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Gender, Class and Generation: A Comparative Study of Working and Middle Class Indian Women's Household and Work Experiences in Ekurhuleni

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Research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts (by Coursework) in Sociology.

Johannesburg, 2008

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the ways in which gender, class, generation, and religion intersect to shape women's perceptions and experiences of work and household relations. Given the minimal research conducted on Indian communities in South Africa, this research focuses on Indian women living in Benoni, Ekurhuleni, demonstrating the importance of the intersection of different axes of identity. Differences in perceptions between older and younger generations were looked at in terms of how they viewed gender relations and work. Finally the implications of religion were examined in relation to these women's subjective experiences.

The literature review unraveled the theory of intersectionality and located the dynamics of overlapping social categories within the household and in relation to work experiences. Drawing primarily from Beverley Skeggs' notion of respectability, the research uncovered points of similarity and difference along these varying axes as they intersect at different levels and enable women to create meaningful identities for themselves. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were used to obtain the first-hand, subjective perceptions of the respondents regarding their experiences both within the home and outside.

The research findings demonstrate that respectability comes to mean different things for working class and middle class women, older and younger generations, and Muslim and Hindu women. Thus for the most part, working class Muslim women derived respectability from being full-time housewives and mothers, while middle class Hindu women overall felt that respectability was achieved through establishing individuality from formal employment while simultaneously being there for their children.

This study may, hopefully, contribute to the growing body of literature on intersectionality by highlighting the importance and necessity of looking at different social categories as they combine and coexist to inform and shape the identities and lived experiences of different groups of people.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Masters of Arts in Development Sociology in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

_____

Daphne DeSouza

_____ day of _____ , 2008.

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

South Africa is a country that has been characterised by racial oppression and segregation under the authoritarian apartheid regime. Despite the transition to democracy in 1994, there has not been an easy corresponding shift from inequality to equality. It thus remains a country divided along multiple lines of identity. As such, divisions remain along race, class and gender dimensions and experiences vary greatly along these differing axes (Seekings and Nattrass, 2005). It therefore becomes important to understand how individuals hold multiple identities at one and the same time which in turn shape their daily lived experiences.

The main argument of this research is that experience and perceptions are shaped along intersecting social categories that are context specific. As such, the experiences of these women are moulded by the overlapping categories of gender, class, generation and religion. Using Beverley Skeggs' notion of respectability, we see how respectable bodies and identities come to mean different things for working class women and middle class women, older women and younger women, and lastly, Muslim women and Hindu women. This research therefore looks at the shifting markers of respectability based on these intersecting identities.

The research found that working class women generally created respectable senses of 'selves' through dedicated domestic ideals centered around home life, while middle class women generally established respectable identities through formal employment together with domestic caring practices. Childcare however was a core marker of identity and womanhood – and therefore respectability – across both class and generation. Household gender relations reflected more equitable relations within the home with the middle class interviewees. This was not the case with the working class interviewees, where women primarily had to attend to all household chores with the assistance of domestic workers. We see that for those women working, it was therefore the working class interviewees who felt that managing the home and work was a double shift, while middle class women

felt that they effectively balanced the two. Lastly, with religion, we see that the working class women were primarily Muslim women with the view that womanhood entails making a home for their families. In contrast, the middle class women were mainly Hindu women that strongly favoured the notion that women should hold independent professions.

These varying perceptions and experiences framed along gender, class, generation and religion have important implications in terms of how respectability is established for working class and middle class women, older and younger women, and finally Hindu and Muslim women. The lines of overlap between class, generation and religion create experiences of commonality on the one hand, and lines of difference on the other, with regard to how respectability is construed.

1.2 RESEARCH RATIONALE

While issues of race are of paramount importance and at the forefront of research in South Africa, African, white and coloured communities are often given precedence over Indian communities. In addition, given the empirical gaps on issues of gender and class within Indian communities, it becomes useful to study the intersection between these two categories particularly because where these communities have been studied, this interplay of identities has been relatively ignored (Castelli, 2001).

Class analysis has gone through a period of decline since the post-modern critique in the 1980s. More recently, there has been a renewed interest in class, and the intersection of class and gender as a result of the worldwide rise of these inequalities (e.g. Russo and Linkon, 2005; Skeggs, 1997; Skeggs, 2004; Mahony and Zmroczek, 1997). However, there has been little recent focus on class and gender analysis in South African studies. In this respect, this study sought to demonstrate the importance of the intersection of gender and class differences.

Gender relations cannot be looked at in isolation given the complexity of society today and the varying lived experiences it fosters within specific historical contexts. Intersectionality theory overcomes this problem by taking into account other factors such as class and race (Crenshaw, 1991; Brewer, Conrad and King, 2002; Brah and Phoenix, 2004; McCall, 2005; Hancock, 2007). For the purposes of this research, middle and working class Indian women were interviewed so as to gauge their experiences with regard to the intersection of gender and class, given the crucial need to historicise and assess this relationship. These concepts were in turn analysed in relation to the household and work.

Patriarchal relations are strongly reflected within Indian communities (Cain, Khanam and Nahar, 1979; Feldman, 2001; Freund, 1995; Sharma, 1986). In view of this, this research provided a comparative analysis between working and middle class households based on the ways in which patriarchy affects Indian women's perceptions and experiences of work and home life. Issues of gender and class have been a fundamental theoretical nexus and yet little has been written on household gender relations framed along class divides among Indian communities, despite the fact that the intersection between these concepts is of paramount importance to the South African context. This study therefore aimed to address this intersectionality as a means of exploring the subjective experiences of Indian women within Benoni, Ekurhuleni, thereby filling in the gaps of current literature.

Finally, the issue of generation was examined in terms of how experiences of the household and labour market may or may not differ between younger and older Indian women. While there is research pointing to the importance of shifting identities in the intersection of gender, class and generation for African people (see e.g. Kenny, 2004; Hunter, 2002), there is little research that examines changes between generations within Indian communities in South Africa.

This research hopefully helps fill the theoretical gaps in the literature with regard to the experiences of Indian women, locating gender and class dynamics within the spheres of

the household and labour market. In addition, by studying older and younger women within middle and working class Indian households, this study delved into how class and generation affected gender dynamics in the household. Such a study can, on the whole, hopefully generate and provide new directions for research in the domain of gender, class and work more broadly in South Africa. Through compelling explanations of how differences, if any, are reflected in the meanings and experiences between working and middle class South African Indian women, new light may be shed on the realities of these women's lives.

1.3 CHAPTER BY CHAPTER

Chapter Two examines relevant literature relating to the intersection of class and gender as overlapping categories, as a recent response to the economically determinist past views on feminism. It locates these overlapping categories within the realms of the household and work experiences. The theory of intersectionality will be examined in detail together with Beverley Skeggs' notion of respectability.

Chapter Three addresses the methodology adopted in this research discussing aspects such as sampling methods and qualitative semi-structured interviews which were used in obtaining the relevant data.

Chapter Four provides a thematic summary of findings based on perceptions and experiences of work. It unravels the different ways in which respectability and meaning are created between the working class and middle class interviewees. We see that working class women generally create respectable senses of 'selves' through domestic ideals centered around home life, while middle class women generally establish respectable identities through formal employment together with domestic caring practices.

Chapter Five presents findings based on household gender relations. It examines the ways in which class and generation create lines of similarity and difference between past and present experiences of the interviewees. We see that stark gender divisions within

the home were present for the majority of the interviewees' while growing up. However, with present day home relations, class and generation create lines of difference between interviewees, where middle class and younger generation women experience more equitable household gender relations. Again we see how respectability encompasses different meanings between classes and generations.

Chapter Six looks at religion in relation to women's experiences. Although not foreseen to be a significant variable initially, it was found that religion intersects with gender and class and constitutes a marker of respectability which differs between Hindu and Muslim women. We see that working class women are primarily Muslim women with the view that womanhood entails making a home for their families, while middle class women are mainly Hindu women who strongly favour women holding independent professions.

Chapter Seven concludes this research report. It reflects on the arguments developed from the research findings and argues for the usefulness of using respectability as a marker of gender and class, together with other identities of religion and generation. It asserts, based on the findings from the previous chapters, that the intersection of these identities creates experiences of commonality and difference in terms of what it means to be respectable for these women.

It is hoped that this research, with its attention to the complex relationship between different social categories and the ideologies they embody, will relay the significance and value of understanding how meaningful identities are created and lived out.

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Literature Review examines relevant literature relating to the intersection of gender and class as overlapping categories which together work to establish meaningful identities for women. It will locate these overlapping categories within the realm of the household and labour market. The theory of intersectionality that arose in response to the past economically deterministic views of feminism will be explored in detail. In particular, Skeggs' notion of respectability will be examined as a measure of establishing the ways in which meaningful identities and senses of 'self' are created.

This chapter firstly begins with a discussion of gender and class as basic sociological concepts. This is followed by a review of the existing literature carried out on Indian communities in South Africa as well as in India. The next section examines how the theory of intersectionality came about and provides a more in-depth discussion of how scholars have studied the intersection of various social categories. Next, the concept of respectability is explored in detail in relation to capital – in particular cultural capital. Finally, an extensive discussion on the link between the household and the labour market is provided.

2.2 GENDER AND CLASS

Before drawing on the intersection of gender and class, it becomes useful to discuss these categories separately.

2.2.1 Gender

Giddens (1989) draws the important distinction between sex and gender whereby the former refers to the physical differences of the body while the latter refers to the social, psychological and cultural differences between females and males. As such, gender can be referred to as a social construct ascribed to the two sexes. In addition, Connell (1987) asserts that gender refers to practices organised in relation to the reproductive division of

labour, the interplay of structures of power, and emotional relations based on the structure of cathexis.

Following this, gender relations refer to the relationships between men and women that are present in all types of institutions, and as a result, give rise to particular gender regimes of control, power and resistance which operate at multiple levels in society (Connell, 1987). In essence, gender relations are context specific and can be viewed as the synthesis of relations of the above mentioned three structures which together constitute a gender regime of a particular institution (Connell, 1987:125).

Following from the above, patriarchy refers to the asymmetrical power relationships between men and women, by which men are privileged and dominate women (Beechey, 1979). It can also be defined as a system of male oppression of women in which political and economic control is exercised over women (Hartmann, 1976). Gender inequality stemming from these patriarchal relations is a direct result of this powerlessness of women over decision-making within the home setting, which often translates into their economic marginalisation (Barrett, 1980).

2.2.2 Class

The concept of class is much contested within sociology. Conceptualisations of class by classical theorists have demonstrated differing views. The Marxist view holds that two main classes exist, each with common economic interests – one who owns the means of production and one who does not. As a result, the latter class (the working class) has to sell their labour to the former (the capitalists) (Fine, 1975). Adding to Marx, Engels (1972) saw women's subjugation as a result of the reinforcing of monogamy due to men's desire to pass on property to their own offspring. In light of this, Engels did not see subjugation as an integral element within the working classes as property was rarely owned by working class men, and assumed that women's integration into wage labour would obliterate gendered oppression.

Max Weber's general perspective on class overlaps with some Marxist aspects in that both approaches adopt a relational view of class and both see class relations as based around the ownership of particular economic assets (Weber, 1964). However, Weber distinguished class from status when looking at social stratification. Weber (1964) defined class as purely economically determined, consisting of people with common economic interests based on opportunities for income or on possession of goods. For Weber then, class relations are built around the ownership and control of economically significant assets.

Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) contribution to our understanding of class stems from his idea that classes are constituted through the location of people in a social space defined by their relation to various forms of capital – cultural, social, symbolic, and economic capital. Thus class analysis is framed along the distribution of these forms of capital. Bourdieu (1984) gives us a way of understanding how structural categories of the working class and middle class produce systems of meaning represented through tastes, which reinforce the division between classes. Bourdieu provides a more nuanced use of a Marxian notion of class as structure, and demonstrates the way in which it combines with 'culture' to produce meaningful sociological differences based on access to different forms of capital (Bourdieu will be discussed in greater detail below).

This research will take as its starting point the intersection of gender and class rather than looking at them as isolated concepts (see Section 2.4). It will combine and explore these concepts in relation to Indian women's experiences. We now turn to studies on Indian communities.

2.3 INDIAN COMMUNITIES

2.3.1 South African Indian Communities

Literature on Indian communities in South Africa regarding the interaction of gender and class takes a historical approach in the way patriarchy defines women's economic and household experiences. Meer's (1984) study of Indian women workers in Natal looks at

gender and class. She examines how economic decisions in terms of to why these women work, were made by the males of the household – considered to be the household heads. Freund (1995) discusses the Indian community in Durban focusing on the Indian working class in particular. He considers this working class as an extremely unique entity due to the fact that, despite its experience of discrimination under apartheid and a history of poverty, the Indian community nevertheless contrasted with the African working class by having no barriers to free labour movement. Elsewhere, Freund (1991) delves into the issue of gender and class by looking at the changing character of the Indian working class household in Natal. He discusses how, over a period of time in South Africa, Indian family life developed outside the indenture system, and as a consequence, Indian cultural, social and familial life was recreated along new lines where working class women came to have a significant role to play within the household.

Sheik (2005), in her gendered historical analysis on Indian women, studies the ways in which colonialism and Indian customs restricted and facilitated the mobility of Indian women brought to Natal as indentured labour. In line with this, Desai and Vahed's (2008) recent book *Inside Indenture* examines race, class, caste and gender among Indian South Africans. They examine gender and the ways in which women use legal categories to carve a space for themselves to act within patriarchal relations. These historical studies are significant for contextualising the intersection of different identities.

Govender (2001) points out that it is important to note that in the case of South Africa, South African Indian women encounter simultaneous experiences of oppression with regard to race, class and sex, together with additional categories of oppression – namely those of religion, caste, and a sense of 'not belonging' to the African continent. While these studies demonstrate an interesting interplay of the overlap of these social categories, this research report offers a different approach using the concept of respectability which looks at both objectivities and subjectivities that work together in creating meaningful identities for women.

We see that the literature on South African Indian communities that incorporates gender and class dynamics does illustrate the significance of these identities in understanding Indian women's experiences. In addition, the literature demonstrates how historical context plays an integral role in these experiences. However more needs to be done in relation to contemporary society. Also, the need to differentiate Indian women's experiences needs to be further developed, going beyond the working class and thus incorporating the experiences of middle class Indian women into the analysis of these communities. This research also attempts to add to the existing body of literature by not only looking at the interplay of gender and class, but going beyond these categories and including the additional dimension of generation when understanding and differentiating the lived experiences of Indian women in contemporary South Africa.

2.3.2 Indian Communities Outside of South Africa

Literature based on Indian communities outside of South Africa appears to be more developed. Sharma (1986) highlights gender and class as processes of dynamic social life in her study of working class women in Shimla, India, centering on the urban household where internal and external gender relations come together. She discusses the economic contribution of women towards the household which in turn has implications for class formation. However, while providing novel insight to the household dynamics, ideas of class seemed to be rather fixed and static, and comparisons between differing classes are absent from her study.

Cain, Khanam and Nahar (1979) illustrate the predominance of male-headed households in Bangladesh in which male authority is exercised over all aspects of decision-making, which in turn has considerable impact on women entering the labour market. Women's work in the private realm is regarded as a consequence of this patriarchal system of male dominance. Jeffery (1979) also discusses working women in India. She states that poor women are more likely to work than women from wealthier families due to necessities of subsistence. However, she argues that these working women have a double role of paid employment and housework due to lack of economic surplus to enable them to employ domestic help. She goes on to argue that given the scarcity of domestic equipment and

convenience foods, compounded with the submissive expectations regarding these women's duties as a 'woman', the Indian housewife thus bears a far greater burden than most others.

In addition, Feldman (2001) discusses the situation in Bangladesh whereby up until fairly recently, the situation was one in which women were subjected to a position of disempowerment and subordination. These women, under the authority of a patriarchal male, were confined to the household due to exclusion from the labour market. Furthermore, the domestic labour of these women within the home provides a basis for the male wage in the labour market, and therefore reinforces sexual divisions of labour.

While studies of Indian communities elsewhere may not be directly related to the South African Indian experience, they do give some insight into dimensions of class and gender inequalities that are useful to keep in mind. We see that despite the fact that studies have been widely carried out on Indian communities, more needs to be done in terms of understanding the dynamics of intersectionality theory within contemporary South African Indian communities.

2.4 INTERSECTIONALITY

Feminist theory brought with it a new way of understanding and encapsulating women's experiences based around sexuality, patriarchal power, capitalist power, and other such areas that were seen to shape women's lived experiences. Through collective recognition, women were able to establish their collective identities and fight against oppression on various levels based on commonality of experience (Skeggs, 1997).

2.4.1 Patriarchy and Capitalism

Debate about the intersection between gender and class arose first in Marxist feminism. Marxist feminists, by incorporating class into their analysis, have attempted to analyse the relationship between the subordination of women and class exploitation. Early Marxist Feminism put emphasis on how capitalism reinforced the oppression of women

through the separation of public and private spheres. Later Marxist Feminism critiqued the economism of this perspective by debating the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism as intertwined systems that operate simultaneously to oppress and subordinate women.

2.4.1.1 Early Marxist Feminists

Early Marxist feminists, following Karl Marx, understood the sexual stratification of the labour market in terms of class relationships. These theorists argued that patriarchy is a function of private property together with class and wage labour relations. Thus gender and class inequality are rooted in property relations within capitalist societies and it was assumed that women (and men) are dominated first and foremost by capital (see Sokoloff, 1980).

For early Marxist Feminists, patriarchy is viewed as ideological and not material in form. Women's unpaid domestic work in the home within patriarchal relationships contributes to the reproduction of the labour force for capital. For these theorists, women's disadvantage in the labour market and in society is a direct result of their mystified labour within the home. In other words class relations, and particularly capital, creates women's economic dependence on men given the way in which domestic labour is separated from industrial labour (see Sokoloff, 1980). As such, the domestic labour debate brought attention to the separation of the private realm of women's unpaid labour from the public realm of wage labour (Fox, 1980). Fox points out that the task of reproduction in the household is characteristic mainly of working class women as opposed to the bourgeois women who often employ help when it comes to household chores and childcare. Following this, the altering of women's oppression under wage labour can only be achieved by altering her position within the patriarchal home. Therefore, liberation from these patriarchal relationships can be achieved by entering into wage labour or, as some argued, paying women for their domestic labour (see Sokoloff, 1980).

2.4.1.2 Later Marxist Feminists

Critiquing but building from this perspective, later Marxist feminists argued that patriarchy is autonomous as well as intertwined with capitalism and therefore operates within the spheres of both the home and the market. As such, the sexual division of labour in the home and market is a result of the social relations (of gender) under patriarchy and the social relations (of class) under capitalism, respectively, and is therefore not taken as a given – as is the case with Early Marxist feminist thought (see Sokoloff, 1980). In view of this, later Marxist feminism is also referred to as patriarchal capitalism.

This thinking contributed to a dual systems theory whereby a dual relationship was believed to exist between domestic labour in the private sphere and wage labour in the public sphere (see Sokoloff, 1980). Historically, working-class males have been instrumental in excluding women participating within the labour market as a means of maintaining authority and control over relations of reproduction in the family. Hartmann (1979) discusses the division of labour by sex throughout history. She highlights the fact that prior to capitalism, men controlled the labour of women and children in the family under the social arrangement of patriarchy. As such a hierarchical organisation was created which transcended the private sphere into the public with the advent of capitalism, as men sought to maintain their power and control over women (Hartmann, 1976). Hence the family is the predominant site of female reproduction which in turn reflects on their ability to enter the wage labour system as cheap, flexible labour power. As such, despite the increase of women into the labour market, their lower participation in relation to their male counterparts is a direct result of the interplay between the systems of patriarchy and capitalism, the former subsidising the latter (Hartmann, 1979).

Job segregation by sex was thus established so as to counter the threat of men losing this dominance over women. In this way, women's subordination in the household is reinforced which in turn reinforces their subordination and oppression in the labour market. In view of this, women remain oppressed today and many either have low-status jobs, or altogether refrain from entering the labour market. Thus, Hartmann (1976)

argues that capitalism and job segregation evolved from the patriarchal system whereby roles for men and women were constructed differently under a familial authority structure and perpetuated within the labour market.

Debate following Marxist feminism began to critique the overly structural view of the relationship between class and gender. In particular, scholars criticized this theory for its universalism and reductionism. In the next section, I review how people began to theorise intersectionality.

2.4.2 "Difference" and Intersectionality

During the 1980s, a new wave of feminism arose as a critique against looking at the category of gender in isolation. Patriarchy became subject to criticism on many levels. Of highest significance was the failure of patriarchy to look at social relations in a more holistic manner whereby oppression and subordination cannot be de-linked from other social categories. Therefore, theorists began to focus on 'difference', theorising on the intersection between class and gender in different ways and rejecting the existence of a 'universal' female experience.

The black feminist movement argued that experiences were not captured by a simple concept like patriarchy and that the word 'woman' essentially referred to white women (Hooks, 1981). It was argued that black women experience oppression at three levels – race, gender and class – and as such feminist writings needed to look at the intersection of these terms so as to address the structural realities of inequality that clearly operate on many different levels (Barrett, 1992; Mohanty, 1988). Christian (1993) reflects on the African-American feminist Audre Lorde, who emphasised that the intersections of various oppressions stem from the inability to recognise difference, and that women need to develop new patterns of relating across different identities (age, race, class, sex) given the multiplicity that characterises each one of us. Thus reconceptualisations of feminist perspectives on gender include 'the simultaneity of oppression' as a means of relating race, class and gender as they take on varying meanings within specific historical contexts.

In light of this, Black feminist thought sees the importance of a theory of intersectionality as a means of examining the overarching structures of domination common to different social categories. Collins (1991) puts forward an intersectional analysis of interlocking oppressions. She highlights the importance of intersectionality theory as it signifies a paradigmatic shift by incorporating other structures of oppression and subordination such as age, sexual orientation, and religion, in conjunction with gender, race, and class. She highlights how interlocking systems of oppression operate within multiple levels of domination – personal biography, group or community level (cultural context), and systemic level (social institutions).

Scott (1988) asserts that oppression is derived from both sex and class divisions, and social relations of reproduction and production respectively. Thus gender systems interact and operate in tandem with economic systems to produce social and historical experiences of socioeconomic and patriarchal structures. Scott (1988) therefore demonstrates the importance of historicising class and gender given the intertwined embeddedness of these concepts, and places emphasis on how gender becomes a signifying system of power.

Later theorists began to study intersectionality as a theory in and of itself given the inadequacy of early theorising of social categories as structured and separate entities. Firstly, Crenshaw (1991) focuses on intersections of race and gender as a means of addressing the need to account for multiple grounds of identity and qualitative differences in experiences when considering how the social world is constructed. She argues that experiences of race, class and gender cannot be captured fully by looking at them individualistically. Awareness of intersectionality can serve as a means of acknowledging and grounding differences centering on various levels of marginalisation and thereby enables the construction of group politics (Crenshaw, 1991).

Sunde and Bozalek (1993) highlight the importance of historical differences which locate women differently, and therefore deny the homogeneity of lived experiences of women. They assert that within particular historical contexts, some of these differences may be

emphasised by reflecting particular power relations and thereby resulting in a hierarchy of oppression. This shifting nature of identity, and therefore shifting subjectivity, across different contexts serves to challenge previous beliefs of 'fixed' notions of identity. Hendricks and Lewis (1994) emphasise that the gendered social subject cannot exist independently as a 'woman' or 'man', but instead is always a gendered subject with other overlapping identities. This highlights the differing power relations that characterise women's varying experiences that are particularly relevant and significant to the South African experience (Hendricks & Lewis, 1994; Holland-Muter, 1995; Tee, 1995).

Campbell (1993) highlights the importance of contextualising multiple identities across various historical settings. She points out that each identity aligns us with different groupings based on the commonality of shared experiences. Similarly, Brewer, Conrad and King (2002) discuss the way in which all systems of oppression become mutually reinforcing. They demonstrate the ways in which women can be thought of by using intersectionality, namely by considering the particularity of each group, by examining how each group is ideologically defined by elements of another group's characteristics, and finally, through analysing the common experience of inferiority that operates at the levels of gender, caste, race, and class.

Gupta (2001) discusses how the issue of women's ethnicity and sexuality are said to intersect significantly with the reproductive functions of women. As such, women are said to be 'guardians' of an ethnic group given their function of childbearing which therefore serves to create and maintain ethnic boundaries. This in turn enables not only internal cohesion, but also establishes external differences. As such, identity demarcation is reinforced through a sense of the 'other' between ethnic groups. Gender and ethnicity therefore merge in creating commonality of experiences.

Kirk-Duggan (2003) demonstrates how politics of identity concerns how people deal with issues of race, ethnicity, sexuality and gender, how these identities relate, and how the resulting differences impact on individuals' physical, social and emotional selves. Brah and Phoenix (2004) argue that intersectionality theory allows one to develop a more

complex and dynamic understanding of the social and structural positions of subjective experiences. It becomes very important to acknowledge these different axes of differentiation so as to enable theorists within different disciplines to grasp the power relations evident in social structures and the ways in which they operate within specific historical contexts (Brah and Phoenix, 2004; Hancock, 2007). Thus class and gender are viewed as simultaneously subjective and structural, and not as distinct realms of experience.

McCall (2005) states that since critics first highlighted the limitations of using gender as a single and homogenising category for analysis, feminists have turned to intersectionality which provides a holistic assessment of the relationships among multiple dimensions of social categories. She attests that previous research, which centered solely on gender, failed to take into account the conflicting dynamics of the lived experiences of women. Thus McCall (2005) asserts that a more complex and interconnected analysis is required in feminist research given the disconnection between social reality and theory within various disciplines. She argues that the problem of *how* to study intersectionality needs to be transcended as various methodologies for the study of this theory can be utilised today.

Intersectionality thus allows for a more holistic understanding of the interrelated dynamics of different identities. Such thinking serves to challenge previous feminist writings that placed gender alone at the center of analysis, or that argued for the universality of the category 'woman'. By historicising and contextualising relations, and focusing on subjective meanings and lived experiences, this literature also critiques the overly structural and economistic earlier Marxist Feminism. This determinism is overcome through intersectionality theory. Skeggs, using Bourdieu, takes this approach, drawing on the insights of intersectionality to reposition the concept of 'class' within feminist debate. She does this with her concept of respectability which aims to understand the interplay of gender and class dynamics when exploring the lived experiences of women.

2.5 RESPECTABILITY

Skeggs (1997) demonstrates how dispositions of class and gender combine to produce a respectable body. Hence, bodies are the sites upon which we draw distinctions between different social categories. Skeggs uses this notion of respectability to encapsulate the subjectivities of experience in the history of class and gender formation. She uses experience as a means of understanding how women occupy the category 'women'. The specificity of experience is central to the production of subjectivity of raced, classed, and gendered 'woman'. Accordingly, Skeggs (1997:166) states that "Through the overlaying of categories the term 'woman' always comes with a specific class address… Overlaying always occurs in a nexus of power relations in which valuations of different types of women are made." Thus, by singling out a particular social category (such as gender), one assumes – erroneously so – a fixity or homogeneity of identity over time and space. Instead, subjective experiences create identities which are continually in production and which cannot be divorced from relations of political economy.

Following this, Skeggs incorporates Bourdieu into her analysis whereby he asserts that bodily dispositions are markers for social positions, and therefore intersections of race, class and gender are embodied and practiced within them. Bodies, then, are markers of social position, reflecting various tastes and practices, which in turn give individuals access to differential amounts of capital (be it economic, cultural, social or symbolic capital) (Bourdieu, 1984). Bourdieu (1984) argues that the dispositions acquired based on social positioning in social space results in individuals adjusting to these prescribed social spaces to which they belong.

It becomes useful to draw on Bourdieu's different metaphoric forms of capital. Bourdieu speaks of four forms of capital; economic capital (income and wealth), cultural capital (credentials, knowledge, and can embody gender relations in terms of notions of femininity and masculinity), social capital (relationships, group membership and social ties), and symbolic capital (honour and prestige) (Bourdieu, 1977).

In addition to an individual's access to a variety of resources, education, and occupation, Bourdieu asserts that culture (tastes, preferences and values) is stamped by social class. Different classes are defined in general by their occupation. Each class then has varying access to cultural capital which is homogenous within the particular class. Thus the middle class would distinguish themselves from the working class through their distinctive cultural tastes, knowledge and competencies, while these aspects are shared and constant within each class (Bourdieu, 1984).

Cultural capital in this study was viewed through the way it takes shape in an embodied state and in an institutionalised state. Cultural capital in an embodied state refers to that which is embodied in the individual. This is thus a result of the inherited aspects of one's self from the family one is born into, through the process of socialisation. The institutional form of the cultural capital is primarily understood as academic credentials which relate to one's position in the labour market. This type of capital transmits to economic capital based on these educational achievements (Bourdieu, 1977).

Following from this, we are born into a given social space within which we have varying access to these different forms of capital. As such we are born into gender and class relations which designates one to positions of 'woman', 'working class' or 'middle class' and in turn gives us meanings that inform the ways in which we relate to these different social positions. In this way, Bourdieu's forms of capital enables us in this study, to understand how access, resources and legitimation contribute to class analysis.

In addition, Skeggs (1997) drawing on Bourdieu, asserts that 'experience' is the key to the definition of class, and respectability is understood as a central mechanism through which the concept class emerged. According to Skeggs (1997), respectability has been attributed to those possessing individuality and was thus originally defined in relation to social position or class. Thus it becomes a possession of the middle class as opposed to the working class who were seen to lack this individuality, and therefore respectability.

Skeggs (1997) asserts that respectability is one of the most universal signifiers of class as it informs our education, behaviour, values, positions within the homes, and how we classify others. This in turn enables individuals to create meaningful identities for themselves. Based on one's social position, respectability can be derived from different aspects in life (work, motherhood, being a housewife) and come to incorporate different ideals and value judgments which serve to create meaning for the individual (Skeggs, 1997). In effect, respectability often becomes an issue for those who do not possess it due to their inferior class status. My research looks at and addresses this notion of respectability and the way it contains judgments of class, gender and generation in terms of how women live based on their access to and display of respectability. Following the importance of intersectionality theory, the category of 'woman' will therefore be identified as one of the products of class by using the concept of respectability as an analytical tool. In the next section we see how other scholars have understood the dynamics of class and gender in relation to the household and labour market.

2.6 THE LINK BETWEEN THE HOUSEHOLD AND THE LABOUR MARKET

Next, I turn to examining concretely how authors have analysed the relationship between the household and the labour market. Initially it was held that once women entered into the labour market they became liberated from embedded patriarchal relations in the home. According to Engels (1972:137-138), the first condition for the liberation of women from their oppressed status was to bring the whole female sex into the public industry.

In line with this, Kabeer (1994) argues that the increase of women in the labour force gives them a sense of autonomy and power that is then enacted within the private sphere of the household. Thus the labour market is viewed as a realm that emancipates women from patriarchal relations within the household. Amartya Sen's theory runs parallel to this argument in that he asserts that women's freedom to work in the labour market will serve to congruently increase their autonomy within the household as they will feel empowered given their enhanced status. Here, agency is significant, albeit contingent upon the opportunities and capabilities available to these women (Sen, 1999).

Jaffee (1988) discusses the ways in which commuter labour has transformed the lives and households of African women in South Africa. Women, although concentrated in the least skilled types of jobs so as to reinforce their condition of subordination, nevertheless gained some economic independence – albeit limited – as a result of the wages that they received in the labour market. This in turn enabled them to exert more control over their households.

Other theorists however believe that capitalism in fact can also serve to reproduce patriarchy and can reinforce general gendered norms within the household. Ong (1987) found that while Malay women developed a sense of autonomy and esteem through the earning of their own wages, this relationship becomes more complicated on the shop-floor of male-dominated factories. Thus, women in the home did not in fact experience more oppression that women in the labour market as gender oppression was reinforced within the workplace in different ways, through different male-dominated networks (Ong, 1987).

Hochschild (1989) demonstrates the way in which women entering into the labour market are compelled to deal with the conflicting demands of a double workload in that they hold full time jobs and still have to care for children at home. Yet household work is not being redistributed between men and women despite this entry of women into the labour market. According to Hochschild (1989:4), "Most women work one shift at the office or factory and a 'second shift' at home". Folbre (1994) echoes this view by pointing out that women's unpaid labour in the private realm subsidises the economy. This unpaid labour in turn creates a second shift for women as they enter the labour market highlighting the permeating aspect of gender inequalities and the difficulties that women face given the reinforcement of the male-biased work culture. Thus the previous belief of women's emancipation upon entering the labour market is strongly critiqued by these theorists.

Roberts (1993) also demonstrates how women's structural position in the household as well as in the labour market serves to restrict their access to any leisure time, which is reinforced by associated norms that assert women's domestic place in the home in terms

of mothering. This free time is even more impossible to experience in the case of working class women. As such, working women appear worse off as opposed to liberated as was believed by earlier theorists. Furthermore, Maforah (1993) highlights the strains and disenchantment experienced by working women due to their disproportionate share of household chores that they have to bear in addition to a full days work. As such, they feel insecure and at a disadvantage in terms of competing with men within the labour market, given these multiple and conflicting roles that are imposed on them.

In addition, it has been argued that despite the increase of women into the public realm of paid labour, patriarchal inequalities persist given the fact that many women in developing countries constitute cheap labour in semi-skilled tasks (Robinson, 2006; Pearson, 2004). Robinson (2006) discusses the problems of inequality in both wage labour and paid and unpaid care work in developing countries. This 'care' work involves the nurturing of others together with social reproductive work that will ensure the reproduction of the labour force. Women bear the brunt of this responsibility exclusively and this burden has drastically increased under the forces of globalisation. In addition, these women are not only exploited but excluded from the formal economy to a large extent thereby adding to their burdens within the household and driving them to seek work in the informal economy. As such, their unequal status within the household is perpetuated within the labour market, illustrating the way in which the public world of labour cannot be separated from the lives of women in the private familial sphere. Power relationships and struggles are thus enacted within both these spheres. Work cannot be decontextualised from the household (Robinson, 2006). This idea is echoed by Pearson (2004) who rejects the divide that many create between reproduction and production.

Connell (1987) describes the sexual division of labour characterising gender relations as one which defines certain types of work as domestic and unpaid while other kinds of work are public and paid. These usually comprise of work for women and men respectively. The labour market constructed by the capitalist state offers primarily lower-status, part-time jobs, for working-class women in particular, driven by the ideology that

women are first and foremost concerned with their household duties over and above their "second wage" in the labour market (Connell, 1987).

Connell goes on to say that the differences of production within the household and the labour market vary along the class divide. Despite changes today in household structure, the labour market and state policy, women still bear the brunt of trailing behind men, especially working class women who are oppressed at both gender and class levels (Connell, 1987). For example, working class families survive on the husbands wage while the upper-class families revolve around the husband's career. Moreover, working-class women are forced to enter the labour market to make ends meet, yet must return to childrearing and unpaid household work after returning from the labour force. Women's senses of 'self' as mothers and as workers are intertwined with these lived experiences that are context specific (Connell, 1987).

Phillips (1991) argues that women are restricted from entering the public world due to the gender inequality and power relations that exist within their private lives. She discusses the ways in which patriarchal power is exercised over women within the private sphere of reproduction which is reinforced in the public sphere. She points to the fact that despite the high increases of women into the workforce at the turn of the century, they fail to climb the corporate ladder due to the fact that the career system inhibits women given its male bias in its structure. Men do not partake in the raising of children or the household chores and this limits the capacity of women to compete with men given their dual work responsibilities. The fact that men earn more money given their role as 'breadwinner' often results in them abusing this power within the family (Phillips, 1991). While relationships within the household are shaped by public policies on the one hand, politics and the relations at the workplace are in turn shaped by household gender inequalities. In addition, while public participation is limited given the constraints within the family, this signifies a double shift for women given that their private household responsibilities remain intact. The very fact that women *are* subordinate and dependent in the household illustrates their continued oppression and emphasises the interconnectedness of the private and public domains (Phillips, 1991).

This research, then, also examines whether there are different structural constraints for working class and middle class women, and for younger and older generation women. It looks into how different women create respectability for themselves by building their own subjectivities and senses of 'self' through the dynamics of gender, class and generation.

CHAPTER 3 - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research was to understand the intersection between gender, class and generation through a comparative analysis between working and middle class Indian women in Benoni, Ekurhuleni. To accomplish this understanding, qualitative research methodology was used. Semi-structured interviews were carried out so as to address the complexities of the issues under study and the meanings ascribed to the lived experiences of these women. The data collection was undertaken between January and April. It was carried out within three areas in Benoni – Actonville, Lakefield and Farramere. Actonville is predominantly a working class area while the latter two are middle class areas.

3.2 SAMPLE

The sample comprised of Indian women from both working class and middle class households (see Appendix A for full details of interviews). The sampling method used was that of purposive sampling which is a type of non-probability sampling. Purposive sampling involves targeting particular individuals or categories of individuals for investigation (Greenstein, 2003). The advantage of this sampling strategy is that a few cases can be selected for intensive study. Purposive sampling was used in determining what kinds of households to select in terms of ensuring that there exists (or existed) a spousal relationship, as well as women from two generations. Despite this sampling method's usefulness in terms of the study at hand, a drawback with this method is that it inhibits the ability to generalise to the larger population which is possible with probability sampling techniques (Burton, 2000). However, with many qualitative studies, generalisation is not always sought – as is the case with this study.

The sample included ten households (five middle class and five working class households). Two female members, representing different generations from each household were interviewed. The age cohorts were as follows: eight interviewees were in

the age range of 18-24, two were in the range of 30-40, eight were in the range of 40-50, and finally, two were in the range of 65-75. These different age groups allowed for an assessment of the influence of generation on differences in perceptions of gender relations within the home, and what it means for a woman to work. For simplification purposes, the age groups will be divided into 'daughter' (18-24), 'mother' (30-40 and 40-50), and 'grandmother' (65-75) generations.

The tables below give a summary of the interviewees (pseudonyms used), their class, their age, and their generation:

Working Class Women

Interviewees	**Age**	**Generation**
Shoutami	Late-60s	Grandmother generation
Shazia	Late-40s	Mother generation
Salimah	Late-40s	Mother generation
Manifah	Late-40s	Mother generation
Razia	Late-40s	Mother generation
Anjali	Late-30s	Mother generation
Raheema	Mid-20s	Daughter generation
Zainab	Late-teens	Daughter generation
Safinah	Late-teens	Daughter generation
Aiyesha	Late-teens	Daughter generation

Middle Class Women

Interviewees	**Age**	**Generation**
Kavina	70s	Grandmother generation
Hema	Late-40s	Mother generation
Nisha	Late-40s	Mother generation
Praveena	Late-40s	Mother generation

Yasmeen	Late-40s	Mother generation
Sunaina	Late-30s	Mother generation
Naheema	Mid-20s	Daughter generation
Rupee	Early-20s	Daughter generation
Jasu	Early-20s	Daughter generation
Geeta	Early-20s	Daughter generation

3.3 ACCESS

Access was obtained initially through a key contact that is acquainted with certain families within the areas in Benoni. Following this initial access, the rest of the sample was obtained in a snowball fashion ensuring that the above mentioned criteria of sample characteristics were met. Snowball sampling is a method used to target difficult-to-reach persons by selecting a few people and asking them to direct the researcher to others within the same group (Burton, 2000). In other words, the initial families interviewed identified additional members to be included in the sample and therefore helped direct the researcher to the next households to be studied and so on. This form of non-probability sampling was used for its convenience given the difficulty in establishing a sample.

Finally, interviews were conducted within the households so as to allow the respondents to feel at ease within their own homes. It is important to note, however, that this may well be a disadvantage due to respondents becoming too relaxed and possibly being distracted by telephone calls or children for example. This however only proved to be the case with a couple of the interviews. Following a brief introduction and general conversation about the study at hand so as to establish rapport and trust, interviews commenced, taking roughly between forty-five minutes to an hour. It was not possible to interview both members of a household on the same day so in most cases, interviews were carried out on different days when convenient for the respondents. Each respondent was therefore interviewed alone and not in the presence of other family members. Males were not present during the interview process as a means of ensuring that female respondents were not inhibited in any way in terms of their responses.

3.4 METHODS

The concepts of gender relations and class were operationalised through experiences, attitudes and opinions, and the actual practices of the respondents that were identified through the sampling strategy, data collection measures, and interview questions. In this process, Skeggs' concept of 'respectability' proved useful. In addition, geographical location was also used as a marker of class based on the three areas of Benoni from which interviewees were selected from – Actonville, Lakefield and Farramere. Working class interviewees were those who lived in Actonville, while middle class interviewees were those living in Lakefield and Farramere.

The method of data collection was qualitative in nature so as to obtain first-hand, subjective perceptions of the respondents regarding their experiences within the household. Qualitative research enables one to focus on understanding and interpretation of meanings and intentions that underlie human behaviour as opposed to focusing on quantitative research which seeks to uncover measurable aspects of human behaviour through generalisations (Weiss, 1994). The strengths of this approach are that it provides rich contextual information thus enabling the discovery of new phenomena not discovered by previous research. This in turn may help in the generation of new theories (Greenstein, 2003). A frequently mentioned shortcoming of qualitative research is that it has limited ability to generalise given its small sample size (Greenstein, 2003). However, it is important to note that generalisation may not necessarily always be the aim of a qualitative study and was in fact not the aim of this particular study.

Interviews are the most common technique utilised with qualitative research. The type of data collection instrument used in this research was qualitative semi-structured interviews, so as to obtain direct information from the participants on a face-to-face basis which effectively facilitates the aim of this research – understanding and interpreting the meanings people attach to their social world. Semi-structured interviews are flexible whereby the role of the researcher is primarily to remain fairly unobtrusive so as to encourage respondents to freely express or share his or her thoughts on a particular issue. This method also has the advantage of allowing the researcher to build rapport with the

interviewees and allows for effective interaction with them (Greenstein, 2003). Given the unstructured aspect of this method, subjects can feel free to develop their own train of thought. In addition, due to the flexibility of this approach, valuable insights that may not have been initially predicted may come to light. However, the researcher needs to ensure that the focus of the study is not lost by using the interview schedule (Appendix B) as a means of guiding the participants towards addressing all the issues relevant to the study. Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to explore complex individual beliefs and examine issues in greater depth and detail. The types of questions used to establish the effects of gender, class and generation were relatively unstructured and open-ended. In addition, obscure details were clarified with this method through the use of probes and prompts, further highlighting the relevance of this method for the research at hand (Weiss, 1994).

Additional merits of the semi-structured interview method include its ability to collect large amounts of data from respondents and the fact that it leaves room for clarifying ambiguities and inconsistencies. In addition, follow-up sessions can be scheduled if the researcher has any further issues to address that were not previously anticipated (Greenstein, 2003). The limitations of this method include possible discomfort on behalf of the respondents to divulge information, given the personal level of interaction entailed by this method. This was evidenced with some of the interviewees when asked questions based on intra-household decision-making and spousal relations. However, for the most part this difficulty was not experienced with the majority of the interview sessions. Of greater difficulty, with this method, is that data obtained is often less standardised and the task of transcribing and coding the data is often extremely onerous (Greenstein, 2003).

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Finally, analysis was undertaken through the identifying and extracting of common themes that arose out of the data from the interviews. Detailed transcribing of the tape records was firstly carried out. The data was dissected and coded thematically so as to discover new implicit and explicit meanings of the respondents' views and experiences.

Coding provided insight into the intersection of gender, class and generation, and enabled the researcher to the extract various themes from the findings, which in turn enabled the data to be thematically interpreted. Differences between the extent of influence of class and generation on gender relations in the home and women's views on working were assessed using the information gleaned from the interviews. These themes were then related back to the literature to see whether commonalities or inconsistencies appear between the existing theory and the empirical findings. The additional theme of religion, not initially seen to be a variable of import in this study, was discovered and analysed in relation to the other social categories. Thus an exploration of recurring themes and patterns of relationships was carried out using the data.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

With all social research, basic professional ethical concerns must always be addressed. As such, with this research, participants were firstly given full disclosure of the purposes of the study. Through a subject information sheet (Appendix C), they were briefed about the nature and aims of the research, what they are required to do, and why. Interviewees were assured that participation is completely voluntary. They were required to indicate their informed consent by signing the relevant sheet (Appendix D) at the start of the interview. Respondents were also asked permission for tape-recording the information elucidated in the interview and signed a separate section within the informed consent form with regard to this.

The researcher's personal contact details were provided should the interviewees have any queries or problems. Participants were also assured of confidentiality and anonymity, the latter ensured through the use of pseudonyms when direct quotes were used. The participants' rights to privacy were established through allowing them to withdraw from the study if they so chose to at any point. Lastly, they were informed that they may contact the researcher for feedback on the overall results of the study on completion of the project.

3.7 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

Gaining access to a research site or sample is often very difficult. A key difficulty with this research was actually finding respondents. In addition, establishing times for interviews proved very difficult as many had busy schedules and often postponed interviews due to personal or work related commitments. As such, some interviewees rushed through the interviews towards the end which may have resulted in valuable information being lost. Finally, the sampling methods also posed a limitation to the research as both purposive sampling and snowball sampling are not representative methods, hence the sample cannot be said to represent fully the working and middle class women in Benoni.

CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS: PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF WORK

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the perceptions and experiences of work of the twenty interviewees. It examines the ways in which gender, generation and class intersect to create 'respectable bodies' (Skeggs, 1997), and the ways in which these women create meaning from what they do. Through these separate axes of identity and the specific points at which they intersect, we can see how commonality of experience operates on the one hand, yet how boundaries of difference are established on the other hand based on the subjective lived experiences of these women of different classes and generations.

Respectability, domestic ideals and childcare all create constraints on the lives of women. Yet they may also be experienced positively through different ways. As such, they establish lines of difference between women – working class and middle class women – depending on historical differences, shifting contexts and locations, and access to various forms of capital. Thus we see that working class women generally create respectable senses of 'selves' through dedicated domestic ideals centered around home life, while middle class women generally establish respectable identities through formal employment together with domestic caring practices. With the working class women these domestic ideals encompass undertaking of household chores together with caring for their families, while for the middle class women, domestic aspects center more on looking after their families. Both classes however share similar ideals on motherhood and childcare as these aspects are seen to be integral to womanhood and respectability.

A very interesting discovery that arose out of the findings was a contradiction between views on work with regard to the personal experiences of the working class interviewees, and what they believe it *means* to work. While this paradox was not reflected across all the working class interviewees, it was nevertheless evident with many of them. In other words, while they felt on the one hand that women should work on the basis of financial

necessity as motherhood takes precedence in terms of their identities as women (Section 4.4), they felt that work was important for a woman's independence and therefore self-esteem (Section 4.5). Thus these findings bring forward a conflict as these women asserted that being a housewife to stay with their children was a marker of respectability. And yet they later say that work is important for self-esteem.

Ten interviews were conducted with middle class Indian women from five separate households, two from each household. Likewise, ten interviews were conducted with middle class women from five households, again two from each household. The interviewees from both classes comprised of the following age cohorts – eight in the range 18-25, two in their 30s, eight in their 40s, and finally two in the age range 65-75.

The tables below give a description of the interviewees, what they do, their age, and their generation (categorised as 'grandmother', 'mother', and 'daughter' generations for simplification):

Working Class Women

Interviewees	**Profession**	**Age**	**Generation**
Shoutami	Retired, was a Teacher	Late-60s	Grandmother generation
Shazia	Housewife	Late-40s	Mother generation
Salimah	Housewife	Late-40s	Mother generation
Manifah	Housewife	Late-40s	Mother generation
Razia	Housewife	Late-40s	Mother generation
Anjali	Administrator in Life Insurance Company	Late-30s	Mother generation
Raheema	Sales in Mining Company	Mid-20s	Daughter generation
Zainab	University Student	Late-teens	Daughter generation
Safinah	University Student	Late-teens	Daughter generation
Aiyesha	University Student	Late-teens	Daughter generation

Middle Class Women

Interviewees	Profession	Age	Generation
Kavina	Housewife	70s	Grandmother generation
Hema	Reflexologist/ Homeopathic Healer	Late-40s	Mother generation
Nisha	Hairdresser/ Tricologist	Late-40s	Mother generation
Praveena	Credit Controller	Late-40s	Mother generation
Yasmeen	Housewife	Late-40s	Mother generation
Sunaina	Manager in Foreign Exchange Division at FNB	Late-30s	Mother generation
Naheema	Administrator in Father's Business	Mid-20s	Daughter generation
Rupee	Internal Auditor Trainee	Early-20s	Daughter generation
Jasu	University Student	Early-20s	Daughter generation
Geeta	University Student	Early-20s	Daughter generation

4.2 GROWING UP AND VIEWS ON WOMEN WORKING

The findings demonstrate that growing up, views on women working were more of the notion that women should remain within the domestic sphere. Respectability was therefore established through women being housewives due to domestic ideals centered on caring for the family and the home. These views were consistent for the most part between classes. This can be attributed to the fact that initially all interviewees, including the middle class women currently living in Lakefield and Farramere, were from Actonville and therefore common views were held within the Indian community as a whole back then. With generation however, the 'daughter' generation in both classes showed a digression from this view whereby they felt that it was important to work in this day an age. Here however, work was regarded as more of a necessity by the working

class younger generations' families while for the middle class younger generations' families it was deemed important for self-esteem and therefore respectability.

Most of the working class women's mothers were housewives all their lives although sometimes their mothers would help their fathers out with work from home. Only two, Razia (late-40s) and Salimah (late-40s), stated that their mothers used to work. One worked making telephone cables and the other was a dressmaker, respectively. With the middle class interviewees, six had mothers who were housewives. The remaining four stated that their mothers were all working women – hairdresser, homeopathic healer, credit controller, and running a fruit and vegetable business together with her father. Three of these four women are in the 'daughter' generation and one, Sunaina**,** is in her late-30s.

We see that for the most part, the mothers of both the working class women and the middle class women did not work. However, as demonstrated above, the younger generation middle class women were more likely to have mothers who worked, which may demonstrate the changing perceptions of women's roles over time. Thus class differences come to bear only when linked with the younger generations. These differences become clearer (see below) when taking into account the familial views on women working when the interviewees were growing up.

4.2.1 Working Class Family Views

4.2.1.1 *'Grandmother' and 'Mother' Generations*

The older generations stated that in those days – 1950s to 1980s – while they were growing up, it was not necessary or ideal for women to work as they did not need to.

Salimah (late-40s),

> "I think they were too close-minded and they were very much like, 'ok this is what men do and this is what women do'... women can't do what men do and things like that… I think my parents were very conservative so they expected me to be just like

what they were... in the conservative field... not working and going out there and being a professional."

Razia (late-40s) said,

"The woman's place was in the home looking after children."

Shazia (late-40s),

"They didn't allow the women to go out to work that time because they were originally from India... my mother and father... so I don't think parents those days wanted us to go out and work... my mom didn't do anything for that matter… married and that's it – in the house all the time."

Shoutami (late-60s),

"For many years they had the view that women belonged in the home back then… yes very, very upset if daughters wanted to study or work."

Only one woman stated that while in general the view was that a woman should not work while they were growing up, her family was more open-minded in their thinking and hence accepted it as it was important for women to be independent and not have to depend on a man.

Manifah (late-40s),

"Back then, usually they thought that women should stay home and look after the kids… but my father, he wasn't like that… he didn't mind if anybody worked or if we were going to work after school."

We therefore see that growing up in Actonville in the1960s and 1970s, working class families seemed, for the most part, to reinforce a notion that women should not work.

4.2.1.2 'Daughter' Generation

The working class women in the 'daughter' generation digressed from the views of the older two generations in that they stated that growing up, their families thought it was important for women to work nowadays solely due to the cost of living.

Zainab (late-teens),

> "In today's time, some people they feel they're better off if both parents are working because even the cost of living is so high... they feel maybe they could give their children a better life if they both have financial stability... so in today's time sometimes its better if both parents work."

Raheema (mid-20s),

> "They [her parents] encouraged it... working... education was very important… we can't sit at home anymore…she [her mother] always tells me that a woman can never depend on a man because you dunno where he's gonna land up one day… you get married today and tomorrow you're divorced and then you at home."

4.2.2 Middle Class Family Views

4.2.2.1 'Grandmother' and 'Mother' Generations

Middle class older generation family views on women working when the interviewees were growing up were akin to those of the working class older generation respondents. This, as mentioned above, was due to the fact that in the 1960s and 1970s, the older two generations also belonged to the working classes and only achieved middle class status when they were adults. This in turn explains why views start changing between the classes in the younger generation (as demonstrated in the next sub-section). Six of the interviewees stated that while they were growing up, men were the sole bread-winners while women had to attend to the homes and children. Women, who did work, were frowned upon, especially by their in-laws once they got married.

Kavina (70s) said,

> "Those days the womens never used to work... nobody wanted to work… because they [women] were also strictly controlled not to go and work... the men were working... the women looked after the childrens and the house and cooking... there was lot work to do... the washing and the ironing and the cooking, cleaning the house and all that."

Nisha (late-40s) also stated that,

> "You [women] weren't allowed to [work]... the reason for that is men had all the status."

Here we see that it was generally unacceptable in the Indian community, at the time when the older generations were growing up (1960s and 1970s), for women to work. This was because norms and values of that time were constructed along the idea that femininity was defined in terms of being a good wife and a good mother. Thus women did not even want to work during those days as they felt their identity was shaped through making a good home and raising a family.

4.2.2.2 'Daughter' Generation

This view changes later, as we can see from the younger generations' familial experiences as this generation was born into the middle class lifestyles unlike the older two generations. Like the working class younger generation, these interviewees all reported that their families, while growing up, thought that it was important for both husbands and wives to work in this day and age. They differed in that they believed work was essential for women not only because the cost of living is high today, but also because a woman needs to have her own identity and self-respect. Thus, respectability becomes viewed in terms of self-esteem and women being able to make something of themselves, rather than solely being a housewife or working for economic reasons as is the view of the working class younger generation.

Jasu (early-20s),

> "I think the woman should work instead of just sitting at home… well it's actually your choice at the end of the day but I think it's important for your confidence."

Geeta (early-20s),

> "Well from our point of view it wasn't where the girl has to sit at home and do the cooking and the cleaning... you have to go out and look for your job and work... but I've got a granny who sees it differently... she's like his olden day person that will say 'ok the girl must sit at home and she must cook, she must look after the husband, she mustn't go and work'… but women working makes you more of a confident and independent person"

This latter quote very succinctly illustrates how the view on women working has changed over time.

4.2.3 Class and Generation Differences

We can see here also that differences between the working class and middle classes regarding family views of women working when interviewees were growing up were not so pronounced. During those times (1950s to 1980s), womanhood came to be defined by a woman's role in the home as mothers and housewives. As such, gendered identities of femininity and masculinity become encapsulated in the roles of housewife and breadwinner, respectively. During the childhoods of the interviewees from the older generations ('mother' generation and 'grandmother' generation) women generally created their identities through what was expected of them as home-makers and good wives who attended to their husbands needs when they returned from work. This was true of both working class and middle class women when they were growing up thereby reflecting shared experiences across class as it combines with generation. They therefore willingly ascribed to these expectations as it served to construct their identities as both 'mothers' and 'wives.' This was reinforced by the fact that in the past all belonged to the same class – that of the working class. In view of this, naturally no class disparities were evidenced based on childhood subjective experiences.

This then changes with the younger generation of women. The view of working class and middle class respondents from this generation generally differs from the view of the older two generations in that both grew up in families which encouraged work. However, the reasons for working bring with it class disparities not evidenced so far within this section. Here we see that the younger generation working class women encouraged work more on the basis of financial necessity while the younger generation middle class women argued for the importance of women working on the basis of self-esteem, an imperative aspect of identity according to these women.

Here we see how historical specificity and changing contexts creates different identities of 'women' through the intersections of gender, class and generation. We see that during the period of the 1950s to the 1960s, all interviewees had relatively equal status as most grew up in Actonville – a primarily working class Indian community. During these times, men had jobs which could sustain a family relatively well. Thus even if families were not very well off, family security was generally okay. From the 1990s however, drastic changes in the economy and the cost of living heralded in the need for more family members to engage in work as a means of financial security. As a consequence of these shifting contexts, together with the fact that women were obtaining higher status worldwide, the younger generation respondents probably started to digress from the previous beliefs on work where women were strongly discouraged from doing so.

In addition, these shifting beliefs can be attributed to access to differential amounts of cultural capital (see Section 4.3) in terms of education and job status. These changes brought with them a corresponding shift in class status over time – from working class status to middle class status – and are thus particularly relevant with regard to the younger generation, middle class women. Here, knowledge, tastes and competencies particular to the middle class in present day, allow for the shift in the perception of work whereby it now comes to be viewed in terms of self-esteem by these middle class interviewees. This change in view is congruent with the belief that work is important for women's identities and individuality.

Walker (1995) discusses how in South Africa motherhood lies at the core of a woman's identity in that she is seen inherently to possess the responsibilities of caring, nurturing and protecting. It thus serves to establish a unifying experience on the one hand but establishes difference based on how women interpret and create meaningful notions of motherhood. As we shall see in Section 4.4, while there is a common identity based on the paramount importance of motherhood which cuts across the axes of class and generation, we see that the working class women are more inclined to feel more strongly about what entails being a good mother, in that they believe that they should be available full-time for their children. However, with the middle class interviewees, while all strongly believe that they need to be there for their young children, they are nevertheless not as rigid about it. Therefore, they still feel that they should work, albeit on more flexible hours or part-time, which will still enable them to be present within the home so as to be able to care for and raise their children.

Before looking at the ways in which motherhood comes to take on meaning between the classes, it is important to look at the cultural capital accessible to the two classes which plays a role in the way respectability is perceived.

4.3 CULTURAL CAPITAL – WORK PROFESSIONS

As noted in the above section, for the two older generations growing up, all women generally belonged to the same social position as they grew up within Actonville, a predominantly working class Indian community. This status began to change in the adult lives of these women as half of them gained greater access to economic and cultural capital, the latter referring to educational qualifications and job positions of themselves, as well as of their spouses. These women since moved through marriage (over the past ten years ago or so) into Farramere and Lakefield, both of which are regarded as wealthier, higher class areas in Benoni. This in turn served to create differences with the younger generation interviewees, half of which were now middle class, while the other half remained working class. This varying access to cultural capital consequently brings

with it diverging views and experiences which in turn has implications on how respectability is construed by these women.

4.3.1 Working Class Professions

Only two of the ten working class interviewees were working women:

Anjali	Administrator in Life Insurance Company
Raheema	Sales in Mining Company

These positions of 'administrator' and 'sales' were not particularly deemed prestigious, high-earning positions by these interviewees. Both stated that they worked really hard at their jobs. Also, both women mentioned that despite the fact that they also worked and contributed to household expenditure, financial strain was still felt due to the rising cost of living of today.

As Anjali (late-30s) stated,

> "I'd like to get a house [she stays in a flat] but its just that that is a bit costly at the moment so we have settled for this at the moment… but hopefully in the future."

In addition, when interviewed, it was discovered that neither of these women completed high school which illustrates the fact that their positions did not require any formal qualifications – also an indication of lower job status in comparison to the middle class working women. The same holds true of the work positions held by the husbands of the seven married interviewees. The professions of these husbands varied; bookkeeper, collections officer, four had small businesses, and one worked in a production company. This serves to emphasise how these women's lower access to cultural capital is congruent with lower access to economic capital, which in turn reinstates them into the category of 'working class'.

4.3.2 Middle Class Professions

Unlike the small number of working class women who worked, seven middle class women worked:

Hema	Reflexologist/Homeopathic Healer
Nisha	Hairdresser/Tricologist
Praveena	Credit Controller
Sunaina	Manager in Foreign Exchange Division at FNB
Naheema	Administrator in Father's Business
Rupee	Internal Auditor Trainee

Already we see a difference in the types of these middle class women's jobs as compared to the two working class women in sales and administration. Significantly, all these women loved what they did, were qualified in their professions and had undertaken some form of tertiary study which thus attributed greater status to their professional status. All also mentioned that they lived very well financially, again demonstrating the link between economic and cultural capital. Only Naheema (mid-20s) worked in administration but she emphasised that this was purely because she wanted to assist her father with running the business, as she was in fact qualified to work in tourism.

A further aspect pointing to higher cultural capital access was the flexibility of the jobs of Hema and Nisha who both worked flexible hours of their choice so as to spend time with their children. Finally, the husbands of these women – seven of who were married – all held good job positions; one was a strategy planner, three ran their own companies, and two were managers. Only the lady in the older generation mentioned that her husband used to sell produce in a market. This however, is a direct consequence of generation whereby this woman grew up and married in a working class context characteristic of the 1950s. Thus her access to resources and capital was minimal back then hence explaining her husband's lower job status.

4.3.3 Class and Generation Differences

These differences in cultural capital and the resources (financial wealth and opportunities) that it awards people, serve to account for the differences between the classes in perceptions on work, and the level of importance they ascribe to it. These resources are a direct product of the economic capital available to individuals as a result of their cultural capital (education qualifications and job status). This in turn highlights the way in which the notion of cultural capital differentiates classes from one another in terms of the overall volume of capital (economic plus cultural) controlled by individuals or families (Bourdieu, 1984).

In terms of generation, we see shared experiences during the childhoods of the two older generations. This is because all these women were born into similar social positions. This denotes the embodied aspect of cultural capital which people are born in to and therefore acquire through heritage (Bourdieu, 1984). Differences manifest only with the younger generation. These differences are a consequence of the institutionalised state of cultural capital based on the positions that these people are able to acquire within the labour market often as a result of their educational qualifications (Bourdieu, 1984). We see therefore, that context is crucial in understanding access to capital, and this in turn has significant implications on the dynamics and interplay of gender, class and generation (Crenshaw, 1991; Brah and Phoenix, 2004; McCall, 2005; Hancock, 2007).

4.4 PRESENT VIEWS ON WOMEN AND WORK

Present views, unlike past views, reflect stronger differences between classes and generations when it comes to defining and creating respectable identities. For the most part, working class women felt that motherhood was central to their identities as women and hence a strong marker of respectability. For these women, working was seen as incompatible to motherhood as being a good mother entailed being constantly present in the home to attend to their children. Middle class women also viewed motherhood as a meaningful construction of identity although they felt that working was an essential component in creating meaning for their sense of 'self', which in turn reinforces their

ability to be good mothers. While we find that this was not the case unanimously within each class, we see that on the whole, respectability means different things for the different classes and illustrates how respectability is derived from a set of codes related specifically to a particular class or social status (Skeggs, 1997). In addition, we see differences in generation too, in which the woman in the 'grandmother' generation of the middle class derives respectability through domestic ideals of motherhood, while the 'mother' and 'daughter' generations favour a combination of being working women while simultaneously raising their children.

4.4.1 Working Class Views on Women Working

Current views of the working class interviewees regarding women working revealed some differences. Two of these respondents are working women and reported that their husbands were fine with them working as it was a big help financially. However, both stated that while they really enjoyed their jobs, they would prefer to work part time so that they could be at home for their small children.

Anjali – Administrator in life insurance company (late-30s***)*** said,

> "I would have loved to stay at home. Before my son [1 year old], I would have not wanted to stop working because I would have had nothing else to do so work was my priority… but after my son I would have loved to stay at home but just as I said, children are costly."

Raheemah – Sales person in mining company (mid-20s) also felt this way,

> "I think in today's life, yah [both husband and wife should work]… you need that because the cost of living is so high… I would love to sit at home and watch my son [3 years old] grow until he goes to school and then go to work but I cant… because one day he's gonna wanna go to university and stuff like that."

We can see here how both of these women feel that responsible motherhood means being able to provide for their children financially, and being there for them during their early formative years. Thus 'good' motherhood entails being available to their children, and

yet they state that they are compelled to work due to financial necessity which is more cumbersome given the added costs of children. Both therefore feel guilty about having to send their children to a crèche or leave them with a nanny.

Raheema (mid-20s),

> "I do enjoy my job... I don't like having to go to work every single day of my life but I do enjoy it... I think the only part where I'd say no... is because of my son... because he has to go to a crèche and because I'm working I can't stay at home with him... and it makes my heart so sore."

Another two worked previously and once again when they did their husbands were happy given the extra income coming in. One lady, Shoutami (late-60s), used to be a teacher and the other, Manifah (late-40s) worked in a bank. The elder lady after working all her life has only stopped now as she recently retired. The younger woman however recently stopped because she stated that her 11 year old daughter was at the age where she needed her mother at home:

Manifah (late-40s),

> "My daughter's getting big and on school holidays and that she's all alone and she phones me ten times… at least I can spend time with her… I feel she needs me at this age."

Here again we see that although Manifah continued to work after marriage, she felt that given the impressionable age that her only daughter was at, it was important for her to be at home for her. Once again, identities of 'womanhood' show fluidity across contexts whereby being a 'good' mother becomes an important marker of respectability during the formative years of childhood. An interesting point here is that Manifah has three older sons, and yet when they were of the same age as her daughter she never stopped working as she never felt obligated to be at home for her boys. She feels that it is more important to be there for daughters as boys are generally self-sufficient while girls need special attention. This has important implications in terms of reproducing gender roles whereby

girls are seen to need more looking after which in turn relates to protecting female sexuality by providing greater care over them as they enter their teens. The issue of female sexuality will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Three working class interviewees in the 'mother' generation were housewives, two of whom stopped working soon after getting married due to their in-laws who felt they should be at home caring for the children and looking after the house.

Razia (late-40s),

> "My father in-law felt that our place was at home with the kids."

Salimah (late-40s),

> "I started doing a BA but then I got married and I left that, much to my regret… you know what happens, I got married and I lived with my in-laws… my mother-in-law was even more conservative than my own dad."

While one was extremely content being a housewife, the above two wished they could work even part-time instead of simply helping out with the administrative work of their husbands' businesses. All three are full-time housewives and none of them have domestic workers.

Razia (late-40s) said,

> "I'm very upset at the moment that I can't get a job... I would love to go and work if I had the time… that's a woman's independence... if I wanna go away for the weekend I can't because I have to think, where's the money coming from?… I can't just sponge off my husband… I mean I'm doing nothing."

Salimah (late-40s) also shared these feelings,

> "I still feel I want to do something [work]… still at this age I still feel I need to do something more."

These two working class women therefore feel that work is an important marker of identity and individuality given the level of independence it awards women both financially and personally. In addition, they feel that their lives lack meaning in that they do not have anything for *themselves* and merely function for their husbands and children. Thus they feel a void in their lives as they believe that work would give them not only a personal sense of freedom, but also purpose and sense of 'self'. We see here with these women a negative connotation of being a housewife. This illustrates a contradiction in terms of what respectability denotes (this contradiction will be explored in greater detail in the Section 4.5). On the one hand, these women do not actively seek out a job as by doing so, they would be defying their husbands and/or in-laws which would in turn be disrespectable. On the other hand, this individual desire is more about their self-fulfillment which illustrates the conflict between a set of norms and values around feminine ideals which attribute respectability to them staying at home, while personally, their own sense of wanting to do other things remains unsatisfied as they feel that being a housewife translates to "doing nothing".

However, Salimah stated that when she used to work she felt that she had to stop once she had children. As stated by Salimah (late-40s) when explaining why she stopped working after her children were born:

> "I worked part-time but then I stopped because I wanted to take care of my kids... I felt as they were growing up and they were still small, I felt I should be there for them... that is something I wanted to do… I felt that I wanted to bring up my own children, not have them brought up by somebody else."

Again we see parallels with the woman who recently stopped working so as to spend time with her 11 year old daughter, whereby identity as a woman is constructed through being 'good' mothers who are home with their children when they are young. The above quote also shows something interesting about the agency of this woman. For her, it is an *active* thing to bring up her children herself rather than let someone else do it. This raising of her children by herself translates into respectability.

Finally, the last three interviewees, all in the 'daughter' generation, stated that once they were married they would want to work until they have children if their husbands allowed them to. They expressed that even working from home or part-time would be sufficient, especially once they had children.

Aiyesha (late-teens) said,

> "When I do have kids I prefer working from home... I don't want them to rely on a nanny or a granny… I'd like to bring them up myself."

Aiyesha demonstrates that not only is it necessary to raise her own children by herself, but she also demonstrates a desire for independence by not wanting to rely on anyone else when it comes to her children. Here too we see an instance of agency. Yet again, we see patterns across generations which demonstrate the importance of motherhood to these women. Although there is a noticeable difference with the younger generation who stated that working from home or part-time were options once they had children, as opposed to the older generations who were full-time housewives, in general, all express the need to prioritise motherhood over and above working. They therefore appear to associate what it means to be a 'woman' more through the identification with motherhood than with being working women although we see from above that conflicting emotions often arise from this working/motherhood binary.

We see that pressures from the larger Indian community and particularly in-laws come to bear strongly when it comes to working class women working. This then gives rise to contradictions in respectability based on their lived experiences and their actual beliefs on what it *means* for a woman to work. Thus as we see in the next section (Section 4.5), although the women thus far have argued that work is primarily a basis for financial necessity, they express that self-esteem is derived from having independent jobs. Herein lies the conflict as experienced by working class women.

4.4.2 Middle Class Views on Women Working

Present views of the middle class interviewees regarding women working today revealed a big contrast from the views held by their families while growing up. In addition, six of these women, compared to the two working-class women, are working women. Their jobs are as follows:

- Praveena – credit controller (late-40s)
- Hema – homeopathic and reflexology healing (late-40s)
- Nisha – hairdresser and tricologist (late-40s)
- Sunaina – manager in foreign exchange division at a bank (late-30s)
- Naheema – administrator in father's business (mid-20s)
- Rupee – internal auditor trainee (early-20s)

Hema and Nisha work from home so that they are able to hold flexible hours which in turn enables them to look after their children and spend considerable time with them. They stated that they simply love their work and do it purely for the pleasure of doing something so fulfilling. Furthermore, their husbands had never had any qualms about them working. The other two married women also expressed that their husbands were fully supportive about them working.

Sunaina (late-30s) said,

> "My husband is quite open-minded… he's not a very orthodox type."

Praveena (late-40s) also said,

> "He [husband] always allows me to make my own decisions... not the typical overpowering Indian male."

The last two working women, one newly married and the other engaged, also stated that their partners were fine with them working although one of them stressed that once she had children, she would prefer to stop working so as to be there for them as they are growing up.

Naheema (mid-20s),

> "I can quit work [once she has children]... I'm sure by then he'll [her husband] earn more… Maybe for the first five years I wanna be there for them [her children]... once they start schooling, then maybe I can go back to working."

Two of the interviewees, both university students, stated that when they got married, they would want to work full time until they had children. They would then prefer to work part time as opposed to being full-time housewives:

Jasu (early-20s),

> "If I do have children I would want to spend time with them and maybe open up a practice in my backyard or something so I can be there for my kids... but yah, definitely still work."

Here we see how aspects of gender create a commonality of experience for women which cuts across class and even generation. These women view motherhood as an important marker of respectability and identity across contexts, regardless of their social position or age. They thus create meaning for themselves through their subjective experiences as mothers/would-be mothers, as this becomes an important aspect in identity-formation for them at different points in their lives. At the same time, for these women, being an independent working woman is as important an aspect of femininity as is motherhood, especially when children are older and more self-sufficient.

The final two interviewees had always been housewives. One stated that she was very content being a housewife as there was no need for her to work economically. In addition, she expressed that she preferred to be at home with her children when they were younger.

Yasmeen, housewife (late-40s),

> "Oh he [her husband] would say go ahead [work if she likes]... he's always encouraged me... even if it's to start something from home do it... but I'm so comfortable, why must I work!"

The other (Kavina, 70s) stated that the thought had never crossed her mind to work as her husband would never have allowed it on the one hand, and because it was her duty as a woman to be a housewife on the other. When asked if she had ever wanted to work she replied:

Kavina (70s),

> "No, it wasn't in my mind… not even further study… never ever worked, never wanted to… my father never allowed us to work… my husband wouldn't allow."

4.4.3 Class and Generation Differences

Analysis of these findings produced interesting differences between class and generation. When it came to themselves, the working class women in their late-40s, felt more strongly that a woman's place is first and foremost in the home. For them, if a woman wants to work and contribute to the household income, then they should work part-time or from the home. Often, within this class group, the women felt that it was up to their husbands whether or not they worked. This view was shared only by one middle class interviewee (Kavina, 70s). In general, the middle class women felt that part-time work is only an option once children enter the picture, as they felt that working is an important part of their identity and esteem, and they would therefore always want to work in full-time jobs. This aspect of self-esteem will be discussed in detail in the next section (Section 4.5).

With the working class interviewees, despite the fact that almost all the women came from backgrounds where women were not expected to work, nor did they feel compelled to work – with the exception of the 'daughter' generation interviewees – these women now believe that working is an important part of life for their children. The 'daughter' generation similarly felt that working is important given the rising cost of living and the need for some income. In addition, they felt that it was important for their self-identity and independence.

In contrast, the middle class respondents felt that it was imperative for them to work, and equally important that their daughters work (this issue is discussed in greater detailed in Section 4.5). Here we see that the significance of class does come to the fore in terms of present views on women working. Here shifting contexts illustrate a corresponding shift on what it means to be a woman for these women of different classes. For the working class women, accepting domesticity becomes a respectable solution to not having formal work. These women therefore gain self worth and create meaning for themselves through familial responsibility (Skeggs, 1997). Thus for working class women, respectability is seen to be gained by being good wives and good mothers for many of the respondents, yet for the middle class women, respectability is gained through obtaining an independent identity through a profession while simultaneously being there for their children (see Section 4.5). These views, as seen above, were not shared unanimously by the working class interviewees who did not feel as strongly as the middle class women about the importance of working.

Numerous reasons can account for these views of the middle class respondents, the main one being independence – both financial and personal. To work also has strong connotations of enabling these women to construct their own identities as individuals. The issue of independence will be further explored and deconstructed below (Section 4.5). This independence in turn has implications for their self-esteem and sense of 'self'. Thus gender and class, with these middle class interviewees, combine to shape the subjective experiences of these women as they make meaning in their lives through their values and lived experiences (Skeggs, 1997). To these women, being respectable therefore becomes an outcome of having their own job and income and basically own lives. Being a good mother for the middle class women entails not only being there for their children but also being strong role models for them by asserting their individuality and independence through having their own professions.

We thus we see how gender and social position creates a situation of commonality of experience at various points in which gender and class intersect on the one hand (in the case of the middle class interviewees), and yet establishes boundaries on the other hand

(between the working class women and middle class women) (Campbell, 1993; Gupta, 2001; King, 2002). Working class women while feeling that women should work in terms of independence and rising costs of living, felt that the experiences of being good wives and mothers was more important than being a working professional. Thus for them, respectability entails motherhood and providing a good home for their families and constantly being there for their children. These experiences are more important and meaningful to these women as markers of their identities as 'women'.

These differences between the classes demonstrate that within certain social positions, common views and interests are held. Cultural practices and beliefs are thus markers of class that create identities given the social space – class – we are born into (Bourdieu, 1984). Skeggs (1997) demonstrates how commonality and difference is established through the intersection of gender and class due to access to cultural capital based on subjective experiences. Cultural capital, in terms of employment and access to independent professions, creates knowledge and similarity between women who have access to this capital, and between those who do not.

Furthermore, the fact that most of these working class women state that whether or not they work depends on their husbands, is illustrative of how women are often restricted from entering the labour market due to the gender inequality and power relations existing within their home setting (Phillips, 1991). The ideology that women should primarily be concerned with household duties therefore takes precedence over working in the labour market as domestic unpaid labour is attributed to notions of femininity, while paid formal work is thought to be primarily the domain of men (Castelli, 2001). Thus women's senses of 'self' are constructed through the specificity of experiences within different contexts (Connell, 1987). In other words, during the 1950s and 1960s women did not need to work so did not feel disempowered by being housewives. Nowadays, with the changing lifestyles and greater independence of women, women begin to feel that work is important to their identity and sense of 'self'. This therefore is reflective of the specificity of experiences within varying contexts as discussed by Connell.

In addition, the fact that working class women seek out the permission of husbands on working in most cases demonstrates how male-headed households illicit a situation whereby male authority is exercised over decision-making which impacts on whether or not women choose to enter the labour market (see Chapter 5 regarding decision-making). This is particularly the case with Indian women as was also discovered by Cain, Khanam and Nahar (1979) with their study on Bangladeshi women. Women's work in the private realm is regarded as a consequence of this patriarchal system of male dominance. Therefore we see how working class women especially are more incorporated into the realm of the home as they establish themselves as housewives given what is expected of them, and through their roles as mothers and housewives, they create meaningful identities for themselves.

The findings draw parallels with Fox (1980), whereby the task of reproduction in the household appears more to be a characteristic of working class women as opposed to the middle class women who often employ help when it comes to household chores and childcare (see Chapter 5). In line with this, the findings demonstrate that the middle class women, more of whom are working women than the working class women, establish their role as a 'woman' through actively working. In contrast, working class interviewees experience and exercise their womanhood by contributing more within the home rather than in the workplace through the associated roles of motherhood and being good wives. And yet this proves quite ironic given the fact that the working class is in a lesser financially sound position than the middle class. This may be due to the influence of religion whereby most of the working class women are Muslim while the middle class women are mainly Hindu (We will address this aspect in Chapter 6).

The two working class women, who are currently working, expressed that while they did love their jobs, they would prefer to be at home to care for their children. Work was seen as a financial necessity given the cost of living, despite their preference to stay at home and care for children. To them, however, being a full-time mother is felt to be a part of their gendered identity. In contrast, the middle class working interviewees all enjoyed their job and did it purely for self-satisfaction. These women experienced 'womanhood'

as being both a mother and a working woman. Also, unlike the working class, middle class women who worked felt liberated and fulfilled by their jobs as it was purely their choice to work and not based on financial necessity. These women do not work because they have to, as all had husbands who were doing well financially. Instead they chose to work for themselves for personal satisfaction.

Such class differences reflect the ways in which economic capital, cultural capital and higher job positions create a sense of 'difference' between working and middle class women (Skeggs, 1997). This difference between the classes can thus be attributed to the fact that the middle class women had shared experiences based on the knowledge derived from their greater access to cultural capital, which in turn enabled them to secure fulfilling professions. As such, these basic differences in forms of capital serve to define the ways in which working class and middle class women understand their roles and their sense of 'selves' (Skeggs, 1997). Thus through the intersection of gender and class women create different meanings of 'self' and 'womanhood' given their social position and gender in different contexts of home life and work (Connell, 1987; Sunde & Bozalek, 1993).

We however can see a contradiction in the findings when it came to the working class women. Those who did not work yet wanted to (Razia and Salimah, both late-40s), felt oppressed by the view that women were expected to be housewives given that their children are now grown up. As such here we see how oppression was felt on multiple levels of gender, generation – and religion (as discussed in Chapter 6) – which demonstrates commonality of experience for those in similar positions. The lived experiences of being a housewife therefore established markers of difference between the working class and middle class women whereby the latter opted to be housewives of their own volition as opposed to being 'expected' to stay at home. Agency here becomes important for middle class women's sense of 'self' and respectability. With working class women's sense of 'self', agency is perceived differently whereby they themselves choose to raise their own children. On the other hand, these women are also subjugated to external pressures which entail an acceptance of, and meeting of, the prescribed

expectations of 'womanhood' that defines their identities and therefore creates respectability for these women (Castelli, 2001). They thus internalise these values and create meaningful identities through full-time mothering. Here again we see how working (or being a housewife) carries different meanings, and operates differently across the intersecting identities of class and gender.

Generation proved to have a significant influence on views on women working. All the interviewees in the 'daughter' generation all felt that it was extremely important that women work in this day and age. These respondents were all actively studying and able to pursue a career should they choose to given these opportunities. To these women, working was an important part of life, although most felt that once they had children, they should be able to work part-time so as to be active as mothers. This view was held by fewer of the respondents between the ages of 40 and 50 – although this pertains to the working class women only. This demonstrates how perceptions of identity formation change over time and the ways in which women today create meaning in their lives through roles that exist outside of the home. Thus, to work in today's society becomes an integral part of identity for many of these women, particularly the younger generations.

It is important to note however that differences between the middle class 'daughter' generation and working class 'daughter' generation are demonstrated in terms of identity formation where the former class believe that working is more of a necessity to assist economically while for the latter class, working is important in and of itself, and is viewed as a marker of individuality and autonomy (see Section 4.5). Here, shifting contexts give rise to new experiences of femininity. Generation thus intersects together with gender and class to construct meaningful identities for these women at different points in their lives thereby demonstrating the fluidity of identity. These varying meanings will be analysed below in relation to these intersecting social categories.

4.5 MEANING OF WORK FOR WOMEN

A final aspect related to the perceptions and experiences of work is the meaning ascribed to actually working. This section however demonstrates a stark contradiction with regard to the working class interviewee's views on working above. Thus we see a digression in views of work from the actual practices of working when it comes to themselves (previous section), and these women's beliefs of what it *means* for women to work. We therefore see that while respectability for these women centers on motherhood within their own lives, they believe that on the whole, working is important for a woman's self-esteem – a belief congruent to the middle class interviewee's views. It becomes evident therefore that these working class women experience a conflict between working and motherhood whereby they derive respectability from the latter through internalising the expectations of their families, their in-laws, the larger Indian community – and expectations from within themselves. Thus external societal pressures together with internal pressure stemming from their own values as women, lead them to opt for being full-time mothers, when in fact they *do* see work as a strong basis for a woman's self-esteem. This paradox proves to be an extremely important finding when it comes to respectability as it shows a conflict between their lived experiences and their beliefs on women working in general.

While all interviewees – working class and middle class – see work as a means of gaining autonomy, the working class women feel respectability is gained first and foremost through creating a good home for their families. Thus working becomes a secondary aspect that is pursued only where it becomes necessary, financially. It also becomes important when it comes to financial independence as it is felt to be demeaning to have to constantly ask for money from their spouses. While being housewives is not desired by all the working class housewives – recall the two who feel that being housewives is unfulfilling – it is nevertheless accepted by most as it is believed to be a domestic ideal that reflects femininity and its corresponding gendered norms. The middle class women, in contrast, strongly feel that working is a choice and most work as a means of asserting their individuality which is deemed important in creating respectability. Generation

differences are less significant here as class primarily appears to create lines of difference through its intersection with gender.

4.5.1 Working Class Views

When asked what it means for a woman to work in today's society views differed from past familial views. Almost all working class interviewees stated that it was important for a woman today for financial independence, self-confidence, pride and self-esteem. This illustrates the afore-mentioned contradiction seeing as most of them felt that that a women's place was more in the home (as seen above in Section 4.4). Here again we see that choice and expectation play a role in that the working class women were more likely to be housewives based on the latter aspect which becomes an ingrained part of their identities. This may therefore explain why that despite believing that being housewives is important for respectability, working can provide important avenues for a woman's esteem and independence. The two working class respondents who did work currently said that it gave them more control over resources in the home as well as a higher status as it enables them to have an equal partnership with their husbands and therefore more dignity instead of having to ask for money from their spouses.

Raheema (mid-20s) stated,

> "I had a friend that was not working so she was at home all the time and she always had to go to him [her husband] if she needed anything or if she wants to do something or she wants to buy something… she needed his permission... I don't need my husband's permission if I feel I wanna buy something... I'll go right ahead and buy it... I'm independent and I don't need his permission for everything."

Here we see how earning their own money has important implications for autonomy and esteem (Ong, 1987). In addition, being able to assist in contributing to the household financially serves to enable women to exercise greater control within the home as a result of this independence and higher status that are directly a result of formal employment (Jaffee, 1988; Sen, 1999).

Even women who were housewives shared this view:

Salimah (late-40s)**,**

> "It [working] gives them [women] financial independence and they don't have to keep asking their husbands for money… it's very demeaning... and it gives you that sense of achievement, that sense of financial independence... it gives you a bit of dignity."

This reflects how, despite the fact that Salimah opted to be a housewife so as to raise her own children, she herself feels demeaned asking her husband for money seeing as she does not earn her own income.

We see therefore that working class views correspond to middle class views when it comes to work been seen as a marker of self-esteem. Only two stated (mother an daughter) that the only meaning of women working is to assist financially given the rising cost of living and that if the husband earned enough, there really is no need for a woman to work as she should be a housewife.

Shazia (late-40s),

> "I mean it's good for them to work… at least bringing up the family in a good way… maybe with money they need."

Zainab (late-teens)**,**

> "…because of the cost of living… I feel that it's better if you do work because at the end of the day you don't have to be suffering [struggling financially]... I mean I wouldn't wanna be the one to wear the pants as they say... if you in it together then you might as well both contribute."

We can glean from the above the different ways in which respectability is constructed whereby being able to sufficiently provide for the home and children financially is considered an important marker of identity. Contribution is understood by these women

as a means of helping out financially within the home in terms of bills and day-to-day living. As such, class and gender combine to produce respectable bodies depending on the whether or not these women consider themselves as living comfortably as opposed to struggling. Thus we see here that these women think it is important for women to work if it will help support their families. Thus we see how different contexts bring with it differences in gaining respectability for themselves, whereby working class women gain respectability on the one hand by being at home with children, and on the other by working where it becomes a financial necessity to provide adequately for the family.

4.5.2 Middle Class Views

With the middle class interviewees, nine stated that it was important for a woman for financial independence, self-confidence, and self-esteem. In addition, some sated it helped give them their own identity, empower them in the household and give them more control over resources as well as the ability to make their own decisions.

Praveena (late-40s),

> "I think it's good, they [women] must work... they must liberate themselves and they must have their own lives... it's just that now when you working you more empowered basically."

Nisha (late-40s),

> "Oh I think it's essential [for women to work]… source of independence and that's very important... I love my job and I feel I've got my own identity going out to work... I feel we shouldn't be horses with blinkers... we should open up and see and learn from that."

Geeta (early-20s),

> "You must notice a housewife and a lady who's working… you'll notice a big difference... as in they more independent, working women… where the housewife will do everything the husband tells her to do."

Jasu (early-20s), when asked what it means for women to work, responded:

> "To actually be responsible and be independent and do something for herself and not have to ask her husband 'oh please can you give me money cos I really wanna buy something and then you feel bad – you have to live up to that because he bought you something."

The final interviewee however (Kavina, 70s) stated that while it was important for a woman to get an education, they still should remain in the home as a housewife.
It is important to note here that unlike the working class women who work so as to contribute economically to the household, the middle class women work more as a means of establishing individual identities, while sometimes assisting with day-to-day expenses. In terms of views of what it means for women to work, we can see from the findings that almost all interviewees felt that it was very important for a woman's self-esteem and confidence and also gave them a little more control within the home with regard to household resources and decisions (the issue of decision making will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5). This can be attributed to the fact that they earn their own income and therefore do not feel dependent on their husbands, should they need anything. In addition, they do not have to feel obligated to their husbands should they have to ask them for money for personal use. Furthermore, by working, these women feel empowered and as though they have their own individual identities, rather than merely being an appendage to their husbands. This opinion holds true even for those not working, as well as for the working class women.

From the above we find that almost all interviewees believe that working establishes a women's independence although not all seek to assert themselves in this way. Here we see that indeed, the fact that women are able to participate in the labor market and contribute to the household gives them a high sense of autonomy as was described by the all the working interviewees. This therefore separates them from those women who do not work, as well as from the working class women who are not as determined to work. Thus the labour market can be said to be a site that emancipates women from patriarchal relations within the household (Kabeer, 1994; Sen, 1999).

In the case of one middle class respondent, not only were spousal relations equal as a consequence of her profession, but she went on to state that she in fact became the controlling one in the home due to her position:

Sunaina (late-30s),

> "I think if you're on a management level you kind of control the home and that's when I think you need to back off… because I picked that up with myself... I started ruling everything... it makes you feel a bit better."

Sunaina does however feel that this 'control' can be a problem as rather than have higher authority than her husband, she believes that an equal status is best with the home.
This aspect of greater control over resources holds true even if the position is not one that is very high or even if work is being carried out from the home, as it gives women a sense of identity and achievement as was evidenced by the views of the working class respondents. These women differed considerably to those of the view that women should not work if they did not need to. As such, class differences did come to light given that the middle class women tended to exert more control in the home due to a greater number of them being formally employed – and often in good positions – as compared to the working class women, the majority of whom were housewives.

4.6 CONCLUSION

We have seen in this chapter that gender, class and generation intersect and shape subjective experiences of women in different ways based on varying contexts. This in turn has important implications on as to how meaningful identities and therefore respectability is constructed by these women in their daily lives. Thus views on work and meanings around women working are seen to vary between the working class and middle class women, and between the older and younger generations. These perceptions and experiences of work lay the foundation of household gender relations, to be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5 – FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS: HOUSEHOLD GENDER RELATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses the gender relations in the home between interviewees and their husbands. It will look at both past and present views, from the backgrounds and parental relations of the respondents, to the present roles of women in the home. The experiences of the twenty interviewees will be examined looking at the intersection of gender, class and generation and the ways in which these overlapping social categories shape the subjective experiences of these women and impact on the ways in which they create meaning – and respectability – for themselves.

The findings demonstrated that the backgrounds of the interviewees revealed no disparities between working class and middle class women as their home lives were characterised by gendered division of labour in which the women engaged with all household tasks, sometimes with the help of housekeepers. Childcare was a core marker of identity and respectability across class and generation. The freedom awarded to girls and boys followed a similar pattern as girls were more restricted than boys. This related to preservation of sexuality which is regarded as a fundamental aspect of respectability for women. However, here generation differences were to a small extent evident whereby the younger generation interviewees were granted a little more freedom compared to that of the older generations.

The shift to present day however brings with it class and generation differences. Present gender relations reflected more equitable relations within the home with the middle class interviewees. This was not the case with working class interviewees. In addition, education was viewed as slightly more important for males to pursue by the working class women, and the older two generations in particular. Finally we see that for those women working, it was the working class interviewees who felt that managing the home and work was a double shift, while middle class women felt that they effectively

balanced the two. These varying perceptions and experiences framed along class and generation have important implications in how respectability is established differently for working class and middle class women.

As aforementioned, twenty interviewees were selected, two from each of ten households/families. Five of the households/families were working class and the other five middle class. The dyads for the working class interviewees, and the relationship between the two selected respondents, are as follows:

Working class household/family 1

Interviewees	**Relationship**
Shoutami	Aunt
Anjali	Niece

Working class household/family 2

Interviewees	**Relationship**
Shazia	Mother
Zainab	Daughter

Working class household/family 3

Interviewees	**Relationship**
Salimah	Mother
Safinah	Daughter

Working class household/family 4

Interviewees	**Relationship**
Razia	Mother
Aiyesha	Daughter

Working class household/family 5

Interviewees	**Relationship**
Manifah	Mother-in-law
Raheema	Daughter-in-law

The dyads for the middle class interviewees are as follows:

Middle class household/family 1

Interviewees	**Relationship**
Kavina	Mother-in-law
Sunaina	Daughter-in-law

Middle class household/family 2

Interviewees	**Relationship**
Yasmeen	Mother
Naheema	Daughter

Middle class household/family 3

Interviewees	**Relationship**
Hema	Mother
Jasu	Daughter

Middle class household/family 4

Interviewees	**Relationship**
Nisha	Mother
Geeta	Daughter

Middle class household/family 5

Interviewees	**Relationship**
Praveena	Mother
Rupee	Daughter

5.2 INTERVIEWEES' BACKGROUNDS – GENDER RELATIONS BETWEEN INTERVIEWEES' PARENTS

The findings on the interviewees' backgrounds demonstrate a sharp gendered division of labour within the homes of both the working class and middle class women. Class differences therefore do not seem to be important here for the most part. This can be attributed to the fact that initially all interviewees, including the middle class women currently living in Lakefield and Farramere, were from Actonville and therefore common views were held within the Indian community as a whole back then. However, generation differences alter this consistency of experience between classes, and intersect with class differences when it comes to the family life of most of the respondents in the 'daughter' generation of only the middle class. This group instead expressed that gendered roles was more equitably distributed between their parents while growing up. Across the class and generation categories however, childcare was believed to be essential in defining womanhood.

5.2.1 Working Class Women's Backgrounds

Firstly, findings revealed consistencies amongst the working class respondents in terms of divisions of labour within the home of the interviewees' parents. The time periods during which interviewees were growing up were naturally varied. Thus for the woman in her late-60s, we are looking at the 1950s, for the women in their late-30s and late-40s, we are looking at the 1970s-1980s, and with the younger generation we are looking at the 1990s to present day. Almost all interviewees, with the exception of one, Razia (late-40s) reported that their mothers had been housewives while their fathers were the sole bread-winners of the home.

As such, the entirety of household chores, including caring for the children, often lay on the women, although in some cases they had domestic workers. However, while cleaning was left to these domestic workers, the cooking and attending to the children was done by the mothers themselves.

Anjali (late-30s), when referring to the past, said,

> "So basically he [father] used to work and she [mother] used to do the household chores... cooking, cleaning... he didn't really [help with housework]… he used to do repairs and gardening... he used to love doing that… but not dishes and that… yes we had a housekeeper... she just cleaned and did washing and ironing."

Salimah (late-40s) also described the situation in her childhood,

> "The roles were very clearly defined hey… you know how most of the Indian households are... the men don't help in the kitchen… and the women did the kitchen work and whatever... but my mother was like a handy man… because my father, he'll be lazy to change a light bulb... so my mother learnt to do all these things… fix a broken window... so my father basically just went to work and came home… we used to have a couple of maids… they did the cleaning... they cleaned the house but that was it… my mum did the cooking."

Shoutami (late-60s), speaks about the 1950s when she was growing up,

> "Well my mum was a house executive and my father was a business dealer... yes basically my mum did all housework but she had someone, you know at that time most people lived together… and she had somebody to help us, like a housekeeper… she was basically more to do with the cleaning."

Safinah (late-teens), states that when she was growing up in the 1990s, that

> "Well my mum would cook and my daddy would go to the shop... we had a domestic worker… cleaning was the domestic worker."

Zainab (late-teens) also said,

> "No not at all [mother doesn't work]… she definitely did everything, my mom... my mother does all the cooking, daddy just comes home… there is a maid but looking after me, she [mother] looked after me… yah he [father] liked to help around, and the occasional gardening on weekends."

It is very interesting that all these working class households employed domestic workers despite not being financially well-off. Also interesting is that in spite of having domestic workers – and one interviewee speaking of more than one helper – childcare and cooking were regarded as the particular tasks of women household members while cleaning, washing, ironing and other such chores were delegated to these domestic workers.

Some of the interviewees reported that their fathers helped looking after them as children, although this primarily occurred in the absence of their mothers or if their mothers were unwell. These activities were helping with odds and ends around the house, repairing of items, and feeding children. Only one reported that the dad was the primary caregiver due to the fact that her mother passed away when she was very young.

Manifah (late-40s),

> "My mum passed away when I was three years old... it was just my dad and my granny helped a lot with cooking, cleaning, being there for us while my father was at work... he'd see to us in the evenings… yes, yes that kind of thing [father helped with feeding and bathing the children]… we had a maid that used to come in and come tidy up."

Only two of the interviewees stated that the fathers helped a little around the house with small tasks and tidying up – although this never entailed cooking or cleaning. Therefore the bulk of housework tasks fell on the mothers and female domestic workers, and mothers assumed the role of being primary caregiver to the children. Motherhood was believed by all these women to hold central importance in creating meaningful identities as women.

The above quote also highlights the way in which the work carried out by the domestic worker was in a way diminished by the interviewee by being referred to as just "tidying up". This reinforces the centrality of the roles of mother and wife, dealing with childcare and cooking respectfully. Thus cleaning is not seen as central to womanhood when it comes to respectability and establishing a sense of 'self'. Furthermore, cleaning is viewed as fit for domestic workers yet cooking and childcare are not deemed fit for them to undertake as these aspects are left to the women of the household.

5.2.2 Middle Class Women's Backgrounds

With the middle class interviewees, findings also revealed that most interviewees' parents adhered to the ideas of division of labour within the household between men and women, although only four, in comparison to the nine working class women, stated that their mother's were housewives. It is important to note here that with the 'mother' and 'grandmother' generations, their households while growing up were not necessarily middle class. While they were often better off financially than the working class interviewees they were not as wealthy as they are today. Thus they became middle class only presently rather than from the onset which is the case with the daughter generation only. As with the working class interviewees, we are looking at the periods during the 1950s, 1970s-1980s, and the 1990s to present day when we examine the childhoods of the 'grandmother', 'mother' and 'daughter' generations, respectively.

Kavina (70s), when referring to the past, stated,

> "My father never allowed us to work... my mother never worked... myself I never worked… [mother used to do all housework] everything, everything… because they were so poor they never had any luxury life… [father did nothing in the home] no, no."

Interestingly, we see here how having a domestic worker is related to notions wealth whereby Kavina – the only middle class woman who was not very well-to-do in the past – expresses that her family could not afford any domestic workers while she was growing up, and therefore all household work was carried out by her mother and herself. This

issue was also true for the two older generations of the working class women whereby they did not have domestic workers during their childhoods – although most of them currently have, or did have at some point, domestic workers in present day.

Another middle class woman also referred to the stark division of labour within the home during her childhood:

Praveena (late-40s),

> "My mother was a housewife… we used to have a housekeeper… no, I don't remember him [her father] ever doing housework… he was a typical Indian man."

Praveena's father did not help looking after the children either, when she was growing up.

One interviewee stated that although both parents were working in the family business, her mother still attended to all household duties with the help of domestic workers. Another highlighted the fact that childcare was the duty of women, especially if they were housewives. Here we see the centrality of motherhood establishing womanhood which in turn is viewed as a marker of respectability.

Naheema (mid-20s),

> "My mums a housewife, my dad works... we have a maid but most of the things like cooking my mum used to do it… even my mother helps her clean… [father never does housework] nothing, nothing … I don't ever recall him looking after the kids as such… but my mother wasn't working so it was her duty."

We see how the above interviewee talks about her mother's "duty" as a house wife while below its more of a willing choice to "spoil" her husband by doing everything for him, as opposed to be a dutiful wife.

Sunaina (late-30s),

> "I think my mum used to spoil my dad because she was from that old school that did everything for him like got his food going and put his clothing out in the morning… we had servants to help... that used to do the housework… they were live in... we had about two or three depending, because of the business."

Here we see that some of the respondents were able to employ more than one domestic worker at a time. This was evidenced by the fact that owning a business entailed hiring domestic workers to assist within the workplace as well as in the home – as was the case with the interviewee above. This reflects how some of the middle class interviewees were more likely to be sufficiently financially well-to-do even during their childhoods.

Three interviewees described a situation in the home where, whether the mother was a housewife or not, the father did help a lot around the home with small chores and the children.

Jasu (early-20s),

> "My mum grew us up all the time… we did have a maid but not with the kids... my mum looked after us, she cooked for us, bathed us, everything... the maid just did the cleaning… [father helped with the household chores], not cooking but washing dishes or helping to sweep... he actually does help with those things… he always fixes… my dad was always doing things for us and you know, he always looked after us."

Hema (late-40s),

> "I think in those days, basically the men went out and worked and brought the money home... the ladies obviously took care of all the shopping and the cleaning, and the kids and things like that… yes [she had a housekeeper]… not really to look after the kids and that... my mum was at home all the time… my dad was very wonderful, he used to really take care of us… he used to change my nappy and bath

me and things like that... because my mum was very sick up till the age when I was about six so my dad did play a very important role in that - he's wonderful."

Geeta (early-20s),

"With our family its more like an equal share cos my father cooks and helps to clean... my mother cooks, helps to clean… its not like how normal people would do where the husband goes to work and does his work and just comes home and eats... he helps around as well – everything, dishes, cooking, cleaning up, looking after the children…yes we do have a housekeeper, she comes Monday to Saturday... she does most of the work [cleaning, washing] but like has to have her days off."

With this respondent we see that equal gender relations within her home is actually perceived as going against the norm of most Indian households. As such "normal" gender relations, when it comes to Indian families, are those in which unequal relations exist within the home where men are solely bread-winners and play a minimal role in housework. This draws parallels with the belief that Indian women must be confined to the domestic sphere which serves to reaffirm sexual division of labour both with and outside the home (Feldman, 2001; Castelli, 2001). Furthermore, in relation to the other interviewees, in particular most of the working class interviewees, we see that the situation within these two households (with Hema and Jasu, and Nisha and Geeta) is one where more equal relations exist between husbands and wives. Thus here we see differences in notions of femininity and masculinity between middle class women and working class women, as well as some sort of legacy or generational effect given that in both households, similar views and beliefs on gender relations and practices are demonstrated by the 'mother' and 'daughter' generations. Femininity is seen to encapsulate domestic ideals for working class women while for middle class women it appears to be more grounded in equal household relations in which men contribute to household chores.

In only one instance was the father the primary caregiver for the children as the mother suffered from clinical depression. Here too, like with the working class woman (Manifah)

whose mother died when she was only three, the father completely took over the role of caring for the children although in both cases, a domestic worker was there to attend to most of the household chores.

Interestingly, we see that childcare is a significant responsibility for both mothers and fathers in these middle class households. This is more unusual in the case of the fathers as single parents as it would be thought that they would readily want to get assistance when it came to the children as opposed to take full responsibility for them themselves. Thus domestic workers were employed only for cleaning purposes and home-based tasks rather than as assistance with childcare. Parental identities therefore have a significant role within these homes.

Nisha (late-40s),

> "My mom was a housewife, my dad used to work... my dad use to do that, he used help with the children's lunch… cooking yah but not cleaning up... he used to do that [feed and bathe children and the washing]... I was say about six, she [mother] went into chronic depression and my dad took over."

Again the domestic workers were not required to assist with children. When probed on as to why, these women did not really give concrete explanations other than to assert that children were their main responsibility and that they would not want to leave them in the care of anyone else. In addition, they all seemed to be very protective of their children and want to be available to them especially while they are very young. This relates to feminist domestic ideals which propagate home and family values as a means of achieving respectability centered on motherhood (Skeggs, 1997).

5.2.3 Class and Generation Differences

Findings firstly revealed that gender relations in the household growing up reflected a division of labour between men and women when it came to the interviewees' parents of both classes. All the women who were housewives had to attend to all domestic chores including caring for the children with minimal help from their spouses. This was truer

for the working class women's mothers seeing as almost all were housewives. This appears to be akin to what Connell (1987) describes as the sexual division of labour in which gender relations reflect work as either domestic and unpaid or as public and paid. As such, one could argue that patriarchal relations were evident, while growing up, within both the working class and middle class homes in terms of division of labour and gender roles. Asymmetrical power relations were implicit in terms of household work in that the mothers and female domestic workers did most everything pertaining to the homes, while fathers played a minimal role except in the case of absent mothers (Beechey, 1979). It is important to note however that where husbands did help considerably with household work, this rarely involved cooking and washing as these were seen as tasks solely for women. Thus male assistance within the home often included gardening, repairs around the home, cleaning or tidying up, and helping with the children.

Childcare was seen as a key defining aspect of womanhood for both working and middle class women, whereby almost all interviewees felt that being a good mother was an integral part of their identity as women and a marker in defining their sense of 'selves'. Thus we see that childcare constitutes what Fox (1980) terms a 'labour of love' which falls under 'unpaid labour' within the home. This in turn implicitly points to the importance of care and motherhood in shaping social identity through actual experiences (Walker, 1995).

With both the working class and middle class women's families, the patriarchal relations within the home were reflected in the case of the older two generations. However, we see a marked change when it comes to the families of the 'daughter' generation who stated that their parents had more of an equal division of household chores. Thus for these middle class respondents, gender roles take on a more equal dimension within their homes and household work appears to be redistributed between the husbands and wives. This was not the case with the working class 'daughter' generation however, as their families displayed gendered division of roles within the home reflective of the older two generations. This generational inconsistency thus reflects how over time, household traditions and perceptions regarding women's and men's roles have changed – but this

appears to be evidenced only in the middle class homes. To a large extent, these patterns of gendered roles and expectations were also reflected between male and female siblings as will be seen in the following section.

5.3 SIBLING CHORES GROWING UP

Chores allocated to siblings also followed a similar pattern as that between the parents of the interviewees in that they were distinctly reflective of a marked gendered divide between the girls and boys.

5.3.1 Working Class Experiences

Half the working class respondents stated that the girls had the designated tasks of assisting with the cooking and cleaning while the boys engaged in errands such as helping the fathers with the business or odds and ends.

Zainab (late-teens) stated,

> "…but I feel if you're in the house and if you look at your brothers doing dishes, you feel like ok that just doesn't look right you know… so we'd adopt our own ways of like separating chores."

Anjali (late-30s),

> "We [she and her sister] used to help out with the cooking and the cleaning of the house and gardening… my brother was a bit of a lazy one, he used to be out with friends... my sister and I used to do most of the cleaning and cooking."

Even while the other half of the respondents reported that both boys and girls were required to help out equally in the home, the boys still were never expected to assist in cooking or washing. Rarely were the boys treated completely equally in terms of allocated tasks within the home.

Razia (late-40s),

> ”As children everybody had a turn as to who’s gonna clean what... even my brothers... they used to scrub and polish and do everything else, except the washing of course.”

5.3.2 Middle Class Experiences

Sibling chores with the middle class respondents demonstrated some consistencies with the working class women.

Kavina (70s),

> “Yah I helped cooking, cleaning... my brother no, he never used to do... he used to play soccer and go with the boys.”

Some respondents said that only the girls attended to the cooking and cleaning while the boys did not lift a hand or else helped only when it came to the business.

Praveena (late-40s),

> “Mainly it was just us [girls doing housework]... they used to sort of just go to the shop and do the men stuff and we had to do the cooking and cleaning and baking and everything... typical behaviour.”

She however does not treat her own children differently in terms of their chores in the home which is reinforced by her daughter who stated:

Rupee (mid-20s),

> “There are no differences in the chores between my brothers and I… they help out a lot, especially the youngest one who helps my mum a lot, even in the kitchen.”

Another interviewee, also from the younger generation, highlights the equal division of chores between her brothers and sisters:

Geeta (early-20s),

> "Between myself and the smallest child [a girl], we do the kitchen [cleaning]... the boy does the vacuuming... there's two boys... they clean all the floors... and then the middle sister does all the bathrooms... and the small one helps me in the kitchen... so everything is quite spread... everyone's got their set duties."

5.3.3 Class and Generation Differences

Here again we see how discrepancies between roles of women and men were also reflected in the tasks allocated to the interviewees growing up whereby girls carried out more of the domestic chores than did boys. In addition, the tasks were very specific as girls were primarily concerned with assisting their mothers with cooking or washing. These tasks reflect gendered prescriptions of femininity where girls are expected to learn them, not boys. This in turn illustrates how gendered norms and expectations are socialised and ingrained from an early age (Giddens, 1989). This household division of labour was more marked amongst the working class interviewees while growing up.

Although the middle class interviewees did display this division of labour within the home, it was more marked amongst the older generations who while growing up were more subjected to the sharp divide between the prescribed roles for men and women. Again this can be related to the fact that many of these middle class women were originally more on par with the working class families while growing up. Thus with the younger generation interviewees who grew up middle class, we can see that these socialised roles for men and women are no longer strongly adhered to as with their siblings, tasks are more equitably distributed between boys and girls without the previous prescribed roles of tasks designated for girls or tasks designated for boys.

Therefore, we see that gendered division of labour gets socialised from family life (Castelli, 1989). These different roles take on different meanings in the subjective experiences of different individuals and become part of 'respectable' gender and class identities through varying ways (Skeggs, 1997). Thus for working class women, these roles and attributes associated with women create a respectable body as women create

meaning for their sense of 'self' from the tasks expected of them from an early life. On the other hand, gender socialisation operates differently within the families of the 'daughter' generation of middle class interviewees given the more equitable distribution of household tasks. Thus respectable identities are constructed differently for these respondents.

This respectability derived from the acceptance of sexual division of labour by the working class women in particular, is demonstrated through their acceptance of domestic labour as rewarding and natural. Thus given the expectations that women were not expected to work in those days, being socialised into domestic work becomes a respectable solution to a future that does not involve formal employment. These women therefore gain self worth and moral responsibility through maintenance of family life and the home (Skeggs, 1997). With the middle class 'daughter' generation however, respectability is created by balancing of household work with formal employment and gaining responsibility and self-worth from both public and private spheres. These gendered notions of femininity have implications with regard to freedom awarded to girls and boys (while growing up) in terms of going out or having romantic relationships.

5.4 FREEDOM OF SIBLINGS GROWING UP

The freedom awarded to girls and boys show marked differences that are based on the ideal of preserving female sexuality, which in turn translates into the idea of establishing respectable identities. For the most part, these ideals transcend the class divide although variations exist between the two older generations and the younger generations.

5.4.1 Working Class Experiences

All working class respondents, with the exception of two, stated that their male siblings or sons were definitely given more freedom when it came to going out with friends or having relationships.

Anjali (late-30s),

> "He [brother] definitely had more freedom than we did in terms of he being a boy and more responsible, and we obviously being girls and that... he went out more and if we wanted to go out in the evenings, we'd have to be home a certain time… and he didn't have a time that he had to be home."

Aiyesha (late-teens),

> "I think he [brother] definitely has a lot more freedom considering he's a guy... he can do what he wants to... they always know that my brother never has just one girlfriend and they always joke about it… but he definitely has more freedom in the topic than I do."

Safinah (late-teens),

> "Going out's a big issue... during the day its fine but night! – clubs is completely out of the question… he's [her brother] still small but I think they will be much more lenient."

Razia (late-40s),

> "I suppose generally speaking in every home you'll find the boys can go more often out and come back when they want but not with girls... they more strict on the girls… and you still find it in some families I think."

Shoutami (late-60s),

> "They were very strict regarding that you know… basically it was the same [for boys and girls] only boys got slightly more freedom than the girls to go out, because they felt the girls are not at an age where they can look after themselves... boys are more… er… trustable... you know how our old orthodox Indian parents would think..."

This last statement was interesting in that it implied that boys are not only more adept at looking after themselves, but also that it does not matter what they get up to when they go

out. In contrast girls are treated as though they are vulnerable and easily swayed, and that 'going out' has negative connotations when it comes to expectations of female behaviour.

In the case of relationships, many of the times the girls were expected to remain single until they got married. Dating was therefore not an option for those in the two older generations (late-40s and 60s to 70s). This implies that female sexuality is an important aspect within these Indian families and women are expected to preserve their sexuality and protect themselves by staying home rather than going out and socialising. Boys on the other hand were allowed girlfriends and could go out whenever they pleased which demonstrates how masculine sexuality is shaped and portrayed very differently. However, the women in their late-40s, although not allowed to date while they were young, now find it more acceptable that their own daughters date although through controlled measures whereby they need to meet their boyfriends and know what they do or where they go.

We see that a woman's sexuality is linked to respectability in that women had to carry themselves in particular ways and be sheltered from pre-marital relationships as this was seen to be an important aspect of respectability. This was reinforced by some of these women discussing how they must dress decently and conservatively, as well as by references made to girls who dress openly or who go out drinking and clubbing as cheap. Thus restricted mobility was seen as an inherent aspect of femininity as it served to shape these women into modest and feminine ideals (Salo, 2003). As such, cultural beliefs on women's sexuality imposed restrictions and monitoring of women's public activities and behaviour. As Salo (2003) highlights, moral standing is important within small communities and particularly relevant in relation to women. Families are thus often judged as respectable, or not, by a daughter's moral standing and modest behaviour when in public. Thus girls are socialised by their mothers to incorporate and emulate the feminine ideals of respectability through preserving their sexuality.

5.4.2 Middle Class Experiences

With the middle class, as with the working class women, we see how the respondents stated that boys were granted far greater freedom whether it meant going out with friends or in terms of having relationships.

Sunaina (late-30s),

> "We grew up with very strict morals so we weren't allowed to go out… we couldn't even speak to a boy up until you were married and that's it!"

Praveena (late-40s),

> "They [brothers] used to have girlfriends but we weren't allowed to have boyfriends."

Yasmeen (late-40s),

> "Exactly [brothers had more freedom to go out]… all the time... we were always under their wing, we could never experience nothing… we were restricted from everything, social life, everything!"

Nisha (late-40s),

> "Ok at that stage, when you were 17 or 18 you get married... what they used to do is they usually used to organise a boy from somewhere and then you get married."

Like with the working class women however, generation again played a role whereby all the respondents in the younger generation were allowed to date before marriage. However, these respondents all maintained that if they did meet someone they had to bring him home and get him acquainted with their parents formally. Also, they had to inform their parents whenever they chose to meet their boyfriends, or tell them of their whereabouts. Despite this flexibility when it comes to relationships however, in terms of freedom, the younger generation interviewees still maintained that their brothers had considerably greater freedom than they did. This centers on masculinity beliefs that men are more able to take care of themselves and therefore do not need to be restricted from

social lifestyles (Salo, 2003). Here again we see the importance of protecting female sexuality as it was perceived as dangerous for girls to go out whenever they wished to nightclubs or parties, given the lifestyles and social culture of today. In addition, respectability is established through moral boundaries based on a woman's public activities (Salo, 2003).

5.4.3 Generation Differences

Interestingly, despite these rigid boundaries that the older generations – in both the working and middle class – were subjected to while they themselves were growing up, they now feel that when it comes to their own children, sons and daughters should be treated more equally. They therefore award the same opportunities of dating and meeting friends to both heir sons and daughters, albeit with more restrictions on the girls in terms of curfew or where exactly they go to.

5.5 VIEWS ON EDUCATION

We now shift to contemporary views and experiences of the twenty interviewees. Often these views break away from those of the past. Class and generation also create differences in how education is viewed and this has important implications on the different ways in which respectability is constructed by women along these varying social categories.

5.5.1 Working Class Views

Working class women's views on the importance of education for their children primarily reflected an equal emphasis on both sons and daughters. This was true even for the older generations (late-40s, 60s to 70s) whose own parents had felt that education was more important for sons rather than daughters seeing as women primarily remained in the sphere of the home in those days. Interestingly, one of the interviewees in the younger generation expressed the view that while education is indeed important for both sexes, it remained more important for males to achieve as men were expected and required to provide financial security for their families.

Aiyesha (late-teens) said,

> "I think especially for a guy [education is more important]... even though people have modernised, in the Indian community the guys still wear the pants and he has to be stable before I give my daughter to him so naturally the guy would have to be tougher in terms of settling down."

Thus we see that higher education means a better capacity to secure a higher job position and therefore a better capacity to earn. This interviewee felt that as a woman you choose a husband who can support you and provide you with financial stability. As such, it becomes more important for males to be educated and to have a secure job. This view, whereby emphasis is placed on the males in terms of education was echoed by her mother:

Razia (late-40s),

> "I think its very important for them to be educated whether it be a girl or a boy… they should be educated yes… but to go out and work… when she chose her subjects, we'd made sure it is something that she will be able to do from home because now you study, and then you get a husband that does not want you to go and work – you still find them – and then what do you do? At least with this here she can work from home."

Interestingly, although Razia feels that education is important to both girls and boys, there remains a contradiction in what she says as she states that girls should select their field of study based on whether it will enable them to work from home should her husband not want her to work one day.

5.5.2 Middle Class Views

With the middle class women, views on education were fairly consistent in that all believed that in today's times with the rising cost of living, both girls and boys must have a proper education. This was true even for those who came from backgrounds whereby it was not essential or even permitted that girls finish of high school seeing as they were expected to get married early and make a home for their husbands. Only the lady in her

70s stated that while education was important, it should only be sought after as a back up for women, as women still should not work as their place was in the home. This served to reinforce her childhood and background views that women should not study or work.

Kavina (70s),

> "It [education] was important for the boys, not for the girls… up till today, the girls never worked, all my cousins… none of them... no, I never went so far… I went only till standard three... then helping mom in the house."

5.5.3 Class and Generation Differences

It appears that while most of the respondents held the view that education was very important for both sons and daughters, the working class women had a greater number of women whose family held the belief that education was more important for men than did the middle class women's families. This aspect also differed between older generations and younger generations, whereby the latter held more 'conservative' ideas on a woman's 'place' as being in the home. Thus notions of femininity were defined by more working class women and the older generations in terms of women working from home so that they can simultaneously look after the home and children, as opposed to pursuing an education that requires them to work within the public sphere.

This differs from the middle class interviewee's views which held that education is essential for both girls and boys as it is equally important for both to make something of themselves. For the middle class women, education is directly linked to respectability whereby it is regarded as important for making something of one's self. Education denotes possession of cultural capital and thus becomes a strong signifier of class (Bourdieu, 1984). This illustrates different ways in which respectability is construed between working and middle class women.

The middle class women who strongly enforce education as holding equal import for both boys and girls, corresponds with the fact that these women are more likely to be working

women than the working class respondents. These aspects – education and work – have implications on decision-making within the home.

5.6 DECISIONS IN THE HOME

The findings demonstrated a connection between women, working, and independence, which in turn had implications when it came to decision-making within the home.

5.6.1 Working Class Views

Regarding aspects such as decisions in the home, views were mixed amongst the working class interviewees. Some felt that the husbands should hold authority over decision-making for the most part. However, many of the interviewees stated that decision-making on aspects such as bills, shopping, income expenditure and other such issues, is joint between them and their husbands or should be joint (in the case of the younger respondents). Two of these women expressed that they were the ones who made the decisions. Interestingly, both these women (one late- 30s and the other mid-20s) were the only two respondents currently working.

Also interesting were the similarities of views of mother and daughter when asked who makes the decisions or who should make the decisions in the home.

Aiyesha (late-teens),

> "Well it depends what decision making it is... I think *maybe* it should be equal."

On the whole, however, she felt that it should be the husband who holds authority over most decisions except on matters regarding children or bigger decisions such as buying a house or car which should be jointly discussed.

Her mother Razia (late-40s) said,

> "My husband makes the decisions... but in most cases when it comes to the kids, when they want something he says go to your mother... and I say no, go to your father."

This illustrates the ingrained belief that decision-making ultimately should rest on the male head of the household. Here, even where the husband passes decisions over to the wife where the children are concerned, Razia still feels that her husband should hold the final say.

Another lady also echoed this sentiment:

Shazia (late-40s),

> "We do it together, if it's a family thing... but mostly him, because the ideas are coming out from his mind."

This was an interesting comment as it implied that she failed to contribute much insight when it came to any decisions around the home. Thus she gives all credit to her husband by stating that all ideas are coming solely from him regarding any matters of the home. She therefore appears not to take, nor want to take, any initiative on decisions within the home.

In addition, when it came to these women going out without their husbands, only one stated that she seldom did while the others responded that they never did.

Zainab (late-teens) stated that,

> "You know like with us… whatever you do you need the permission of the husband."

5.6.2 Middle Class Views

With the middle class women and decision-making in the home, nine of the interviewees maintained that this should be a joint venture between husband and wife:

Praveena (late-40s),

> "Basically all of us will club in together… joint decisions."

Rupee (early-20s),

> "Definitely joint decisions… especially if you are both independent and working."

Hema (late-40s),

> "We always discussed things with the kids and then we'd make a decision together… we always make decisions together as a family."

Jasu (early-20s),

> "I think you should make it [decisions] together cos that's what we do here [in her family]…"

Yasmeen (late-40s),

> "I would say it's joint... he gives me a hand with all that as well [bills, groceries]... he'll even do the shopping with me."

Once again however, the interviewee in her 70s held a different view:

Kavina (70s) stated,

> "The mans are the head… what they say we got to listen to them and do that… what they told us to do."

With matters of women going out and socialising without their spouses, nine either did go out without their husbands, or firmly believed that they would when they got married. These outings included shopping with friends, going for coffee or dinners with friends

and other such social events. Once again, the eldest interviewee felt otherwise whereby a woman should not go out without her husband.

Here we see a marked difference with the working class women who rarely went out without their partners. This can be attributed to the fact that the middle class women mostly all work and therefore have more financial independence and wider social circles seeing as they operate outside the sphere of the home. In addition, these women in general appear to be more independent and self assured as a result of their jobs themselves as well as their social standing which in turn has an impact on their lives outside of the family sphere and their husbands. Only one of the working class respondents, also a working woman, would go out with friends. Therefore we see that working women are more likely to go out without their husbands given the independence gained from having their own profession together with their exposure to different social circles.

5.6.3 Class and Generation Differences

We can gauge from the above that class and generation played a role when it came to decision-making within the home. With the working class women it was mainly the case that it was the husband who held the final say in any household matters or decision-making. However, interestingly, those of the working class who did feel this way were also Muslim – an aspect to be discussed in Chapter 6. And finally the middle class exception, Kavina (70s), was the only lady who maintained that the husband holds the final say which therefore indicates that generation may also be an influencing factor. It is important to note however that the other woman in her late-60s, Shoutami, felt completely different as decisions were equal in the home with herself and her husband. This aspect which seems to go against the class and generation patterns observed above can also be attributed to religion as it was discovered in the findings that religion played more of a defining role of identity formation with Muslim women than with Hindu women. Religion is thus more interconnected with gendered decision-making for the Muslim women as compared to the Hindu women like Shoutami. (The issue of religion will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6). Hence, despite the fact that she is a working

class woman and of the older generation, both of which identities are more inclined to give more authority to male heads of the household, she feels differently.

5.7 PRESENT GENDER RELATIONS IN THE HOME

Present gender relations within the home bring with it a discrepancy between the classes that was not previously evidenced within the homes of the interviewees while they were growing up. Thus while we saw with the older two generations of *both* classes that previously displayed commonality of experience of gendered division within the home (due to the fact that they were all more or less in the same class growing up), we now see class differences manifest themselves in their present home lives. With the working class interviewees, the past views seem to have been carried down and perpetuated within the homes whereby the women still maintain that they bear the brunt of all housework especially and attending to the children. In contrast, the middle class interviewees demonstrate a break from these past ideals of gender roles and for the most part, more equal relations exist in the home whereby their husbands often assisted a great deal more with children and also helped in the housework – although cooking and washing were mainly still regarded as the responsibility of women.

5.7.1 Working Class Women and Relations in the Home

Present gender relations in the home according to the working class interviewees displayed commonalities between these women. One interviewee, Razia (late-40s), claimed that as a wife and a mother one is expected to do everything "you're a slave": In keeping with this view, her daughter, Aiyesha (late-teens) stated that she still thinks the old fashioned way works where the wife remains at home and looks after the home while the husband works. This view was also shared by two other respondents, except where children are concerned as they maintained that a father's role is important in helping to raise and care for children.

Here again we see that childcare has important implications on parental identity for both males and females. The women felt that the presence of a father is very important in that

even where the fathers do not help raise the children as such they need to spend time with them, play with them and be involved in their lives. Despite these beliefs however, childcare still rested on the mothers as it was believed to be their main responsibility.

A few of the respondents believe that sharing of roles is important nowadays especially given that more women are working. Thus it is important, according to them, that husbands help out a lot both with the children as well as well as providing assistance in the home with household chores. One working woman said that "women still definitely do more… if you leave it to men nothing will get done." (Anjali, late-30s). But she maintains that her husband does his fair share especially where their three year old son is concerned. Another, also a working woman asserted that she wanted to do all the household chores and that it was not a question of being forced to. Her husband too helps in the home "… not an equal share but he does more than most men do." (Raheema, mid-20s).

Where respondents believed that their spouses should also partake in the housework, especially the two working women (Anjali and Raheema) they still all felt that things like cooking were often left to the woman in the home, even if they are also working.

One woman believes that because times are changing the roles of women are becoming more flexible:

Salimah (late-40s) said,

> "Now our [women's] expectations are higher because we know more and we want more... if we are both working then we should share the household work as well."

However, she goes on to say that her husband only helps when he's in the mood as "Indian men are still rooted in that mentality."

We can see that the interviewees often make reference to 'Indian' men or 'Indian' ways when discussing their experiences within the home. This serves to demonstrate that the

interviewees describe Indian men in particular as those having 'old-fashioned' notions about the roles attributed to men and women. As such we see how there is a certain pattern within Indian communities which designate certain roles and expectations for women and men and thus shape ideals of femininity and masculinity based on those prescribed identities. These are largely based on women equated to domesticity and men equated to the role of 'breadwinner' (Castelli, 2001).

5.7.2 Middle Class Women and Relations in the Home

Only two middle class interviewees reported that their husbands were very helpful. One stated that although she was a housewife and attended to most things in the home, her husband helped considerably, especially on weekends, and was a wonderful help with the children in terms of helping with their studies. In keeping with this, her daughter felt that while a woman had to carry out all household duties, the husband should play a big role when it comes to raising and caring for children by attending to all childcare aspects. The other interviewee, a working woman, reported that everything in the house was equal between herself and her husband in terms of equal sharing of housework, as well as equally caring for the children when they were small and to date.

Nisha (late-40s) stated,

> "We equal… we do everything together… there's no such thing as you clean and I cook or I cook and you clean... he does ironing, I don't do ironing… he accepted me the way I was and I accepted him… very rare [with Indian men]… he also did everything with the kids... he used to do the night shift and I used to do the day shift."

According to Nisha, this situation proved to be very different from most families because 'Indian' men rarely helped out with any of the housework or even when it came to feeding or looking after children.

Other middle class interviewees, however, stated that household chores were mainly the responsibility of them, whether they were housewives or working women. However,

these women all had domestic workers to assist with tasks such as the cleaning and washing; hence they usually supervised the household chores while mainly attending to things such as cooking and the children. One interviewee stated that she did everything while her husband only assisted with small household chores. She however felt that it was her duty as the wife although she thinks that her husband should give her a bigger hand in the home.

Naheema (mid-20s),

> "I do everything… but he'll help me set the table and small chores like that... I got to nag him please help me make the bed while I get the breakfast ready... just lazy."

Two middle class interviewees stated that once they were married absolutely everything concerning the home had to be undertaken by them. One claimed that her husband was not only 'lazy', but the fact that she lived with her in-laws, also served to enforce such divisions roles as they were very old fashioned in their beliefs (Praveena, late-40s). We see an interesting contradiction with the findings here. On the one hand, we see how within Indian communities women are expected to dote on their husbands, yet on the other hand, despite these expectations which are viewed as cultural norms, some of the interviewees still refer to their husbands, and Indian men in general, as lazy.

Another interviewee stated that her husband assisted with housework and children sometimes but never with things like cooking or washing. She too mentioned that the fact that she initially lived with her in-laws, such sexual division of labour was imposed on her after she got married:

Kavina (70s),

> "No men never used to do all this stuff [cooking, cleaning]... with my in-laws, the men never used to do work."

Yasmeen (late-40s),

> "If he has to he'll do it for me [cleaning] but it never came to that situation where he needs to help me… because we lived with my in-laws."

She went on to say, in terms of dealing with her in-laws after marriage:

> "You always had to obey the husband... I felt that was quite important… always had to give in."

However, upon leaving her in-laws she stated that she enjoys being a housewife as it is her duty to care for the home and children unless both spouses are working. In addition, she said that while her husband did not help in the home a lot, he was good when it came to helping with the children.

5.7.3 Class and Generation Differences

Here we see an interesting pattern between both the middle class and working class women's experiences with their in-laws whereby two of the latter class interviewees also felt that their in-laws added to the gender divide in which women had to bear the full brunt of household work as their duty. This illustrates the ways in which Indian women are socialised into roles of motherhood and housewife which are perpetuated through marriage – by in-laws – as these roles are viewed as key to defining womanhood (Castelli, 2001). This then translates into respectability.

Razia (late-40s), a working class woman, stated that she had to quit her job once she got married as her father-in-law felt that she should be at home caring for the children. The other working class woman also expressed similar views:

Salimah (late-40s),

> "Things are very different now... because then they were very rigid… and now that my in-laws are gone I'm very free… I can do whatever I want within reasonable limits."

By ‘things’ Salimah refers to stark gender divisions within the home whereby there are no longer strict regulations or obligations on her behalf. Thus she has a lot more flexibility now as she can carry out her day to day tasks in her own way and at her own pace. We see that it was often the case – for both the working class and middle class women – that they were subjugated to and had to abide by external pressures arising from their in-laws in terms of what was of expected of a woman’s role within the home.

A significant discovery was the fact that those women who were formally working, both working and middle class, stated that they made sure their husbands’ helped out in the home even if it was with minor tasks. This could be demonstrative of how women, once they have entered the labour market and achieved a degree of economic independence, become more empowered within the home even if it is not always to a great extent (Jaffee, 1988; Kabeer, 1994).

5.8 DOUBLE SHIFT?

Perceptions on whether or not dealing with formal work and the home simultaneously showed differences between the classes once again. The working class interviewees who worked did feel that balancing work and home life and childcare was akin to a double shift as despite holding a job, household work is not redistributed (Hochschild, 1979) . This was not the case with the middle class interviewees who worked however as they somehow managed to balance work with housework and childcare with the assistance of their husbands and domestic workers. These women therefore did not perceive themselves to be working a double shift.

5.8.1 Working Class Views

A final finding with regard to working class interviewees’ views on women working was whether or not they experience a double shift if they do in fact work when they come home in the evening. Those that do or did work strongly agreed that it was a double shift.

Raheema (mid-20s),

> "It is [a double shift]… it is hard… but other than that if I'm cooking or cleaning or whatever after work, he'll [her husband] see to my son, so he takes a little off my hands."

Salimah (late-40s) stated,

> "A woman's work is never done… Indian men are very lazy."

Two of them stated that while it is a double shift, after a while it becomes so much a part of their routine that it is automatic and becomes a natural part of life.

Manifah (late-40s) voiced that,

> "You manage to juggle the work and home life."

Anjali (late-30s) shared a similar view,

> "It is [a double shift]… it's hard work, it's hard work because you work the whole day and you come home you've gotta cook, you've gotta see to the child, u gotta clean up after u cook… but you get used to it… it becomes part of your daily life."

Finally, those who were still studying, and the one lady who has always been a housewife felt that it would definitely be a double shift as regardless of whether husbands help a little around the house, the women always have to deal with a disproportionately larger share of household chores and caring for the children.

5.8.2 Middle Class Views

Middle class women's views in terms of whether these working women felt that they had to work a double shift when they returned from work differed from the working class views in that not one of them felt this was the case. Since two worked from home with flexible hours, they said they had enough time to do what was needed within the home. Others with full time jobs stated that they had domestic help, as well their husbands who helped out sufficiently. Even for those without domestic help felt that they could cope

very well and that they adjusted themselves between work and home very well. Those who did not work however felt that once they were working and married, it would most probably be a double shift of work and that it was just a question of time management. The final respondent (the same lady in her 70s) felt that there is no time to both work and be a good wife hence the woman should not work at all.

5.8.3 Class and Generation Differences

Interestingly, the issue of whether or not the women who are working experienced a double shift showed significant disparities between the working class and middle class interviewees. Working class women stated that it was indeed a double shift having to juggle formal employment and then having to deal with the home and children after work. A couple of the women stated however that it becomes almost automatic and part of a routine so its not really felt as a double shift anymore. Middle class women differed in that none of the women who worked felt it was a double shift either due to the assistance of a domestic worker or because their husbands helped out, or because simply they had worked out a system of managing both effectively. Here we see that the working class women are more of the view that women are compelled to deal with the conflicting demands of a double workload when working full-time jobs as household work is not being redistributed between men and women despite this entry of women into the labour market (Hochschild, 1989; Maforah, 1993).

Therefore we can see that class dynamics give way to varying experiences of women. The fact that the middle class women do not experience a double shift due to above reasons highlights a significant aspect. Based on the fact that they have more liberal views on women working in today's society and a woman's role in the home, they are able to exercise their cultural capital (due to knowledge and being fairly well educated and possessing good professions) and therefore can veer away from the 'orthodox' view that expects women stay home and do all housework. Respectability is therefore achieved through actually having their own professions and not through being the 'stereotypical' housewife that is often portrayed within Indian culture (Kabeer, 1994; Castelli, 2001).

The working class women who were formally employed also felt that they had no time for any leisure, particularly for themselves given their full day. This reflects how a woman's structural position in the home serves to restrict their access to any leisure time, which is compounded by the fact that they take primary care for children as well (Roberts, 1993). This free time is even more impossible to experience in the case of working class women seeing how the findings showed how middle class women who worked and had domestic help together with husbands who helped in the homes, still had personal time for themselves for socialising with friends and getting out once in a while. Nevertheless, the daily lives of these working class women, juggling the double shift of work and family life become integral to their sense of self and their identities thus constituting respectability. As such, class position together with the associated roles of being a woman that arise out of social class, do shape women's experiences within the home and give rise of different notions of respectability between working class and middle class women in terms of defines womanhood (Skeggs, 1997).

5.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter has looked at both past and present household gender relations. Although class and generation differences were not reflected in the findings when looking at the interviewees backgrounds, these come to bear in their present lives. Here class and generation differences manifest in terms of what being a woman and a wife entail, whereby working class women and the older generations believe that women primarily need to engage in domestic work within the home while their husbands hold more authority over day-to-day decisions. Nevertheless, the common thread between class and generation is that childcare and motherhood is an integral marker of respectability despite variations in perceptions and experiences in the role of women (outside of motherhood) between the class and generation. Where class and generation could not explain these differences, findings suggest that religion added to, and reinforced, the intersectionality of gendered identity – as will be detailed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6 – FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS: RELIGION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Interestingly, the findings showed that religion – a variable not initially accounted for – played an important part in this research. Together with the intersection of gender, class and generation, religion added to this matrix by overlapping at these different levels to shape the interviewees' perceptions and experiences. We see then that working class women are primarily Muslim women with the view that womanhood entails making a home for their families. In contrast, middle class women are mainly Hindu women that strongly favour women holding independent professions. These lines of overlap create experiences of commonality and 'difference' along the lines of class and religion, as well as define what it means to be respectable in different ways.

Ten of the interviewees were Hindu women and ten were Muslim women. Eight of the Hindu interviewees were middle class women, while eight of the Muslim interviewees were working class women. These intersections between religion and class – working class Muslim women and middle class Hindu women – served to establish common experiences within these overlapping categories when it came to views on 'womanhood'.

The tables below break down the categories of the interviewees' class, generation, religion, and whether or not they work:

Working Class Women	**Generation**	**Religion**	**Working?**
Shoutami	Grandmother	Hindu	Yes (retired)
Shazia	Mother	Muslim	No
Salimah	Mother	Muslim	No
Manifah	Mother	Muslim	No
Razia	Mother	Muslim	No
Anjali	Mother	Hindu	Yes

Raheema	Daughter	Muslim	Yes
Zainab	Daughter	Muslim	Student
Safinah	Daughter	Muslim	Student
Aiyesha	Daughter	Muslim	Student

Middle Class Women	**Generation**	**Religion**	**Working?**
Kavina	Grandmother	Hindu	No (never has)
Hema	Mother	Hindu	Yes
Nisha	Mother	Hindu	Yes
Praveena	Mother	Hindu	Yes
Yasmeen	Mother	Muslim	No
Sunaina	Mother	Hindu	Yes
Naheema	Daughter	Muslim	Yes
Rupee	Daughter	Hindu	Yes
Jasu	Daughter	Hindu	Student
Geeta	Daughter	Hindu	Student

Although religion was not foreseen to be an integral aspect in the study, the findings demonstrated that it in fact was an important marker of identity – together with gender, class and generation – when it came to these women's lived experiences, particularly for the Muslim respondents. Of the ten Muslim women, three are university students. Only two of the remaining seven women are currently working, both in the younger generation. The findings demonstrated a marked contrast with regard to the Hindu interviewees. Two of these respondents are university students. Of the remaining eight, all except one work, or have worked (in the case of the retired woman). The other woman in her 70s is the only Hindu respondent to have never worked.

6.2 FINDINGS

From the findings on religion, we see that class and religion overlap to create a shared experience and perceptions for the women in this study. Muslim women, all highly religious, were more of the view that women should create homes for their husbands and families, where as Hindu women, moderately religious, emphasised the necessity of women to pursue independent careers. Muslim women felt that religion played a vital role in their identities as 'women' while Hindu women, while deeming religion as important, did not view is as a crucial part of their identity. It was also found that generation played a significant role when overlapping with religion whereby the two interviewees in the 'grandmother' generation both maintained that religion played an integral role in their identities.

6.2.1 Muslim Women's Views

The findings on religion showed the following:

Firstly, the Muslim respondents, were all extremely strict in their faith, in that everything they did in life was shaped by and framed around Islam. Thus for them, it was an integral marker of identity that could not be separated from everyday life as they felt that religion informed every aspect of their life. This had implications for their daily lived experiences in the home, and their views on what it means to be a woman, wife, mother, worker, and individual in society.

Aiyesha (late-teens) stated,

> "Religion plays a very important role… you have to be very modest as a girl…your general morals as a girl and how to present yourself as a girl... you have to dress respectfully… before parents came religion... it's a really big part of you."

Raheema (mid-20s),

> "Everything that we do is all based around Islam."

Salimah (late-40s),

> "That [religion] is a part of our lives which is constant and very important. We grew up as Muslims so whatever Islam teaches you we were taught... how we dress… it was conservative yah… a lot of the conservatism comes from the Islamic background where women have to stay at home… I grew up in a conservative Muslim home... the roles were very clearly defined hey… you know how most of the Indian households are... the men don't help…"

Shazia (late-40s),

> "You must have respect for your husband... that's important first of all... in our Muslim community they don't allow that time girls to go out and do something or study something or become something".

Zainab (late-teens),

> "I think being Muslim it's very conservative… I feel that religion is something that really controls us… you know like with us, whatever you do you need the permission of the husband… you can't really go anywhere without asking him."

This proved particularly interesting as this girl is not even married but holds these strong views on women being required, from an Islamic point of view, to seek out permission from their husbands for everything that they do, or if they want to go anywhere.

Razia (late-40s),

> "From an Islamic point of view, a woman's duty is to look after her husband's belongings and that includes his house and his children... in short and sweet, everything."

Yasmeen (late-40s),

> "The boys were always regarded as much more superior than the girls... till today… the boys have status much more than the girls… women never allowed to study or work then."

Interestingly, all of the women above, with the exception of Yasmeen, are working class women. Here we see how religion intersects with class whereby the Muslim women in this study were in fact predominantly working class women with the exception of two – Yasmeen and her daughter Naheema. Corresponding to this, these working class Muslim women all tend to share the view that the husband is the head of the home and therefore must be obeyed and respected. In addition, these women are also mainly of the view that women should be housewives unless financial necessity forces them to work and contribute within the home, as we saw in the previous chapters. Together, these beliefs constitute respectability for these women.

6.2.2 Hindu Women's Views

The Hindu women, depending on their varying levels of faith, had different views on as to what extent women had to hold passive roles in the home or in relation to their spouses. On the whole, these respondents seemed to have more equal relations in the home and most of these women were working women. This lesser degree of staunch adherence to religion is witnessed with the findings, given a greater emphasis on spirituality for some of these women.

Nisha (late-40s) said,

> "Well okay, religion was important but it wasn't forced upon you… I wouldn't say it played a major role… I'm more spiritual than actually religious."

Jasu (early-20s),

> "Well it [religion] always played a role but I would say I'm not that religious, I'm more spiritual… we don't run to the temple for everything... so we'll do our prayers at home."

Two of these women, although not highly religious themselves, discussed how a lot was imposed on them as a woman and wife by their in-laws when they were living with them soon after marriage. These obligations included aspects such as strict religious adherence and practices, which also entailed a woman being subservient within the home and

having to take care of their husbands by cooking for them, attending to them and basically creating a good home for them.

Sunaina (late-30s) stated,

> "My father wasn't very religious… he was a Punjabi, on the Sikh side... we only fast on a Tuesdays and main functions... they never used to believe in going to the temple, we could pray at home… on religion-wise and cooking-wise [in-laws imposed these aspects on her]... that was very difficult for me to adjust to."

Hema (late-40s),

> "I think more spirituality... although we Hindu, we don't go so much to temple anymore… initially when I was living with my in-laws it was different because they were the staunch Hindu type... things were imposed on me [as a wife and mother]... my in-laws were brought up differently, my husband was also brought up differently… it took him a few years to adjust to my beliefs."

Here we see an instance of resistance. Hema went on to state that they had moved out of her father's parents' home as she was being stifled by her in-laws' beliefs and views. This same situation was described by Praveena who said that things improved a lot once she moved out of her overbearing in-laws' home.

Praveena (late-40s),

> "My mother-in-law was a typical old fashioned female... it was a typical Indian home... I had to do everything… but when I came out on my own, it became better."

Only Shoutami, a lady in the 'grandmother' generation, asserted that religion played a vital part of life, unlike all the other Hindu interviewees. This was also true of the other woman in the 'grandmother' generation, Kavina. However, in the case of Shoutami, this staunch religious adherence was only significant during her childhood and therefore did not have an impact on her sense of 'self' after marriage as. Thus, in her later married life,

religion and 'womanhood' were not simultaneously interlinked categories within the home, unlike the case with all the Muslim interviewees. This is evidenced by the fact that she worked all her life, and also due to her experiences as a wife and mother. With Kavina, the opposite holds true whereby she stated that given her very religious background and life after marriage, it did have an impact on her role as a woman in that she was expected to stay at home and attend to her husband and children's needs over and above everything else.

Shoutami (late-60s),

> "Very important [religion]... going to temple, we would attend that regularly because they were very staunch in that respect… I suppose they [parents] were from the old school, they were very orthodox... if we had to make a cup of tea for my father we had to put on a scarf… he would never accept a cup of tea without a bangle... with your bare hands."

She goes on to say however that,

> "I had the most fantastic husband... I used to come back from school sometimes… he would be early and he'd do all the cooking... for basically ten years I never knew what it was to cook."

With Kavina (70s), the situation was completely different,

> "That we never had that chance to do all [study, work]... very religious… and he [father] was very strict."

Again we see here how religion overlaps with class whereby all the Hindu women with the exception of two, Shoutami and Anjali, are middle class women. While religion was a significant part of their lives, other aspects such as spirituality played a role in their lives. Religion was therefore not of paramount importance in that it did not inform every aspect of their daily lived experiences. Parallel to this is the view shared almost unanimously by Hindu women – as seen in the two earlier chapters – that women should work regardless of financial status so that they secure their individuality and

independence. The only exception here was Kavina who felt strongly, as with the working class Muslim women, that women should not work.

6.3 MUSLIM VIEWS

The findings of this study are reflected in studies carried out on women and religion. Jeffery (1979) looks into the Muslim societies of India and Pakistan which are dominated by the rigid separation between women and men. She discusses the situation in these places whereby outside the home the economic role of women is sharply curtailed in that it is the task of males to obtain employment to support their families while the task of women is restricted to the domestic domain of 'natural duties' such as motherhood and domesticity. Following this, we can draw parallels with the Muslim interviewees, most of who placed centrality on the roles of 'wife' and 'mother' and therefore felt that their place was in the home. Thus we see how subjective meanings are shaped and created differently through different cultural and religious practices.

Today, a radically changing view of women's and men's roles and status within society is witnessed whereby women now have the means of pursuing career goals and are less oppressed on the whole both within the home and in general. Despite these changes, the findings demonstrated that views on women working were more conservative with the Muslim respondents on the whole, which suggests that to a certain extent, Islam still informs women's roles both inside and outside the home. This is reflected in the values adhered to by these women whereby they had to dress very conservatively, keep a good home rather than work, and basically not really have a large say in general.

In addition, we see aspects of Islam whereby these women say that they have to abide by their husbands wishes regarding aspects within the home, or in terms of working, or even if they wanted to go anywhere or do anything. Often the idea of obtaining their husband's permission for most things, including working, was expressed by these respondents. Most of these interviewees stated that if their husbands were alright with the idea of them working then they would do so. In addition many of them thought that

working at home would be ideal so that they may attend to the housework while simultaneously working.

These Islamic views cut across class, as aforementioned, in that eight of the ten Muslim interviewees were working class women. Thus we see an interplay of the categories of 'working class' and Muslim where both aspects seem to mutually reinforce and perpetuate women's identities as centering on domestic care within the home.

6.4 HINDU VIEWS

The Hindu interviewees, while also religious women, did not appear to be very staunch in their practices or beliefs, nor did they emphasise male superiority in terms of decisions in the home or in terms of a woman's decision to work. On the whole, the Hindu women appeared to be less inclined to believe that a woman's role centers around in the home – with the exception of one elderly lady who held the view that women need to obey their husbands and care for children, rather than work. Although respondents who had married and lived with in-laws stated that a lot was imposed on them during this time, including the fact that women had to be more passive and subservient, once they moved away from their in-laws, they felt that they were able to be their own persons as is seen above. Thus they felt that they could make their own decisions with the full support of their husbands, which would not have been possible had they still lived with their orthodox in-laws. In addition, none expressed the view of male superiority and most felt that women were equal to men in all that they endeavour to do in modern society.

As previously mentioned, and akin to the Muslim/working class ratio, eight of the ten Hindu interviewees were middle class women. This also depicts the intersecting of the categories of religion and class albeit with a different religion and class cohort in this case. Thus the generally 'open' views of the middle class women seem to coincide with their less rigid Hindu practices with the exception of Kavina. This points to the role of generation given this older generation woman's view of women's roles, which coincides with Islamic views, as well as with working class views.

6.5 INTERSECTIONALITY

According to Pathak and Rajan (2001), primary socialisation for an Indian is effected in terms of religion and class. Gender intersects these two categories and creates subjectivity of experience thus demonstrating how these categories are formed from childhood. Together these mark the foreground of identity and must be viewed in relation to one another as they exist in combination with one another to produce meaning.

The study demonstrated how most of the Muslim women felt more inclined to be housewives or came from families where the women were more likely to be housewives in comparison to the Hindu women. As such we can deduce that religion did influence to a certain degree gender relations in the home and women's views and experiences of work. In addition, these Muslim women were mainly working class women. Here we can therefore begin to see the ways in which intersectionality of numerous social categories operates differently with different groups of people. Therefore we see how religion as an identity marker intersects with gender, class and generation to form the subjective experiences of some of the respondents in a particular way, while with other women, these interlocking categories create a different set of experiences, based on, for example, a different religious beliefs. In addition, religion does not play a pivotal role in creating personal meaning or senses of 'selves' for the Hindu women, while it is a key defining marker of identity for the Muslim women. This therefore demonstrates the fluidity of identity and its various points of intersection that in turn create varying experiences for different groups of people.

For the Muslim women, religion is inextricably intertwined with the category 'woman' and thus is a large part of how they create meaning for themselves with what they do – as housewives and mothers. It thus informs their subjective experiences and illustrates the power relations at work as these women are oppressed on different levels (Jeffrey, 1979). Simultaneity of oppression is thus experienced by these women, which establishes a commonality of experience for all Muslim women centered on being both a 'woman' and a 'Muslim'. This in turn establishes boundaries and lines of difference with women who do not have the same subjective experiences based on these two axes of identity. Thus

although the ten Hindu interviewees were also women and parallels are evidenced with regard to their experiences as women, these interviewees, as Hindus, experience 'womanhood' somewhat differently to the Muslim interviewees, in that the former group favour women working to a large extent, while the latter are more inclined to feel that a woman's place is in the home.

We can thus see that for these Hindu women, religion is not an inseparable aspect which informs their daily lived experiences but instead exists as a separately. This is not to say that Hinduism does not play its part in a woman's identity and lived experiences, but with regard to these Hindu respondents, the simultaneous impact of religion and gendered experience is not as pronounced with the Hindu interviewees as with the Muslim respondents, thereby creating lines of division and establishing what is often regarded as 'otherness'.

Again we see that the category 'women' is historically and discursively constructed and needs to be looked at in relation to other categories of identity. Castelli (2001) discusses how the terms women, gender and religion are all inherently unstable, fluid and overlapping categories. She highlights the ways in which feminist studies on religion have addressed the ways in which boundaries are demarcated between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. This was evidenced when the Muslim interviewees talked about women who dressed inappropriately, or those who would resist the expectations of them as wives and mothers and become too career-oriented or driven. These people were looked down on given their failure to abide by the general expectations of them as women prescribed by the teachings of Islam.

As one interviewee, Aiyesha (late-teens), pointed out,

> "Some of the girls [in the neighbourhood] are so free… they go completely drunk... they just have no boundaries… I just feel there's no guidance."

6.6 RELIGION AND RESPECTABILITY

Drawing from Skeggs (1997), we can use her understanding of the interrelationship of class and gender in identity formation as a basis of uncovering how religion can also be used as a marker of respectability. Although Skeggs' does not incorporate religion into her analysis we can use her theory to analyse religion as one of the fundamental social categories that construct identity. Thus we can see how for Muslim women, religion is an integral element in defining womanhood and its associated roles of wife and motherhood which serve to establish respectable identities within and outside their homes.

With the Hindu interviewees, while religion is an important dimension in these women's lives, respectability for these women is not necessarily directly attributed to their religion but more a product of their roles as mothers, wives and working women. Thus, as with the previous chapters, we see how respectability comes to take on different meanings to different groups of religion – as well as to different classes and generations.

6.7 CONCLUSION

Religion, as a social category, cuts across other categories such gender, class and generation, to name a few, and therefore one cannot look at gender as an analytic category in isolation. The subjectivity of experience of these interviewees thus demonstrates how gender and religion combine to create meaning in their daily lives – together with class and generation. Thus, religion, together with the other social categories discussed in this essay is also contexualised and cannot be looked at separately when trying to gauge the meanings and understandings ascribed to these women's daily lived experiences (Castelli, 2001). From this, as with gender and class, respectability is established in different ways for the women in this study.

CHAPTER 7 - CONCLUSION

This research looked at the perceptions and experiences of Indian women in Benoni, Ekurhuleni, in relation to work and household gender relations. The theory of intersectionality is pivotal to understanding society, and is particularly relevant within the South African context given the multitude of identities that characterise this nation. It therefore formed the basis of analysis when dissecting and understanding these women's subjective experiences.

The study highlighted the interplay of gender, class, generation, and religion within three Indian communities in the Benoni. Using semi-structured interviewees on a sample of ten working class women and ten middle class women, it was discovered that class, generation and religion intersect at varying points, within different contexts, to create different notions of respectability for these women.

The findings demonstrated how respectability, domestic ideals and childcare all create constraints on the lives of women. On the other hand, they may also be experienced positively through different ways. As a result, lines of difference are established between working class and middle class women based on shifting contexts, historical differences and varying access to cultural capital. The research found that working class women generally create respectable senses of 'selves' through dedicated domestic ideals centered around home life, while middle class women generally establish respectable identities through formal employment together with domestic caring practices. A point of convergence between the two classes was the based on their ideals on motherhood and childcare, aspects seen by both working class and middle class women to be central in defining womanhood and thereby establishing respectability.

A very interesting discovery that arose out of the findings was a contradiction between views on work with regard to the personal experiences of the working class interviewees, and what they believe it *means* to work. While on the one hand they felt that women should work on the basis of financial necessity as motherhood is more important to their

identities as women, on the other hand, they felt that work was important for a woman's independence and therefore self-esteem – a view akin to the middle class interviewees. Thus these findings based on perceptions and experiences of work bring forward conflicting notions of respectability.

The research also demonstrated that the backgrounds of the interviewees revealed no disparities between working class and middle class women of the two older generations in terms of by gendered division of labour within the homes. This is because growing up, the older two generations all belonged to the same class and only later on did half of them achieve middle class status.

The shift to present day however brings with it class and generation differences. Present gender relations reflected more equitable relations within the home with the middle class interviewees. This was not the case with working class interviewees. Here differences manifest in terms of what being a woman and a wife entail, whereby working class women and the older generations believe that women primarily need to engage in domestic work within the home while their husbands hold more authority over day-to-day decisions. Childcare, however, was a core marker of identity and respectability across class and generation. These varying perceptions and experiences framed along class and generation have important implications in how respectability is established differently for working class and middle class women, and for older and younger generations.

An interesting finding not initially foreseen to hold any import in the study, was the role of religion. Together with the intersection of gender, class and generation, religion added to this matrix by overlapping at these different levels to shape the interviewees' perceptions and experiences. The findings demonstrated that working class women were primarily devout Muslim women with the view that womanhood entails making a home for their families. In contrast, middle class women were mainly moderately religious Hindu women who strongly favoured the notion of women holding independent professions. Muslim women felt that religion played a vital role in their identities as 'women' while Hindu women, while deeming religion as important, did not view is as a

crucial part of their identity. It was also found that generation played a significant role when overlapping with religion whereby the two interviewees in the 'grandmother' generation both maintained that religion played an integral role in their identities
We see therefore that class, religion and generation overlap to create shared experiences and perceptions for the women in this study.

The findings demonstrated that gender, class, generation and religion all served to shape the interviewees' senses of 'self' as mothers, wives, workers and women. Therefore, it was found that the role of 'woman' takes on different meanings between working and middle class women, older and younger generations, and Hindu and Muslim women. As such we can see how identities are fluid and intertwined and cannot be separated from one another (Campbell, 1993; Hendricks & Lewis, 1994; Skeggs, 1997). We see how both commonality of experience as well as lines of 'difference' are created through the lived experiences of these women as they establish meaningful identities for themselves in their day-to-day lives within and outside the home. Based on the study's findings, we can therefore argue for the usefulness of using respectability not only as a marker of class and gender, but also as a marker of other axes of identity such as generation and religion.

This study has highlighted how gendered dynamics are lived out within South African Indian households in relation to other social identities. It will hopefully cater for a large audience not only within the discipline of sociology, but also in other disciplines focusing on gender studies. It is hoped that this research report has effectively demonstrated that it is imperative to look at social categories holistically rather than in isolation when understanding the complexity of social beings.

APPENDIX A – LIST OF INTERVIEWS

INTERVIEWEE 1 - Shoutami

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 26/02/08 **PLACE OF INTERVIEW:** Actonville

CLASS: Working Class **AGE/GENERATION:** Late 60s/Grandmother generation

INTERVIEWEE 2 - Shazia

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 26/02/08 **PLACE OF INTERVIEW:** Actonville

CLASS: Working Class **AGE/GENERATION:** Late-40s/Mother generation

INTERVIEWEE 3 - Salimah

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 22/02/08 **PLACE OF INTERVIEW:** Actonville

CLASS: Working Class **AGE/GENERATION:** Late-40s/Mother generation

INTERVIEWEE 4 - Manifah

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 03/03/08 **PLACE OF INTERVIEW:** Actonville

CLASS: Working Class **AGE/GENERATION:** Late-40s/Mother generation

INTERVIEWEE 5 - Razia

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 08/02/08 **PLACE OF INTERVIEW:** Actonville

CLASS: Working Class **AGE/GENERATION:** Late-40s/Mother generation

INTERVIEWEE 6 - Anjali

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 26/02/08 **PLACE OF INTERVIEW:** Actonville

CLASS: Working Class **AGE/GENERATION:** Late-30s/Mother generation

INTERVIEWEE 7 - Raheema

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 03/03/08 **PLACE OF INTERVIEW:** Actonville

CLASS: Working Class **AGE/GENERATION:** Mid-20s/Daughter generation

INTERVIEWEE 8 - Zainab

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 06/03/08 **PLACE OF INTERVIEW:** Actonville

CLASS: Working Class **AGE/GENERATION:** Late-teens/Daughter generation

INTERVIEWEE 9 - Safinah

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 21/02/08 **PLACE OF INTERVIEW:** Actonville

CLASS: Working Class **AGE/GENERATION:** Late-teens/Daughter generation

INTERVIEWEE 10 - Aiyesha

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 08/02/08 **PLACE OF INTERVIEW:** Actonville

CLASS: Working Class **AGE/GENERATION:** Late-teens/Daughter generation

INTERVIEWEE 11 - Kavina

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 18/03/08 **PLACE OF INTERVIEW:** Lakefield

CLASS: Middle Class **AGE/GENERATION:** 70s/Grandmother generation

INTERVIEWEE 12 - Hema

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 08/02/08 **PLACE OF INTERVIEW:** Farramere

CLASS: Middle Class **AGE/GENERATION:** Late-40s/Mother generation

INTERVIEWEE 13 - Nisha

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 15/03/08 **PLACE OF INTERVIEW:** Farramere

CLASS: Middle Class **AGE/GENERATION:** Late-40s/Mother generation

INTERVIEWEE 14 - Praveena

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 15/03/08 **PLACE OF INTERVIEW:** Farramere

CLASS: Middle Class **AGE/GENERATION:** Late-40s/Mother generation

INTERVIEWEE 15 - Yasmeen

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 18/03/08 **PLACE OF INTERVIEW:** Lakefield

CLASS: Middle Class **AGE/GENERATION:** Late-40s/Mother generation

INTERVIEWEE 16 - Sunaina

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 18/03/08 **PLACE OF INTERVIEW:** Lakefield

CLASS: Middle Class **AGE/GENERATION:** Late-30s/Mother generation

INTERVIEWEE 17 - Naheema

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 18/03/08 **PLACE OF INTERVIEW:** Lakefield

CLASS: Middle Class **AGE/GENERATION:** Mid-20s/Daughter generation

INTERVIEWEE 18 - Rupee

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 15/03/08 **PLACE OF INTERVIEW:** Farramere

CLASS: Middle Class **AGE/GENERATION:** Early-20s/Daughter generation

INTERVIEWEE 19 - Jasu

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 22/02/08 **PLACE OF INTERVIEW:** Farramere

CLASS: Middle Class **AGE/GENERATION:** Early-20s/Daughter generation

INTERVIEWEE 20 - Geeta

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 03/04/08 **PLACE OF INTERVIEW:** Farramere

CLASS: Middle Class **AGE/GENERATION:** Early-20s/Daughter generation

APPENDIX B – INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

A] DEMOGRAPHICS

1) age
2) age of marriage
3) how many children
4) education level
5) occupation
6) religion

B] BACKGROUND (family background, everyday life at home while growing up)

- Where did you grow up?
- What kind of home did you live in?
- Who did the following jobs around the house, your father or mother: cleaning, cooking; washing up, shopping, washing clothes, decorating, repairs and improvements?
- Did your parents pay anyone to help in the house? What were her/his duties: cleaning; looking after children; hours, pay? How did you get on with her? Who supervised/paid her/him?
- Did your father ever look after you on his own? Did you ever go out just with your father?
- Who was the primary caregiver in the family?
- Did you have any tasks you had to carry out regularly at home to help your mother and father? What were they? What about your brothers' tasks?

- Did your mother ever go out without your father?
- What did your parents do in their free time? Social life?

- Did your parents bring you up to consider certain things important in life? Certain family values? Morals? Appearance? Language?

- Did your parents expect you to achieve certain things in life? What?
- What role did religion play in your life growing up?
- What were expectations for girls and boys in terms of having relationships?
- What were your parents' expectations in terms of you getting married? The type of person, his class, etc? What were your expectations for choosing a partner? How much were you influenced by your parents? Are there the same expectations for males?

- How many siblings do you have?
- What did your parents do? Did your mom work? Mom's work? Dad's work?
- What were parents' views on education? Their own? For you and siblings?
- What was your education? What kind of schools did you go to? What did you think of it? Did your parents choose this school for you? What did you want to do when you grew up? Did you go to university? Who chose it? What did you study? Did your parents try to influence your field of study?
- What were your family's views on women working? Did your parents try to influence your job/profession?
- Relations between parents in the home? Gender roles and expectations within the family of women and men?
- What was expected of boys/girls growing up?

C] PRESENT LIFE

- What do you and your family like to do in your pass-time? Social events? Weekends? With or without your husband?
- What is the importance of education to you? For your children? Are they the same as those your parents had for you? Do you have the same expectations for your daughters/sons?
- Do you think girls should be treated differently to boys?
- Does religion mean more or less to you now? What role does it play in your life/your family's life?

D] HOME EXPERIENCES (for unmarried interviewees, how you would like it to be when married)

- Are the roles and expectations within the home the same from when you were growing up? Gender relations same? Are these imposed on you as a woman/wife/mother?
- What do you understand in terms of marriage? What does it mean to be a good wife? Good mother? Women's appearance? Behaviour? Responsibilities?
- Have your values changed after marriage?
- What are your thoughts on women's and men's roles?
- What is your typical day in the home/after work?
- Who does the household chores? Who has a greater variety of tasks? Do you have a housekeeper to help with the household chores?
- Who makes the decisions in the home? Bills? Shopping? Income expenditure?
- Who attends to the children more? Did you have a nanny to help look after the kids?
- How often does your husband alone look after the children? Take them out alone?

E] WORK EXPERIENCES (for students, how you would like it to be when working)

- What is your education status?
- What does your husband/boyfriend do?
- Did you continue to work after marriage? What was your husband's attitude to you working?
- What do you do? Your work history? Character of work? Working hours? Why you chose this job?
- Would you have liked a different sort of career?
- Why did you choose to work? Why didn't you?
- When did you start working?
- Was it your decision to work? Is it normal that both husband and wife work? What are your views on women working?

- How do you feel about working? Enjoy your job? Do you feel pride in what you have achieved? What does it mean to you to work? What does your job mean to you?
- Do you feel liberated by your work? Independence? Higher status in household? More control over resources?
- Do you feel that the fact that you work makes it a double shift dealing with the home as well?
- Did your work change after marriage? Did you continue to work after your marriage?
- Did you leave your job when you had kids? Why/why not? Part-time/full-time?
- How does working in these jobs influence their relations within the household? Do you feel your work and home relations are interconnected as a "women"? Link between gender relations in home household and labour market?

APPENDIX C – SUBJECT INFORMATION SHEET

University of the Witwatersrand
School of Social Sciences
Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa

My name is Daphne DeSouza and I am conducting this research for the purposes of obtaining a Masters degree at the University of the Witwatersrand, under the supervision of Bridget Kenny in the discipline of Sociology. The focus of this research will be on assessing gender relations in the household together with perceptions of work. The study also seeks to assess whether class and generation have any influence on these experiences of women.

If you agree to partake in the study, you are requested to participate in an interview which should take roughly an hour to an hour and a half of your time. By signing a separate form, you will be giving your informed consent to participate in the study. In addition, you can indicate on this form your agreement or refusal to be tape-recorded during the interview process. You are kindly requested to answer the questions as accurately as possible, reflecting on your individual experiences. No identifying information of you will be disclosed in the research write-up of findings. Your complete confidentiality will be ensured in your interview responses and pseudonyms will be used instead. Your participation in this study will be on a volunteer basis and you hold the right to withdraw from the study at any point if you choose to. While you will not derive any direct benefit from the study, you may contact the researcher if you wish to obtain feedback on the research.

Should you decide to participate in this study, you will be contributing to the development of a body of knowledge relating to class and gender which forms a significant and central aspect within the South African context. Should you need any assistance or have any queries, I am readily available and can be contacted telephonically at (011) 717 5431 or via my email d_desouza@hotmail.com. Alternatively, any queries may be directed to my supervisor at (011) 717 4445.

Thank you for taking an interest in the study.

Kind Regards

Miss Daphne DeSouza

APPENDIX D – INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Daphne DeSouza of the Department of Sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses. I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the thesis and/or publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

I was informed that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the researcher at any time.

Circle:

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

YES NO

I agree to have my interview audio recorded.

YES NO

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

YES NO

Participant Name: _____ (Please print)

Participant Signature: _____

Witness Name: _____ (Please print)

Witness Signature: _____

Date: _____

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