (2009: 212) for example, states how masters treated domestic servants like animals as if they had no rights. What Grossman tried to illustrate with this statement, is that domestic workers were not treated equally as human beings and lacked any protection from the state under Apartheid. Thus, masters could easily exploit domestic servants as (like animals) they had little rights.

Although the master-servant employment relationship never formally ended, it slowly started to change as domestic servants started moving out of their masters’ houses and “madams” started to employ “maids”. Under this ‘maternalistic’ employment relationship, the nature of domestic work did not change much, excepting now servants were not necessarily living on the premises of their ‘madams and masters’. They were still expected to perform a whole range of tasks, but they had more autonomy in deciding how and when to do tasks. Although the relationship was now less exploitative, as maids could sever from the employment relationship more easily, wages were still low and masked by gestures of gift-giving (Goncalves, 2010: 41). This was typical of the employment relationship of maids during Apartheid.

However, many transformations occurred during Apartheid. Maids started to work part-time to have more control over the work process and gain independence from madams. From madams' perspectives, part-time domestic work was also a strategy to cut costs, as maids were only required to work a few days per week for them. Racial issues also played a role in this shift, as madams did not want a Black person in their houses every day (Ally, 2010: 56). Working conditions under part-time domestic work remained exploitative and oppressive as it was not regulated by law.

Recognising the highly exploitative conditions under which maids work, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act was implemented in 1996 to protect the domestic sector within a legal framework (Fish, 2006: 116). Contracts were implemented to regulate wages and working hours to protect maids from exploitation. However, as Fish (2006: 117-118) found in 2002, the majority of employers were either still were either reluctant to sign contracts with maids or found it difficult or unnecessary. Maids also claimed that their rights only existed on paper and they were still exploited by employers.

The effect of the law played a major part in the shift to outsource domestic work, as many madams and maids clearly had a need for formalisation without the inconvenience of dealing with laws, or fighting for rights and protection. Housecleaning service companies are one solution to these needs as they change madams into clients and maids, into employees.

Interesting changes have taken place in domestic work with the emergence of housecleaning service companies. Here, those employed provided these 'services', especially where they worked in teams. Although some housecleaning service companies rotate tasks amongst teams, it was found that housecleaning service company A does not. Thus, almost like under Taylorism, there is the application of scientific management principles. For example, now managers decide how tasks are to be executed (hence removed from domestic employees). The work is segmented and training involves detailed instructions on how to execute tasks and how long it takes to complete them. In other words, scientific management is used as a means to fragment tasks in order to increase speed and profits (Webster *et al.*, 2003: 14).

Thus, it can be argued that housecleaning service companies change the nature of domestic work, but whether it changes it "for better or worse", remains debatable. On the one hand, housecleaning service companies in this study relieved domestic employees from oppressive working and living conditions found under the master-servant and maternalistic employment relationship. Teamwork and division of tasks mean that domestic employees only clean

specific rooms, or do specific tasks in houses and no longer the entire house on their own. On the other hand, teams are controlled by having to follow specific rules, adhere to time pressures and regulations as these form part of the professional image of the housecleaning service company. With this, domestic employees no longer have the autonomy to decide what tasks to start with and they have to clean houses in specific time schedules. In addition, although workload is divided among teams, they have to clean three houses a day, resulting in increased workload. Thus, it can be argued that the division of tasks among teams and restricted time spent in houses “mask” the increased workload and fast pace associated with housecleaning service companies.

In addition to this, housecleaning service companies also transform the employment relationship of domestic work. The employment becomes triangular between managers, clients (former madams/ employers) and domestic employees (former maids/ domestic workers) and surveillance increases.

5.3 Employment Relationship

This section discusses the changing nature of the employment relationship between managers and domestic employees. Similarities and differences between the master-servant, maternalistic and triangular employment relationship are given. This is followed by a discussion whether this change has improved domestic work.

5.3.1 Employment Relationship between Managers and Domestic Employees

Unlike the personal relationship that occurred during the master-servant and maternalistic employment relationship which was not formalised and characterised by high levels of exploitation, it was found that although the employment relationship between managers and domestic employees in both housecleaning service companies is also on a personal level, it is based on unitarist principles. Blyton and Turnbull (2004: 40) state that under a unitarist perspective, employees are seen as part of a team and accept management’s right to manage. The law makes provision for a more pluralist dispensation, but in reality, because trade unions are weak in this particular sector, the employment relationship stays unitarist and (p)maternalistic. Although both managers of housecleaning service company A and B confirmed that they see themselves as a ‘team’, become personally involved with their employees’ problems and take a personal interest in their welfare, managers still have the right to control domestic employees.

According to the unitarist perspective, when conflict arises it is generally dealt with by improving communication where domestic employees have the chance to express their dissatisfaction. It was found in this study that when conflict arises, managers held a meeting with all employees, to remove the misunderstanding and solve the issues between them. In this relationship, trust between managers and domestic employees is vital for the success of the housecleaning service companies and this is similar to the master-servant employment and maternalistic relationship. Domestic employees' responses varied from trusting their managers with issues regarding financial to medical problems, which according to Blyton and Jenkins (2007: 169), is an ideal of a unitary approach. Unitarism succeeds where there is a shared value system. For example, managers are trusted as leaders or preachers, who protect and take care of their employees, which is central to the success of both housecleaning service companies. Unhappy employees cause conflict, which is "pathological" for the success of an organization (Blyton and Jenkins, 2007: 169).

Similar to the maternalistic employment relationship, it was also found that not only have both managers in housecleaning service companies the status of a leader or "boss", but they also take on the role of preachers. For example, the manager of housecleaning service company A clearly stated that she "told" her domestic employees "to stop drinking at 6 o'clock on a Sunday morning, in order to be fresh on a Monday morning". Similarly, the manager of housecleaning service company B stated that she had to "educate" her domestic employees about the "White culture", because "they are raw from the field". This preaching role that both managers undertake is maternalistic in nature.

This maternalistic nature is also reflected in the way managers approach and speak to domestic employees. It was found that managers speak to their domestic employees on "a lower level", which involves "a certain body language". Foster (2007: 305) argues that in a maternalistic employment relationship, the employer becomes "the mother-figure who guides, disciplines, protects, cares and supports servants in a similar way as children". In relation to this, the manager of housecleaning service company B said, that although she cares for her domestic employees, "it has clear limits". She also wants her domestic employees to know that she "is the owner and boss of the company", because this is a "professional cleaning company" and that she "demand[s] respect from them". The employment relationship between the manager and her domestic employees in housecleaning service company B, is similar to a "mother and child" relationship, where respect and obedience from domestic employees are necessary.

Similarly, the manager of housecleaning service company A, stated that although she cares for her domestic employees, she is “very strict” with them, because “if you give a pinkie, then they take a hand”. Clearly, the managers remain in a superior position to their domestic employees and have the authority and leadership positions, which according to Blyton and Turnbull (1994: 88) is “the natural order of a unitarist employment relationship”.

Furthermore, none of the domestic employees in either housecleaning service companies belongs to a union, as managers believe that conflict must be resolved within the company itself, without the help of outside forces, because it is “unnecessary”. This means that domestic employees in the housecleaning service companies, have no external support and they are forced to adhere to specific rules set out by the manager of both housecleaning service companies. Various forms of control and punishment arise because of this.

5.3.2 Control and Punishment

Domestic employees in both housecleaning service companies are under constant supervision. This is an additional burden, which is unique to housecleaning service companies. Surveillance in housecleaning service company A is enhanced by the use of service evaluation forms by clients. Clients of housecleaning service company A confirmed that they need to evaluate cleaning services provided by the team of domestic employees. Clients need to indicate whether rooms are cleaned according to a scale from “super” to “bad”. When bad, domestic employees are punished. However, unlike the master-servant employment relationship, where punishment of domestic servants was physical, such as harsh whipping (Hansen, 1989: 50), withholding payments or imprisonment (Cosser, 1973: 32; Lundh, 2004: 83; Anderson, 2000: 462; Strobl, 2009: 166), the manager of housecleaning service company A, punishes her domestic employees by subtracting money from their salaries. This form of punishment does not occur in housecleaning service company B. In housecleaning service company B, domestic employees are not punished *per se*, but rather asked to redo rooms if the manager or client is dissatisfied with the cleaning.

Apart from service evaluation forms, it was found that the manager of housecleaning service company A, is in “radio connection with all drivers” and if teams finish late, she “calls workers on their cell phones and tell them to come out [of clients’ houses]”. This emphasizes that the speed of services delivered by teams is controlled and carefully calculated by the manager of housecleaning service company A. All these factors emphasize that the

employment relationship is not symmetric and that the manager has the authority to choose how and what she thinks works best for the company as a whole.

In housecleaning service company B, surveillance takes place by means of inspection. The manager confirmed that when clients are dissatisfied with services, she asks the team of domestic employees to “redo a room”, but the problem is that they then get “behind schedule” and arrive “late at home”. Domestic employees of housecleaning service company B expressed the inconvenience of waiting for other teams to finish, which results in picking them up later than usual and see this as a form of punishment.

In relation to this, Foucault (1975: 145) argues that through supervision, one is able to observe the worker’s presence, application and the quality of the work that is done by the worker. This enables managers to compare workers with one another, to classify them according to skill and speed. This was found in housecleaning service company A, where domestic employees do not alternate tasks between houses, in order to deliver “fast and effective services” in “two and a half hours”. Similarly, in housecleaning service company B, the manager confirmed that she knows what her “workers’ weak points are”, and that she “does not give all workers ironing work to do”.

Whether this personal employment relationship found in housecleaning service companies has improved domestic work “for better or worse” remains debatable. On the one hand, the personal relationship is clearly beneficial for both parties as it creates trust, unity and harmony amongst them. According to the unitarist approach, this is vital for organisational success. On the other hand, it was found that managers base this personal relationship on maternalistic principles. Numerous authors such as Rollins (1985) Gill (1990), Abercrombie and Hill (1976: 418) and King (2007) amongst others, have shown that (p)maternalistic employment relationships are in favour of employers and create unequal power relations. This is further enhanced by means of surveillance. Although this is good for organisational success, it puts additional stress on domestic employees in addition to the increased workload.

With this in mind, it could be argued that little has changed in terms of the employment relationship of domestic employees, as it remains unequal and in favour of the manager (now employer). In fact, in terms of power relations this has increased in favour of the manager (now employer) as both manager and client influence control over work performance. Given the unitarist approach to employment relations of these companies, trade unions are seen as

an intrusion into the organisation and all attempts are made to discourage this. Hence, given the vulnerable position of these employees, none of them belonged to trade unions. Thus, the employment relationship remains unequal.

Apart from this, the triangular employment relationship also changes the employment relationship between clients (former employers) and domestic employees (former maids and domestic workers).

5.3.3 Employment Relationship between Clients and Domestic Employees

Previously under the master-servant and maternalistic employment relationship, the employment relationship between masters/madams/employers and domestic servants/maids/domestic workers were personal (Makosana, 1989: 105; Cock, 1980: 90). A key characteristic of housecleaning service companies is that it offers an impersonal employment relationship between clients (former masters/madams/employers) and domestic employees (former domestic servants/maids/domestic workers). The maternalistic employment relationship shifts to the managers and domestic employees.

For clients, one of the key benefits associated with having an impersonal employment relationship is the privacy of homes. Previously under the master-servant employment relationship, domestic servants sometimes started working from 05:00 until 22:30 at night (Rubbo & Taussig, 1983: 11). This means that the domestic servants spend a lot of time in masters' houses. Similarly, during Apartheid South Africa, live-in domestic work was common, where maids lived on the premises of White families. This promoted the perception on the part of employers that their maids were "part of the family". As time progressed and part-time employment of maids living "off-site" increased, this relationship became less exploitative, but was still personal.

In contrast to this, responses from clients indicated that they have privacy of their homes back and that they do not have "someone around them the whole day". Some clients find it "tiring" to have a domestic worker "under their feet the whole day". Apart from having their privacy back, housecleaning service companies also take over all legal aspects. Previously under the master-servant and maternalistic employment relationships, domestic work was not formalised. However, in the past two decades, domestic work became formalised and regulated by law. This forced employers to pay domestic workers regular wages stipulated by

law. In addition, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act⁴⁰ of South Africa requires employers to pay Unemployment Insurance Funds (UIF), minimum wages, paid leave of three weeks a year and maternity leave. It was found from clients' responses, that this was one of the main reasons why they employ housecleaning service companies. Clients from both housecleaning service companies confirmed that they are "fed-up with all the UIFs and laws" and that "they do not need to worry about that stuff anymore". One client said that she finds the legislations "very unfriendly towards employers".

Taking care of legal responsibilities is not a key characteristic of housecleaning service company A and B, but was found in most advertisements of housecleaning service companies in South Africa. For example, one housecleaning service company in Gauteng emphasizes that clients can "forget the hassles of UIF, pension, medical aid, salary, sick leave and annual leave"⁴¹. This relates to Fish's (2006: 116) conclusion that employers remain "unaware" and "unwilling" to conform to new legislations or find legislation regarding domestic work "difficult". Thus, housecleaning service companies offer clients the convenience of taking over "all the administration" of domestic employees.

Furthermore, the impersonal employment relationship also means that clients are no longer involved in a "time-consuming and emotionally draining personal relationships" (Mendez: 1998: 123). Previously, Makosana (1989: 145) revealed that in Apartheid South Africa, masters often became involved with the personal issues of maids such as contributing towards the education of maids' children. In relation to this, clients from both housecleaning service companies confirmed that they no longer want to get involved with the "social and personal set-up" of their domestic workers anymore, because it is "emotionally draining". For example, one client said that prior to the employment of the housecleaning service company she often got involved with the medical issues of her domestic worker's daughter. Now it is the managers' of housecleaning service companies "responsibility" and "problem" and that "they (the domestic employees) sit under someone else's tree", which is very convenient.

Clients also said that they do not want to do the "mothering and fathering" of maids/domestic workers anymore. Previously, under maternalistic employment relations, maids not only

40 For complete reference of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, see: Department of Labour. 2009. *Basic Conditions of Employment Act and Amendments*. Available at <http://www.labour.gov.za>

41 *Maids on Wheels*. 2008. [Online] Available: <http://www.maidsonwheels.co.za>

received living quarters in the backyard, but also food, clothing and gifts. Numerous authors such as Cock (1980), King (2007), Anderson (2000) and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001) amongst others have shown that under live-in arrangements, all aspects of maids lives were controlled by employers, even to the extent that employers decided what furniture maids can have in their rooms. It was found that personal interaction between clients and domestic employees in housecleaning service companies are reduced to the extent that clients do not even know the names of domestic employees.

From domestic employees' responses it appears as if they too prefer this impersonal employment relationship. By not being dependent on one family, they claimed that it offered them a sense of job security. Previously, under the master-servant employment relationship, when masters moved, they either relocated with them, or were dismissed (Ginsburg, 2000: 88-89). Similarly, under the maternalistic employment relationship, live-in and live-out arrangements meant that maids had one employer and were totally depended on them in terms of housing and a job.

Even when domestic work was formalized in South Africa and employers became obliged to give notice of at least four weeks prior to dismissal, domestic workers remain depended on that one family for work and income. Even where they work in many different houses, as many part-time maids/domestic workers do, this can affect their income quite dramatically. One domestic employee confirmed that she does "not know where she will get another job" and that is why she works for the housecleaning service company.

In addition, working for three different families every day reduces boredom and isolation and is seen as less alienating. Previously, under the master-servant employment relationship, domestic servants were expected to be faithful, subordinate and totally devoted to the personal interests of the individual master (Srinivas, 1995: 269; Sansbury, 2004: 36). With housecleaning service companies, domestic employees reflected the "excitement" of working in different houses every day and expressed that they find it boring to work for one family. Similarly, Romero (1988: 322) found that working for different clients and in teams every day reduces feelings of boredom and isolation.

Most domestic employees said that working in teams enables them to make friends with their colleagues. Domestic employees confirmed that working privately for one family is "boring" and "lonely". Instances of isolation, loneliness and boredom were commonly found under the master-servant employment relationship and the live-in arrangements, where domestic

servants/maids/domestic workers were obliged to give up their “personal lives” (Coser, 1973: 35) which cause feelings of loneliness (Makosana, 1989: 107; Ally, 2010: 47; Preston-Whyte, 1976: 73). Making friends with colleagues is not unique to housecleaning service company A and B. In fact, studies by Mendez (1998: 131), Glenn (1992: 23) and Cohen’s (1991: 204) of housecleaning service companies found that domestic employees develop friendships with colleagues to reduce feelings of loneliness.

Apart from job security and lack of boredom, it was found that the impersonal relationship with clients afforded them privacy in their personal lives and that they “like it that way”. Under the master-servant and maternalistic employment relationship, masters/madams/employers asked domestic servants/maids/domestic workers about personal issues, not out of interest, but for voyeuristic pleasures (Anderson, 2000: 145; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001: 186). In this study, it was found that managers and domestic employees of housecleaning service companies confirmed that they are not allowed to tell clients about their personal lives, which is clearly a protective barrier for both clients and domestic employees. Some domestic employees and clients do not even meet each other, as clients leave their houses before their arrival.

From this, one can argue that it seems that the impersonal employment relationship, does in fact, improve domestic work “for better”, as it limits boredom and social isolation, and affords domestic employees more privacy. Working for different clients also creates the impression of job security, because if one family moves away, it does not have an effect on the housecleaning service company. For clients, it also improves domestic work “for better”, as it creates distance from the emotional and legal responsibilities of domestic employees and limits the invasion of someone entering their private space.

However, although the personal involvement between clients and domestic employees are minimal in terms of personal issues, it was found that with regards to service delivery, clients remain actively involved. Although clients have the benefit of calling managers of housecleaning service company A and B if dissatisfied with services, many clients addressed dissatisfaction directly with the team leaders and not necessarily with the manager. Some clients confirmed that they choose to speak to domestic employees directly, rather than calling managers, because they “don’t like conflict” between managers and domestic employees.

Although not so strong as under private arrangements, it can be argued that some clients protect, care and support domestic employees, which reflects a typical characteristic of a maternalistic employment relationship (Forster, 2007: 12). Thus, conflict in terms of services is sometimes resolved between clients and domestic employees, before managers are informed. However, it can be argued that clients still have more power than domestic employees, because clients can threaten domestic employees of informing managers if dissatisfied with services.

5.3.4 Employment Contracts

Previously, under the master-servant employment relationship, domestic servants were forced into domestic labour due to debt bondage and servitude (Srinivas, 1995: 275). Employment relationships between managers and domestic employees in both housecleaning service companies, however, are formalized in terms of “working agreements”. The main aim of a justifiable working contract, according to Persson (2006: 412), is that it strives for symmetric power relations between employers and employees. It can be argued that this is in fact true, if one considers that housecleaning service companies move away from the asymmetric employment relations, which occurred during the master-servant employment relationship, where domestic servants devote all their time in the furtherance of their masters (Coser, 1973: 32, 34). In both housecleaning service companies, domestic employees undertake work voluntarily, which means that they sign an employment contract with managers that stipulate exactly what their job descriptions involve in terms of regulations, rules and tasks (Persson, 2006: 410).

Another characteristic of a work contract is that work is undertaken for a specific time period (Persson, 2006: 412). Previously, under the master-servant and maternalistic employment relationship, domestic servants/maids in South Africa worked longer hours than any other labourer, because working hours were not regulated (Cock, 1980: 41). For example, Cock (1980: 41) found that live-out maids during Apartheid, worked on average forty hours a week, while live-in maids worked approximately sixty hours a week. Under new labour laws, working hours have become regulated and both housecleaning service companies abide by this. Working hours of domestic employees in both housecleaning service companies do not exceed forty-five hours per week as they work in “two and half hour sessions per house”.

Additionally, work contracts make sure that employers and employees have mutual rights, obligations and responsibilities, for example, by exchanging labour power for remuneration

and time (Persson, 2006: 412). Domestic employees also indicated that employment contracts of both housecleaning service companies offer them “job security”. However, it appeared that domestic employees in both housecleaning service companies need to adhere to certain disciplinary codes that are “based on labour laws”. However, both housecleaning service companies have grievance procedures. Managers confirmed that when some employees are dissatisfied with decisions, a meeting is held with all employees where the issues are discussed.

Thus, although the main aim of the working contract is to obtain a more symmetrical employment relationship between employers and employees, in fact, the managers of both housecleaning service companies have more power than the domestic employees.

Although it seems that employment contracts of housecleaning service companies change domestic work “for better”, it is not entirely the case. Managers of housecleaning service companies manipulate their authority by acting as caring employers using a maternalistic style. This has clear implications for the working conditions of domestic employees in housecleaning service companies.

5.4 Working Conditions

This section discusses the changing nature of working conditions offered by housecleaning service companies and whether this change has improved domestic work “for better or worse”?

Previously under the master-servant and maternalistic employment relationship, domestic servants/maids served as “cooks, cleaners, childminders, wet nurses, security guards, secretaries, laundresses and dog walkers” (Rubbo & Taussig, 1983: 15, 18; Gill, 1990: 122; Barnes, 1993: 28). It was found that both managers of housecleaning service companies clarify domestic employees’ job roles. In housecleaning service company A, the manager specifies what services are involved. For example, domestic employees are allowed to iron a maximum of twenty-five articles of clothing per session.

Similarly, in housecleaning service company B, domestic employees only clean inside clients’ houses. These restrictions in terms of workload are unique to housecleaning service companies and a clear transformation from the master-servant and maternalistic employment relationship. However, it can be argued that it goes beyond the level of protection to a level of professionalism. Both managers indicated that their housecleaning service companies are

“a professional cleaning company” and that “clients expect a professional job”. Thus, although limitations on workload can be seen as a protective barrier for domestic employees, it is ultimately more to enhance the status of the company as being “professional”. Also, domestic employees clean up to three houses a day, which result in the ironing of seventy-five pieces of clothing every day, which is more than they would have done when they worked privately for one family.

From clients’ responses, it was found that the competitive environment of housecleaning service companies in Stellenbosch causes them to expect the “best service” offered by the housecleaning service company they employ and that they “need to see the difference after they have cleaned”. Another client confirmed that the standard of cleaning remains “good”, because it is “like a business set-up”. This relates to the theory on externalisation, where clients have the benefit of improved quality in service delivery and a reduction in costs due to competition (Burnes & Anastasiadis, 2003: 357, Kremic *et al.*: 2006: 467). Thus, although workload is controlled, domestic employees have extra pressure on themselves to clean houses of clients according to managers’ and clients’ expectations. All domestic employees receive professional training by managers, which is unique to housecleaning service companies. Although informal, on-the-job and to a lesser extent formal, external training of domestic workers under private arrangement may take place, it can be argued that housecleaning service companies train domestic employees with specialised and unique skills which differentiates them from other companies.

From domestic employees’ perspectives, it was confirmed that they are trained how to clean rooms faster and more effectively. Domestic employees are trained to clean rooms from the “top” to “the floor”. This confirms the argument that training of domestic employees in housecleaning service companies is to enhance the “professional image” by increasing the speed of cleaning, which has to be “fast and effective”, and not necessarily to increase the status of domestic employees as trained specialists, as domestic work is still seen by many as unskilled labour.

In terms of remuneration, both managers of housecleaning service companies confirmed that they pay domestic employees, salaries that are above the average of the required minimum. In housecleaning service company A, domestic employees receive “R2032, 88 per month” and in housecleaning service company B, between “R700 and R800 every fourteen days”. This is much higher than that determined by the Sectoral Determination Seven: Domestic Workers

Sector, which stipulates that domestic workers are entitled for R7, 72 per hour if they work more than a 27 ordinary hours a week, which works out at around R1 400 per month. From a unitarist perspective, it can be argued that managers use better payments as a strategy to encourage and assure loyalty, commitment and reliance from employees. This was confirmed by domestic employees in housecleaning service company A that they are “very satisfied”, while domestic employees in housecleaning service company B said that the “money is okay” and “more than the minimum wage”. However, this trend is not unique to housecleaning service company A and B, as Mendez (1998), Ehrenreich (2006) and Devetter and Rousseau (2009) amongst other scholars have found that paying domestic employees higher wages is a typical characteristic of housecleaning service companies.

Apart from better payments, housecleaning service companies also offer domestic employees promotion opportunities, which is unique to housecleaning service companies. In housecleaning service company A, domestic employees can be promoted to leadership positions within teams, which mean that they have to make sure that the rest of the team are doing their job well. However, they are still under the authority of the manager and cannot act on their own. Similarly, in housecleaning service company B, domestic employees are promoted to a senior position, if they are employed for five years or longer. With this seniority, comes an increase of R100 on their salary.

Domestic employees also receive a number of other benefits such as paid sick leave, unemployment insurance funds and maternity leave. Although the law stipulates that domestic employees are entitled to receive these benefits, the two managers still have the authority to decide whether domestic employees provide plausible evidence before they receive their payments or benefits. This emphasizes the maternalistic employment relationship, where managers remain in control of domestic employees.

Apart from these legal obligations that managers have toward domestic employees in terms of sick leave, maternity leave and UIF, managers also use benevolent gestures of gift-giving to increase domestic employees’ loyalty and commitment to the housecleaning service company. It was found in housecleaning service company A, that the manager gives Valentine’s and Mothers’ Day⁴² cards to all employees, as well as birthday presents. The

42 When the manager was asked if the male domestic employee also receives a card on Mothers’ Day, she responded positively, by saying that he does a women’s job and therefore also receives a Mothers’ Day card from her, just like all the other female employees.

manager also takes all employees on an “uplifting outing” at the end of the year, which varies between taking them to Table Mountain or to Robben Island. In housecleaning service company B, domestic employees do not receive that many extra benefits, but do get a “small party” when it is the manager’s birthday.

Benevolent gestures of gift-giving by managers in both housecleaning service company A and B are not unique. In fact, several studies on housecleaning service companies in the United States of America, France and Australia (Ehrenreich, 2006; Mendez, 1998; Devetter & Rousseau, 2009; and Meagher, 1997), have found that managers often give domestic employees these kinds of benefits in order to keep their loyalty and to keep them happy. In fact, domestic employees in housecleaning service company A responded positively to this stating that they “enjoy their job”. One domestic employee even said that the manager has “God in her heart and that is why she has so much love that she gives us”. In terms of the “uplifting outings”, domestic employees responded positively and stated that these are the reasons “why they like this company”. Thus, it is clear that managers use gifts to increase employees’ commitment, reliability and loyalty to the company.

Although clients are not obliged to give domestic employees of housecleaning service company A and B any gifts or bonuses, it was found that most of them do. However, the managers of both housecleaning service companies confirmed that they tell domestic employees to be “grateful” when receiving gifts from clients. Most clients confirmed that they give domestic employees bonuses at the end of the year, especially when they have worked hard throughout the year.

From domestic employees’ responses, it was confirmed that they “like” receiving gifts from clients. Some domestic employees confirmed that they receive gifts, because they “work hard”. Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001: 11) argues that gift-giving is used by employers to encourage domestic employees to “work harder”. The main difference between housecleaning service companies and private arrangements, however, is that under the former, domestic employees receive gifts from many clients and sometimes from the manager too. They receive more gifts, from different families, which were found to be “nice” for domestic employees. Therefore, in terms of material benefits, housecleaning service companies are “for better”, as domestic employees receive more. From a maternalistic employment relations perspective, however, gift-giving, care and financial support by managers is a one-way relationship, which oblige domestic employees to react with loyalty

(Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001: 207). Similarly, Abercrombie and Hill (1976: 415) argue that the exchange of goods and services is highly asymmetrical, because one party always gains significantly more than the other one.

5.5 Conclusion

Reflecting on the findings and previous discussion, it appears that housecleaning service companies transform domestic work “for better” on several grounds. The formalised, yet personal employment relationship between domestic employees and managers means that domestic employees in permanent employment are financially better off and have more benefits. Furthermore, the workload is controlled; payments are at or above the minimum wage; working hours are regulated better; they receive training, unemployment insurance funds (UIF), sick leave, maternity leave, annual income increases, and paid leave.

The formalised, impersonal relationship with clients also transforms domestic work “for better” as distance between clients and domestic employees is obtained. This limits chances of exploitation and abuse, as they are no longer involved in an emotional personal relationship, as the managers take over this role.

In terms of autonomy in how the work day is organised however, domestic employees lose this as managers decide on division of tasks amongst teams and the workload. Previously under the maternalistic employment relationship, maids could decide with what task they want to begin or what room they want to clean first. In housecleaning service companies, managers are the “boss”, the “educator” and “preacher”, which mean that they are in a superior position to domestic employees. In addition, no domestic employees in either housecleaning service companies belong to unions, because managers perceive unions as unnecessary and prefer to resolve conflict within the company. Domestic employees are therefore dependent on managers’ goodwill and support. Domestic employees can however resort to the CCMA for support.

Although it appears that working hours are regulated, domestic employees have extra burdens of time pressure which is unique to housecleaning service companies. None of the domestic employees interviewed in this study claimed that this was too stressful or unmanageable. A further advantage is that they receive more gifts from managers and clients. Through teamwork, domestic employees make friends, although sometimes not all team members get along and this causes conflict and friction. Although the impersonal relationship with clients

limits chances of exploitation, clients are an extra form of surveillance and control as they can both report unsatisfactory service, or terminate their cleaning contracts with the company.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to establish whether the transitions from master-servant and maternalistic employment relations to triangular employment relations offered by housecleaning service companies have affected domestic work “for better or worse”. In order to understand this transformation, it was vital to discuss four themes of domestic work in depth.

Firstly, the study focused on the master-servant employment relationship. Here the focus was on the history of this employment relationship, what this employment relationship entails, how it influenced the working conditions of domestic servants and what benefit it has for employers and domestic servants. While the master-servant employment relationship has never formally ended, the next phase in domestic work, namely the maternalistic employment relationship, where live-in and live-out domestic work became more prominent occurred as time progressed. One can say there was a shift from master and servant, to madam and maid.

Under the maternalistic employment relationship many maids continued to live on the premises of their madams. This meant that they could demand and oblige them to clean houses and care for children and elderly at any time. As there was no formal legal regulation of domestic work, as they were not classified as employees, this relationship was often very exploitative.

While this maternalistic employment relationship has not formally ended, the classification of domestic workers as “employees” and the madams as “employers” changed the nature of domestic work. In South Africa, domestic work became formally regulated under the Basic Conditions of Employment Act in 1996. This legislation outlined the minimum wages, working hours and fringe benefits of domestic workers. This legislation was introduced to protect domestic employees from exploitation and abuse, typically associated with the previous employment relationships.

This has been both advantageous and disadvantageous for maids. Advantageous in the sense that it sets basic conditions of employment, but disadvantageous in that many employers no longer wish to employ maids full-time or part-time, or simply ignore the legislation. Fish (2006) for example, claims that employers are still “unwilling” to adhere to new laws, as employers find it “difficult”. What this study conclusively found was that the unwillingness

and difficulty of dealing with the labour laws has stimulated the growth of housecleaning service companies.

Presently, housecleaning service companies are transforming the employment relationship from a personal to a triangular employment relationship between managers, clients (former madams/employers) and domestic employees (former domestic servants/maids). The triangular employment relationship is two-fold: On the one hand, it remains personal between managers and domestic employees, and on the other, impersonal between clients and domestic employees. This is transforming domestic work on a micro and macro level.

On the micro-level, housecleaning service companies are transforming domestic work “for better” for those permanently employed by these companies. Just like other employees who are employed “full-time”, they are reaping the financial rewards and benefits and have some sense of job security, in that they cannot be arbitrarily dismissed. It was also found that teamwork, the allocation of workload and working for different clients created a sense of excitement and limited feelings of isolation and boredom associated with maternalistic employment relationships.

Housecleaning service companies also transform domestic work “for better” from the perspective of former employers – now clients. Not only does it reduce the burden of dealing with the labour laws, but it relieves them of their social obligations towards their “maids”. Clients also stated that personal matters such as privacy and convenience as reasons for employing housecleaning service companies. These are some of the benefits at the micro-level.

Although this was not a feature of this study, one can predict that this trend may have a negative impact on employment in this sector at the macro level. For example, a single housecleaning service company in this study consisting of around twenty or more employees clean up to 400 houses a month. This means for every ten houses, one domestic employee is employed, if one roughly divides clientele with number of domestic employees employed. Should this trend continue, the growth of housecleaning service companies may create better employment for a few, but foster growing unemployment in the domestic sector which has been the main source of employment for Black women in South Africa. One has to ask, whether the classification of domestic workers as “employees” has not made things worse for many who are not fortunate to be employed by these companies.

The question is, whether a change in the laws regarding domestic work will reverse this trend? My intuitive feeling is no. What this study suggests is that these companies offer clients a fast, effective and hassle-free domestic service. Further research is needed to establish whether this is a general trend, as the research on housecleaning companies in South Africa is still quite limited. A concern is the impact this is having on jobs in the domestic service sector, which is a subject of further research.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Managers

Why do you think there is such a demand for housecleaning service companies?

In a highly competitive environment, what attracts clients to your housecleaning service company?

- Trained domestic employees?
- Specialized cleaning methods?
- Focus on what clients want?

How many domestic employees are employed in this company?

- On what basis do you recruit them?
- Do they work in teams?
- If so, how do you decide who should work together?
- How many clients do you have?
- How much do you ask clients to clean their houses? (per shift/week)

What is expected in terms of domestic employees' job?

- Is caring for children/elderly part of their job?
- Do they have to clean outside the house i.e. pools, dog houses etc.?
- Do you ask them to redo a room if you/clients are unsatisfied?
- Do you decide who should do what type of task such as ironing, washing floors etc.?
- Do domestic employees receive any form of training?
- If so, how often and on what do you focus?

In terms of the employment relationship between you and domestic employees

- Is it a personal relationship?
- Do you get involved in their personal matters such as financial, emotional, physical and family problems?
- If so, how do you benefit from this kind of relationship?

- Do you call workers on their names, or do you have nicknames for them?

In terms of working contracts with domestic employees

- On what basis do you hire and fire domestic employees?
- Are domestic employees employed on a full-time, permanent or part-time or temporary basis?
- How long is the work contract signed for?
- Does this working contract work on the same principle as when a singular employer employs a domestic employee?

In terms of working contracts with clients

- Do you have contracts with clients or are they based on an agreement?
- What is the duration of a contract/agreement?
- What is the basis of this contract/agreement?

Working Conditions:

- How many houses do they clean a day/week?
- How much are domestic employees paid and how often?
- Are they paid per month or per shift?
- How does the shift work?
- How many days they are entitled for sick leave, annual leave, and maternity leave?
- Do they receive a bonus at the end of month, week or year?
- Do they receive Christmas gifts, birthday gifts?
- Do they receive any second-hand clothes, used items, extra money from managers/clients?
- Do they have lunch breaks and when/how long?
- How do you solve conflict when conflict arises between you and domestic employees?

What are the benefits for you, as being the manager of a cleaning company?

Clients:

Why do you employ housecleaning service companies?

- Do not want to get involve personally with domestic employees and escape emotional connections with them, escape family problems?
- Do not get involved with the law: UIF, sick leave, pension pays, extra payments etc?
- Are specialized, formalized cleaning techniques of domestic employees are attractive?
- Do not like a domestic employee to be in private space of your home all day: housecleaning service companies are fast and effective: prefer leaving when team arrives?
- Workers will always clean: do not have the hassle when domestic employees do not pitch up, you are secure that housecleaning companies will always come.
- Team of workers are more trustworthy, do not steal etc.
- Supervisory tasks are passed on to managers.

What do you expect from team of domestic employees?

- Specify the tasks such as cleaning, ironing, washing etc. - outdoor cleaning?

In terms of gestures of gift-giving,

- Do you still give second-hand clothing, used object, food etc. to domestic employees?
- Do you give domestic employees Christmas, birthday gifts?
- Do you give a bonus at the end of the year?
- Do you give something extra for domestic employees who work hard/best?

Would you ever employ a private domestic employee (again)?

- Why/ why not?

Very briefly, what are the benefits and disadvantages of employing housecleaning service companies?

- Not being in control anymore?

Domestic employees:

In terms of the nature of housecleaning service company

Do you like working in teams?

Do you get along with everybody in the team?

In terms of working conditions,

Why do you work for a housecleaning service company?

- Job security?
- Could not find alternative jobs as a domestic employee?
- Better payments?
- Working hours are better regulated?
- Assured of UIF payment?
- Assured of paid sick leave, maternity leave, and holidays?
- Better socialization with team members?
- No more care work, cleaning outside of house, fetching children at schools etc?
- No more unpaid extra work hours?

In terms of employment relationship

- Do you prefer an impersonal relationship with clients?
- Do you prefer being employed by a manager and not clients?
- How does it make you feel?
- Do you feel managers protect you more than clients would?: For example, when having problems, do you go to managers and ask her for advise, money etc?
- Do you prefer formalized employment relationship? -knows what you will receive and what you are entitled for such as fair wages, decent working hours, no extra unpaid work etc?
- Do you prefer it when clients are not at home?

Very briefly, what are the benefits and disadvantages of working for housecleaning service companies?

- Feels like a robot; Time is money, so service delivery is fast and constant?
- Do not develop a personal relationship with clients?
- Team work may be bad, because of friction between workers?

If you could choose, do you want to work for a housecleaning company or privately?

