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Domestic Bliss

How a group of white South Africans understand their relationships with the domestic workers who helped to raise them.



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A research project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MA by coursework and Research Report in the field of Clinical Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 7th December 2010.

I declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university.

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Abstract

In the dearth of literature regarding domestic workers in general, there is a notable absence of the relationships formed between domestic workers and their employers' children. Nine young white adults who self-identified themselves as having a close relationship with their families' domestic workers for a minimum of ten years, were interviewed on the nature of this closeness and what it means in the context of the family and in South Africa. These participants shared the significance of their domestic workers in their lives, highlighting their integration into the family structure. These women often filled in for absent parents or mediated conflicted parent-child interactions, serving as a unique support system for the participants. However, contradictory evidence was also apparent as the boundaries between domestic workers and the participants' families were described. Issues of race and social difference were cloaked in a silence perceived to be an aspect of concealing the uncomfortable elements of whiteness and the implicit understandings of the institution of domestic work. When these matters were addressed, the interviewees were often ambivalent about their own role in maintaining this norm. Exploring the less than perfect parts of the relationship with these caregivers seemed to threaten the very foundations of the relationship. The findings in this report support the argument that having multiple caregivers is optimal for children's development but when the third caregiver is a black domestic worker the benefits of this arrangement are complicated by racial, social and class constructions. Moreover, constructions of the ideal Western family create friction in allowing a non-relative to be fully integrated into the family.

Acknowledgements

I wish to extend my deepest gratitude to Professor Norman Duncan without whom I would not have been able to begin or complete this report. Having kindly adopted my research at a late stage in the general proceedings, Professor Duncan always expressed the utmost excitement and interest in this topic, thereby enhancing my own passion and curiosity in the study. Despite his investment in this project, he always addressed supervision in a manner which would encourage me to develop my own understanding of the field rather than simply adopt his. Professor Duncan also seemed to have an amazing amount of patience for my various deliberations, hesitations and moments of panic. Prof, I would like to thank you for pushing me to think for myself and for always handing out criticism so gently. The hours and hours of reading to which I have subjected you cannot be repaid but I hope that some small reward will lie in knowing that your thoughtfulness and insight have taught me a great deal this year.

Of course, I would not have been able to torture my supervisor so well without the time and willingness of the nine participants who volunteered to be a part of this research. I appreciate their talking to me about something which so many people simply take for granted. I hope that I have investigated the significant relationships they described with fairness and accuracy.

Considering the dyadic nature of the relationships discussed in this report, it would feel strange not to acknowledge the nannies discussed here. Although their voices are not directly heard in this study, they have still contributed to it through their presence in the participants' lives.

Something that I have learned over the past two years is that everyone in one's immediate radius becomes a part of the research process too. As such, I must thank all those who helped me to find participants, literature and energy and who encouraged and motivated me, affirming the importance of this exploration. This has been most welcome during the final stages of compiling this report.

Thank you!

This research report is dedicated to Elizabeth Zondi.

"There is no trickier subject for a writer from the South than that of affection between a black person and a white one in the unequal world of segregation. For the dishonesty upon which a society is founded makes every emotion suspect, makes it impossible to know whether what flowed between two people was honest feeling or pity or pragmatism".

-

- Howell Raine ("Grady's Gift", The New York Times, 1 December 1991)

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

South African social dynamics are unique in many ways but something that strikes many foreigners as unusual is how 'normal' it is for most upper-middle income families to employ a full-time domestic worker. In addition to their other home-making tasks, these women are very often involved in caring for and raising the children of their employers and as such they sometimes spend more time with these children than do the biological parents. They frequently also spend more time with these children than they do with their own. Consequently, the relationship that inevitably develops between domestic workers and these children can be very close. However, it can also be idealised to levels greater than it can ever reach with existing class, racial and economic disparities that are glaringly obvious.

1.1. Research Aims

The aim of this research was to find out how white young adults who were raised by their domestic workers understand the quality of the relationship with their domestic workers. This included exploring what it meant for family dynamics that the domestic worker was not a relative and was nevertheless very involved in the family life. The research also focused on how the racial and class disparities which are inherent in the socio-political context of South Africa affected and emerged in the relationship between child and nanny.

1.2. Research Rationale

As mentioned above, domestic workers are a topic very relevant to the South African context but somehow minimal empirical research has been undertaken in this field. With domestic work constituting the largest job sector for black women in the country (Grant, 1997), this seems counterintuitive. Although a number of researchers (for example: Cock, 1981; Grant, 1997; Moya, 2007) have delved into the politics and sociological implications of this trend, few psychological investigations have explored the nature and impact of these women on family life. Where interviews have been conducted, they, understandably, have focused on the perspectives of the domestic workers themselves or else the employers of these women (Chetwin, 2009; Hau-nung Chan, 2005;

van der Merwe, 2007). Very few studies interrogate this phenomenon from the point of view of the child raised by a domestic worker. However, those that have indicate that the domestic worker plays no minor role in the child's life (Goldman, 2003). Indeed, research indicates that it is the quality of the primary care-giving and not the actual giver thereof that has positive benefits for child development (Erel, Oberman & Yirmiya, 2000). Perhaps it is for this reason that some theorists and researchers advocate more than one primary caregiver as being the ideal arrangement (Poster, 1988; van IJzendoorn, Sagi & Lambermon, 1992). There is no doubt that very close relationships can develop between domestic workers and the children for whom they care (van der Merwe, 2007); however, it is the social status of the domestic worker in South Africa (and worldwide in many instances), the socio-political context as well as constructions of the family that make these relationships complex ones. Considering their prevalence, these relationships are worthwhile subjects of investigation.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Home and Away: Domestic workers in the South African and international context

Despite the dismissal of domestic work as being an unskilled, simple job relegated to the woman's sphere (Brown & Reynolds, 1994), Grossman (1997, p.2, as cited in Grant, 1997, p.64) outlines the great number of functions this employment entails:

> Domestic work is socially useful and necessary. It imposes great responsibility and draws on a range of socially useful skills. It involves cleaning, feeding and caring for millions of people. Domestic workers are used and abused as cleaners, cooks, household managers, secretaries, sex-workers, security guards, confidantes, psycho-analysts, nurses, social workers, tutors, gardeners, chauffeurs, dress-makers, interior decorators, etc. Domestic workers are entrusted with the most important human and financial possessions of many of their employers – their children and their houses and household possessions.

In an article published in 1981, Cock describes the politics surrounding the employment of domestic workers in South Africa. Not surprisingly, at that time 89 per cent of domestic workers were black and 88 per cent female. In a handbook for African women on the law compiled during apartheid, the authors make it extremely clear how insecure an enterprise domestic work is: "Many of the laws in SA which protect workers do NOT offer protection for the domestic worker. Laws which set the minimum wages, unemployment benefits, benefits if you are hurt while at work, do **not** apply to domestic workers" (Cooper & Ensor, 1980, p.35). Although new laws regulate domestic work, conditions are not optimal with low salaries and numerous functions expected. It is also extremely easy to exploit these women as there are always new candidates looking for work if they cannot endure (Nyamnjoh, 2005). It is the personal nature of their employment which, in many instances, is what prevents domestic work from being more open to legal protection as employers frequently appeal to perceptions of the domestic worker being "part of the family" and yet are easily able to replace these women as employers are not subject to the ethical protocols of businesses or public enterprises (Brown & Reynolds, 1994). Hence, the obligations of domestic workers are warped by the many tasks and expectations demanded of these women, thereby stretching their duties and hours indefinitely. However, Mendez (1998) contests the notion that more bureaucratised forms of domestic employment lead to improved working conditions. She found that private employment in fact often offers more advantages as there is greater flexibility for negotiation. As both means of

controlling domestic work are not ideal, it is really the beliefs and frameworks around domestic work which perpetuate inequalities that are problematic (Mendez, 1998).

Even after the fall of apartheid, domestic work constituted the largest sector of employment for women, with over one million people in it (Fish, 2006; Grant, 1997). It is therefore sometimes considered the 'last bastion of apartheid' as structured gendered, class and racial inequalities persist in this sphere (Fish, 2006, p.109). Many of these women are single and often the sole breadwinners of their families (Grant, 1997). They fulfil dual domestic roles in the sense that they are responsible for domestic functions in their employers' homes as well as their own (Cock, 1981).

> Their double load implies a double exclusion: there is a sense in which domestic servants are squeezed between two households, their own and their employers. Their subordinate status as servants and the long working hours exacted by their employers means that they are full members of neither (Cock, 1981, p.64).

As such domestic workers are said to be oppressed in multiple ways: by race, gender, labour and class (Gaitskell et al., 1983). Domestic 'servitude' seems to have historically evolved to the state of domestic work but "the relegation of 'dirty work' to racial-ethnic women has remained remarkably consistent" (Duffy, 2007, p. 316). While this remains the sad truth in contemporary South Africa, the focus of this study is how, in this role, these women sometimes become a part of the family for which they work, often in a peculiar way. Cock (1989, p.67) indicates that "much of the nature of the work involves an intimate contact with the employer". However, she adds that this relationship is often characterised by paternalism inherent in many of the attitudes towards domestic workers. At other times depersonalisation is the norm with employers not knowing their employees' full or original names and treating them merely as people who fulfil a job, void of a personal life and meaning. While employers in Cock's (1989) study were quick to describe their domestic workers as "part of the family", quite tellingly, these women did not perceive themselves as such; thus highlighting the complicated dynamics involved in this relationship.

Although South Africa is unique when it comes to the popularity and regulation of domestic work, other countries, such as the United States of America, Taiwan and China, are familiar with full-time domestic workers too (Lan, 2003a). This seems to be partly because women are becoming increasingly educated and enrolled in the workplace, thereby creating a need for outside help in the home. Like in South Africa, this role is primarily relegated to *women* overseas as well. Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) explore the dual role of domestic workers amongst Latina women in

California. These women participate in “transnational motherhood” whereby their own children are left in their countries of origin while they migrate to North America to seek work as nannies or housekeepers. Within this role they must selectively decide how emotionally connected to their employers’ children they are willing to become. Although some women choose not to involve themselves excessively with these children, it seems that many of them transfer the affection they often cannot bestow on their own children onto these substitute recipients and become quite fond of their charges (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997).

In a study conducted in Hong Kong, Hau-nung Chan (2005) identifies how employers attempt to create boundaries between their families and their domestic workers in an effort to reduce the threat they pose to their own definitions of parenthood. These helpers have taken over many traditional parenting roles in their numerous hours spent with the children; often inducing responses of jealousy in the biological parents. Nevertheless, these employers still acknowledge the indispensability of these women to the functioning of their families. Since they complete most of the domestic chores, they free up more time for the couple to spend together, as well as allow both partners to have careers. However, great emphasis on boundary work was made by employers, especially women. The purpose of this seems to be to avoid their nanny’s *truly* becoming a part of the family (Hau-nung Chan, 2005; Lan, 2003b).

> A private household has now become a microcosm of social inequalities in the global economy. Migrant domestic workers are the perfect example of the intimate Other – they are recruited by host countries as desired servants and yet rejected citizens; they are termed “part of the family” by their employers while being excluded from the substance of family lives (Lan, 2003b).

Thus the penetration of domestic workers into family life is not a foreign one in the international arena either. Interestingly, the social disparities between domestic workers and their employers are gapingly big overseas as well, with domestic workers often belonging to a different racial or ethnic group (Constable, 1999; Hau-nung Chan, 2005; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997) like in South Africa. It seems then, that considering how these factors manifest in an intimate relationship between nanny and child may be relevant to other countries too.

2.2. “We are family”

It can often be difficult to look at the dynamics of a specific social norm or setting beyond how it is presented. As such one might assume that the nuclear Western family has always existed in its

current form or at the very least that this is the most acceptable structure possible. However, the social constructionist account signifies a "move away from notions of internalized mental states to highlight the socially constructed nature of the world" (Marchbank & Letherby, 2007, p.126). Social constructionism therefore maintains a "critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge" (Burr, 1995, p.3). Since this 'knowledge' does not then necessarily reflect the actual realities of the world, social constructionism poses the notion that human beings create these 'realities' by way of their numerous interactions with one another. Through this lens, one might be more able to understand the family as something which is in a constant state of evolution and social and cultural shaping.

It is obvious how entrenched society's beliefs about child-rearing practices are in any given setting. Indeed, Freud evolved an entire theory of development based on the nuclear family of father, mother and children (Watts & Hook, 2009). Although his theory can be perceived to be structured by the norms of his own society, Erik Erikson was more aware of how development is largely a social process and, contrary to Freud's notions, not a mere biological given. Something as seemingly simple as feeding a baby is regulated by cultural norms of who feeds it, and when and how this is done (Poster, 1988). However, Erikson can be said to err in terms of his claim that development follows a universal pattern. Nevertheless, his work illustrates that in each setting there exist unique life cycles which regulate child-rearing practices in that domain (Poster, 1988). Thus, in each social context one needs to understand how normativity is constructed.

Poster (1988) traces the development of the modern family through four European family models dating from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. While there is a tendency to think of the nuclear family as having always existed in the same form as we know it today, Poster shows how the peasants, aristocrats and proletariat had radically different family structures and functions. Even the bourgeois family structure from which the modern family originates is still quite different to the modern family. In the aristocratic context, "children were thought of as little animals, not as objects of love and affection" (Poster, 1988, p.174). Amongst the nobility of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, children were handed to nurses and maids who would raise them. Parents symbolised power and struggles rather than secure emotional bases and nurturing agents. In this social class discipline was a priority in terms of child-rearing.

As for the peasants, their children were also viewed in a less than endearing light and were brought up communally rather than by parents alone (Poster, 1988). Shame was the major determinant of desirable behaviour in the village settings where all was shared. A similar pattern of harsh childhood conditions existed for proletarian children during the early industrial revolution. These children belonged to their families so far as they could work and help complement the meagre wages of their

parents. Rather than being 'owned' by the community or by their parents they struggled against a harsh environment, rallying with other youth and leaving home to fend for themselves as soon as they could (Poster, 1988).

It therefore appears as though the bourgeois family system offered children the best option for being perceived as valuable beings in and of themselves. Family relations became more emotional and empathic, with love being used as the tool for growth and discipline, rather than corporal punishment or public ceremony (Poster, 1988). However, this familial arrangement had its own unique limiting effects on children. With the privatisation of families, children became completely dependent on their parents who were able to manipulate children's behaviour with the imminent, though perhaps unconscious, threat of the withdrawal of their love and protection rather than with physical punishment. Thus children became completely dependent on their parents, often denying their inner psychic lives to conform to the whims of these authority figures. Moreover, the bourgeois family also provided children with a limited number of sources of identification. With only mother and father as role models, their input in the child's life took on a huge intensity (Poster 1988).

While the family unit as we know it is often idealised as a safe-haven of peace and harmony where romantic love can flourish, others condemn it for the private nature of its existence as being the cause of domestic violence and child abuse (Burman, 1994). People have come to view the family as an essential part of society, ignoring how families are, though less personally or directly, dependent on a wide network of social support, be it the state, other families and so on (Burman, 1994). Hunter et al. (1998) elaborate on how relatively few studies focus on diverse family arrangements and what the implications of these might be. Thus stereotypes of the female nurturer and male breadwinner are endorsed, even in a society where women are taking on more roles than ever before. This creates a double-bind in that while circumstances are changing, the underlying ideologies are not. This is relevant in terms of what a woman feels about herself as a mother who, because working a full day, allows her children to be raised by another. It is also relevant to her children and husband who most likely also have internalised narrow beliefs about the role of a mother.

This role is a universally constructed one which determines the identity of women as being primarily that of a mother (Arendell, 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997). While variations in its practice exist, motherhood is essentially constructed as the devotion of self to caring for one's children. This is known as 'intense mothering' (Arendell, 2000). While the ideologies around mothering are strong in Western societies, there are increases in unconventional mothering practices such as single

motherhood, unwed mothers and lesbian mothers. However, mothers who work are 'deviant' by virtue of their prescribed role of child-centred behaviour (Arendell, 2000). These socially-determined issues bring to the fore three prominent questions. Firstly, it begs the question of what exactly the prescribed role of the domestic worker is in relation to her employer's children: is she a figure who is expected to give of herself emotionally and selflessly to no limit? Secondly, one might wonder how the very fact that a domestic worker steps into the mother's role at times reflects on the mother herself in a society where certain conduct is expected of her. Thirdly, what does the trend of black women working as domestic workers say about societal expectations of *black* motherhood as these women effectively have to abandon their own children to look after the children of another family (Chetwin, 2009)? The status of the third person in the care-giving position is quite evidently a rather ambiguous one. On the one hand, infinite devotion and time is expected of a mother, while on the other hand financial and social pressures force women to have careers as well. Hired help seems to be the only way by which many women cope and yet this is still a contested position.

While many psychologists and theorists have been quick to proclaim the devastating effects of non-maternal care on children, a meta-analysis of 59 studies conducted by Erel et al. (2000) shows that non-maternal care does *not* hamper development. Although these studies could not prove that there was not some kind of impact by this extra-familial care, the findings highlight the ideological nature of the many weighty arguments around maternal care. Even in research where non-maternal care is associated with less positive developmental outcomes, it is not sufficiently clear that this is owing to the absence of the actual biological mother. Belsky and Rovine (1988) discovered that while longer hours spent in day-care by infants up to one year of age was correlated with more insecure attachment patterns; they also revealed that the mothers of the children with more insecure attachments were more career-oriented, less interpersonally sensitive and often had less help from fathers. This suggests something about the quality of the primary care-giving relationship rather than who that care-giver might be. Accordingly, Kiguwa (2004) illustrates how developmental psychology itself can reinforce the position of women as responsible for the healthy development of children. Thus while there appears to be agreement that children do indeed need "warm, continuous and stable relationships… the precise arrangements that fulfil these conditions continue to be a matter of fierce dispute" (Burman, 2008, p.129).

Poster (1988) proposes that children need to have multiple adults in their lives with whom they can identify so as to eliminate hierarchical power-struggles between children and their parents and to allow children to regulate themselves with more autonomy. In fact, Poster goes so far as to advocate a Kibbutz-style method for child-rearing in which children would be raised with each other in

separate living spaces to their parents and still have a whole community of adults from which they can choose figures with whom to identify. Parents would in this way be able to love their children without being strict authorities as well. It might even be possible for oedipal feelings to be abolished by such a practice (Poster, 1988).

Indeed, in a study conducted on infants in Kibbutzim with multiple caregivers and attachment, it was found that secure attachment to *three* caregivers was the most beneficial arrangement for these babies (van IJzendoorn, Sagi & Lambermon, 1992). However, this study also accepts the argument proposed by John Bolwby – the pioneer of attachment theory – that without enjoyment and satisfaction in the relationship with a child on the part of the caregiver there can be no real bond (Bowlby, 1951). It is for this reason that Bowlby (1951) argued that the best candidate for the primary caregiver role is the biological mother as she is the one most likely to be able to provide such continuous care with her vested interests in the child's growth and development. However, where the mother cannot invest in her child in this way, it seems preferable that the child have a caregiver who can. The literature indicates that many domestic workers responsible for their employers' children do indeed feel fond of their charges and are quite loving of them (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997). In her research on domestic workers' attachment to these children, van der Merwe (2007) found that there are definite attachment patterns.

2.3. Families and their nannies

Considering the overlap into mothering that forms part of domestic work, much of the literature regarding the insertion of domestic workers into the family relates to the mother more than any other family member. Macdonald (1998) conducted a comprehensive study exploring what it means for mothers and nannies to share 'mother-work'. She defines mother-work as "those daily tasks involved in the care and protection of small children", considering both the practical and relational aspects of mothering (Macdonald, 1998, p.26). "Although separate from motherhood as a social role or identity, mother-work represents a large component of what it *means* to be a mother and to experience mothering" (Macdonald, 1998, p.26). This occurs in the broader context of 'intensive mothering' and its ideologies. While hiring help with child care contradicts intensive mothering practices, millions of children are placed under non-parental care. However, despite that social contexts have changed with more mothers working, the same ideologies are present making it relevant to understand how mothers and paid child-care providers feel about sharing mother-work.

Macdonald (1998) argues that what paid child care workers do is really 'shadow motherhood' since they perform mother-work but must simultaneously hide the fact that they are doing so for the sake of cultural ideologies. These ideals propose that the umbilical connection between child and mother is never truly severed and so ultimately the mother alone is best suited to attending to her child's needs. In order to render the nanny a 'shadow mother', some mothers will create rules to ensure that the appropriate boundaries between nanny and mother endure. For example, some women prefer to hire nannies who will live outside the home so as to maintain some distance between their children and these women. This boundary-setting is further noted in the absence of nannies from family photographs regardless of the fact that mothers refer to them as 'one of the family'. In contrast, Macdonald (1998) discovered that nannies would sometimes display pictures of the children in their care. Whether it be competition over the role of 'mother' or the class and racial divides between these two women (Fish, 2006), Nyamnjoh (2005) highlights the tense relationships that frequently exist between domestic workers and their female employers. A telling survey demonstrated that 86 per cent of mothers who employ nannies fear that these women are closer to their children than they are (Attewill & Butt, 2006, as cited in Burman, 2008).

In order to feel better about their choice to hand children over to non-parental care and to demonstrate their success in doing so, mothers were found to maximize the importance of nannies (MacDonald, 1998). Yet when issues such as turn-over arise, mothers may minimize the bonds between child and nanny. As for these nannies, they may be prone to 'self-erasure', behaviour involving being warm and efficient but slightly detached so as to avoid making parents feel threatened. Self-erasure also safeguards these women from the difficulties of being too attached when a change of jobs is imminent. This enhances the mother/not-mother boundary. However, as MacDonald (1998, p.49) suggests, rules around mother-work reinforce the "belief that children in non-maternal care are somehow deprived, regardless of the quality of that care". With such an underlying belief system at play, ideas around mother-work seem to serve an ideology rather than the actual children.

A recent study looking at mothers and nannies investigates the phenomenon of child development when mother and nanny have differing cultural practices (Greenfield, Flores, Davis & Salimkhan, 2008). The major cultural aspects discussed in this research are about collectivist as opposed to individualist values which have implications for how babies are put to sleep to whether siblings' helping with younger children is acceptable. While this was viewed regarding American born employers and Latina immigrant nannies, the implications of different child-rearing practices by different caregivers for the same child would ostensibly apply to a South African sample too.

While these inspections of various elements of the nanny-employer dyad are undoubtedly significant fields of exploration, they all approach the matter of child-caregiver bonds from the perspective of the parent or the employee, specifically the mother, rather than the child him/herself. Few studies broach the child-nanny relationship, though Dill (1994) has dubbed it a 'bizarre kinship' in its simultaneous promotion of closeness and distance between the two participants of such relationships. The one in depth analysis of the meaning of childhood nannies to white adult men in apartheid South Africa uncovered the profound influence that these women had on the participants while they were growing up (Goldman, 2003). On the other hand, Wulfsohn (1988) found that domestic workers had minimal emotional impact on the 50 children in her study. However, she acknowledges the limitations inherent in her study owing to South African socio-political affairs as well as the mothers' expectations of the nannies' roles. Because not every child-nanny interaction is inevitably a close one, this study intends to understand what occurs within relationships that *are* deemed to be close. As such, this analysis will hopefully broaden the literature on non-parental care with the added dimension of the crux of the issue: the child.

2.4. Close relationships: what are they?

A brief exploration of what close relationships actually are must be undertaken in order to understand what this means in the context of domestic workers and the children to whom they become close. Dyadic relationships, whether between child and parent, friends, or romantic partners, seem to be crucial for optimal human functioning. Each person also has concurrent significant relationships with more than one person throughout life (Takahashi, 2005). Many psychoanalytic theories focus on the importance of the mother figure for development. The proponents of attachment theory in particular, stress that the type of relationships established with the primary caregiver in the early months and years of life will strongly influence all future patterns of relating to others (Sroufe, 2000). Not only is attachment style expected to predict future relating but also personality formation (Sroufe, 2005). The emphasis on this infant-caregiver relationship is such that: "Not the strength of the child's drives and negative urges, but the qualities of the infant-caregiver relationship are the critical features influencing the course of development" (Sroufe, 2000, p.108).

This primary attachment is made vital by the infant's dependence on the mother for comfort and security (Levitt & Cici-Gokaltun, 2011). An accumulation of interactions with the primary caregiver creates an internal working model for the child through which s/he navigates future social

encounters. Depending on the relationship between mother and child, there are various attachment types that emerge and these styles of relating that are said to persist through life can be observed in both children and adults (Levitt & Cici-Gokaltun, 2011). While some domestic workers may indeed have become attachment figures for some of their employers' children, the scope of this study is not to interrogate whether this is the case or not. Assuming that these children have attached to a caregiver – be it their mothers or nannies – this exploration aims to understand how, above and beyond one's attachment style, one makes sense of a relationship formed with a caregiver who is excluded to some extent by social constructions of different groups of people as well as familial ones.

Because it cannot be presumed that an attachment type relationship will preside in each case of domestic workers and their employers' children, the affective relationship model will be used to explore these rapports. As a branch of social network theory, this theory notes not only the asymmetrical relationships in which one receives from another but reciprocal relationships and asymmetrical relationships in the opposite direction in which one provides for another (Takahashi, 2005). Thus, while the mother figure is undoubtedly a central one, she may not be the most important figure for everyone. In line with Poster's (1988) argument for multiple caregivers, social network theorists "acknowledge the flexibility and resilience of development" (Takahashi, 2005, p.51). The tendency for people to seek out affective relationships with multiple others seems to be evident across the lifespan (Levitt & Cici-Gokaltu., 2011).

As such, the affective relationship model, which acknowledges the importance of the primary caregiver's role in early development, perceives much of the significance of close relationships to be in "sharing emotional experiences with others and helping others in difficult situations" (Takahashi, 2005, p.51). In order to have different psychological needs met; people require multiple figures to fulfil these roles. Hence closeness can be conceptualised by psychological, relational or social functions. Six central functions of close relationships are identified by Takahashi (2005, p.55): "(a) seeking proximity; (b) receiving emotional support; (c) receiving reassurance for behaviour and/or being; (d) receiving encouragement and help; (e) sharing information and experience, and (f) giving nurture." Takahashi (2005) acknowledges that the nature of these relationships *is* generally hierarchical in that, like in attachment theory, there is one focal figure, though not necessarily the mother, who fulfils most of these affective needs. However, others simultaneously meet some of these needs too. Unless one is isolated or does not choose to have deeper social interactions, psychological adjustment should not vary in terms of *who* is fulfilling one's needs.

This study aims to address how children relate to a third adult figure of identification and her mediation in family dynamics. Under the influence of Poster (1988), one might assume that having a positive connection with this third adult would allow for healthier development. However, in the South African (and seemingly also the international) context, the position of this person, if a domestic worker, is generally a liminal one, thus possibly providing its own set of complications.

2.5. "It doesn't matter if you're black or white"… in a perfect world

Clearly, there is major complexity regarding the extra-familial child care offered by domestic workers. However, this is complicated further by the racial disparity of a black domestic worker and the white child to whom she tends, especially in a country so bound by its recent past of racial discrimination and oppression (Goldman, 2003). One of the most helpful ways in which racist ideology has been explained is by the idea of 'whiteness'. Whiteness can be defined as "the production and reproduction of dominance rather than subordination, normativity rather marginality, and privilege rather than disadvantage" (Frankenberg, 1993, p.236, as cited in Green, Sonn & Matsebula, 2007). It is thus a socially constructed phenomenon which prescribes meaning to essentially meaningless factors such as skin colour, creating real consequences for both whites and people of colour in their day-to-day lives (Ali & Sonn, 2009). For example, the levels at which one feels included or excluded from certain cultural activities, norms and self-beliefs are indicative of how various peoples are positioned in relation to one another (Ali & Sonn, 2009). Relationships cannot, therefore, be separated from the socio-historical context in which they are developed (Sonn & Lewis, 2009). Steve Biko, founder of the Black Consciousness Movement, critiqued the white arrogance which allowed whites to assume superiority for gracing homogenised black people with 'culture' and 'civilisation' for which they should be appreciative but from which they would be barred perpetually (Green et al., 2007).

Despite the fact that apartheid has been abolished for almost two decades now, and despite that whites constitute the minority of the South African population, 'whiteness' endures. In a study conducted by Dolby (2001) on the white identities of students in post-apartheid South Africa, it was apparent how whiteness still remained a point of cultural capital, even if now a more complex one with less overt displays of prejudicial behaviour. She discovered that these students were likely to set themselves up as victims, and thereby simultaneously negate the history of their ancestors, in order to maintain a positive identity as whites (Dolby, 2001). In many ways, whites are still in the 'expert' position with the apparently desirable culture, heritage and values (Green et al., 2007).

Thus, even those who do not consider themselves racist are often 'silently' perpetuating racist ideology through their thoughts, attitudes and/or behaviour (Trepagnier, 2001). This is an undoubtedly critical point when investigating the relationship between white children and their black 'nannies'. On the one hand, domestic workers are given a certain level of authority in terms of child care, while on the other, by virtue of skin colour, these children may have some predetermined superiority and privilege over this population of adults.

Sonn and Lewis (2009, p.118) suggest that through the deconstruction of 'whiteness' and internalised states of oppression the "negative social and cultural scripts and taken-for-granted social and political understandings that inform identities" can be disrupted. Green et al. (2007) recommend actual intergroup relations as the way forward since these will assist in dispelling myths about the 'other'. This is rather reminiscent of the social psychological 'contact theory' which stands as both a theory and a practice of how to promote enhanced intergroup relationships. According to the contact hypothesis, mere contact with a member of another social group is insufficient for creating real connections between people (Dixon, Durrheim & Tredoux, 2005). Certain optimal conditions must be met which allow for real relationship-building opportunities. One of the core conditions for contact is equal status of participants in the contact setting (Pettigrew, 1998). It is debatable whether this is truly possible regarding domestic workers and white children with race, class, status, and age all factoring in. Nevertheless, it seems that with the report of close relationships between children and their 'nannies', some level of intimacy and personal association must be possible in these social set-ups. However, what is likely to emerge in this relationship are some of the difficulties inherent in the South African context so that equality is more an ideal than a reality (Dixon et al., 2005). The following extract illustrates the discrepancies between the two protagonists of this relationship which may emerge at some point:

> Initially, caught up in the self-centered adventures of childhood, I was unaware of the full implications of the circumstances that had enshrined Emily as my primary protector. Listening to her I could understand the injustice, but I simply loved the fact that she was at my side morning, noon and night. I enjoyed her full attention and did not ponder what her commitment to me meant for her relationship with her own children. Ever since I could remember I had clung to her skirts and delighted at the clicks that ran so easily off our tongues. I felt proud that we had our own special language that no one else in my family understood.
>
> Gradually I became conscious of the contradiction between the dignified and loving Emily, adorned in her high 'doek' and black-rimmed Malcom X spectacles, and the low status that she occupied in our social world. Emily and her peers lined our homes with their warmth and dedication, yet they usually lived in

> cramped rooms in the bottom of our gardens, carried their identities in their pockets and lived thousands of kilometres away from their own children and families (Apartheid Archives, N15).

> The safety and insularity of the domestic sphere certainly allow for the development of close relationships between the people therein. Determining to what extent contact between domestic workers and their employers' children creates close relationships, while simultaneously uncovering what elements of 'whiteness' still parade about is of value when considering a relationship with such potential for closeness and yet set between such potentially significant protagonists. As suggested by Frankental and Shain (1986) in their discussion of South African youth, the sensitive child will eventually be faced by the confusion of liberal statements thrown around by parents while their domestic workers have second-rate status in their homes or else racist ideologies at home clashing with a warm connection with their nannies.

Bowlby theorised that the social world has an enormously powerful effect on how relationships are structured (Laschinger, 2006). Taking this a step further through radical group analytic thinking, Dalal (2006) conveys the proposal that all relationships are mediated by power and since each of us are born into pre-existing groups, these power dynamics will play between groups as well. This is because "we do not just attach to people, but also attach to categories" (Dalal, 2006, p.25). It seems then that understanding the relationship which develops between a white child and a black domestic worker is critical in its implications of what happens to the attachment to a category when a more intimate attachment to an individual thereof is formed, and more importantly, how the attachment to that individual is negotiated by the feelings towards her category.

Although this study is not directly measuring attachment patterns, relationships are said to follow the attachment styles one has developed (Senior, 2002). Laschinger (2006, p.5) discusses the inevitable link between attachment and race saying:

> [R]acism, in its underpinning of power inequality in relationships, has been primary in the distortion, denial and destruction of attachment bonds. This implies that no proper understanding of relationships can avoid engagement with the issues of racism unless one is determined to disregard questions of power.

Addressing these phenomena is complicated as the position of whiteness is generally maintained for good reason, even if this is done unconsciously. As mentioned, being located as a white person immediately grants one certain benefits and privileges. Because overt racism is generally no longer deemed socially acceptable, the maintenance of this superior position in society is retained through passive rather than active means (Crenshaw, 1997). Thus silence around racial differences and

disparities is often a means of denial. Denial in turn serves as a resistance against change. In the master-slave-like paradigm of which domestic work is reminiscent, those with 'master' status resist change because they are unwilling to give up their advantageous circumstances (Bulhan, 1985).
Sheriff (2000) illustrates the collaborative nature of such silences and how they can become characteristic of an entire society. Although Sheriff's (2000) work delved into silences around racial issues in Brazil, the resulting notion of 'cultural censorship' seems applicable to any context in which dominant groups enforce their political interests by pretending that these do not exist. Crenshaw (1997, p.253) therefore insists that it is imperative to:

> [Locate] interactions that implicate unspoken issues of race, discursive spaces where the power of whiteness is invoked but its explicit terminology is not, and investigate how these constructions intersect with gender and class.

Considering the rarity of white people acknowledging their whiteness, it is no surprise that these norms persist. For this reason promoters of social equality urge people to speak about these matters (Crenshaw, 1997). Following in this vein, Polite and Saenger (2003) encourage teachers to educate children to speak about race in the classroom so that openness around this subject can be achieved at an early stage. Whether or not whites partially brought up by their domestic workers can speak about the meaning of racial and ethnic differences will rely on a host of factors ranging from the social acceptability of discussing these issues to their own investment in maintaining the status quo.

2.6. Concluding comments

This study intends to be a starting point to talking about the phenomena outlined above in one instance of cross-racial relationships in South Africa: that of domestic workers and their employers' children. While many of the authors included in the above discussions advocate for a radical change in the nature of domestic work so as to eradicate the gender, class and racial inequalities that accompany it, the aim of this study is to investigate the psychological results of such a complex relationship as must be formed between child and nanny. Because this scenario is too common to be ignored, addressing the 'silences' in the literature around this specific relationship seems to be a significant undertaking. Even Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis who attributed particular relevance to his childhood nanny could not or would not classify her as a crucial figure in his childhood (Goldman, 2003). He attributed her appearance in his dreams and thoughts as a screen for his mother (Goldman, 2003). While this may well have been the case, this event highlights the silence that is perpetuated not only with regards to race and class but to the entire institution of the nanny.

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODS

3.1. Research Questions

1. What are the implications of having a close attachment to a secondary caregiver who is not a blood-member of the family on the child's perceptions of the parent-child dyad?
2. What type of relationship develops when this employee occupies a different position in South African society to that of one's own?
3. How are racial and class inequalities engaged through this relationship?

3.2. Participants

The sample consisted of nine white young adults, five females and four males, who were partly raised by their black domestic workers. Participants' ages ranged from 22 to 27 years. All of these participants began their relationships with their domestic workers while apartheid was still in operation in South Africa. Importantly, the domestic workers discussed here have/had been employed by the families of these participants for between 14 to 35 years. This ensured that there was ample time for a relationship to develop and 'family' dynamics to have been in place. All the domestic workers had commenced employment during the participants' childhood years and stayed on until some time during their adolescence, young adulthood or are still employed by the family. One participant now employs her family's domestic worker herself. Participants volunteered to be interviewed if they self-identified the relationship as a 'close' one, thus allowing the definition of 'close' to be established by participants themselves. Since this study aims to be of value in the current South African context, it makes sense that some participants had formed close bonds with their families' domestic workers after apartheid had ended.

No specific family constellation or profile in particular was examined. However, the family structure and relationships are all variables that play a role in determining family dynamics. This being the case, the researcher was sure to consider these factors as they arose in the interviews by asking interviewees to elaborate further on their various familial constellations and interactions.

Snowball sampling was employed to obtain participants. A poster describing the study was put up on the notice-board in the psychology department of the University of the Witwatersrand, around the

university grounds and in the library, in order to attract relevant participants (see appendix G). Thereafter referrals from the initial participants were requested. In the last phase of participant-seeking, an invitation was posted on Facebook. As this is a very relevant topic for many white middle-class South Africans, many people volunteered to be interviewed.

Table 1: Details of participants and their domestic workers.

Participant	Age	Domestic worker (DW)	Time with family	Age of Participant when DW came	Still working for family?
Laura*	23	Monica*	18 years	5 years old	Yes
Nick*	22	Melanie*	23 years	Before born	Retired
Ella*	23	Sylvia*	28 years	Before born	Yes
Sabrina*	22	Prudence*	21 years	2 months old	Yes
Ethan*	26	Erica*	14 years	Newborn	No (family moved to another city)
Jenna*	24	Betty*	26 years	Before born	Yes (but Jenna not at home any more)
Ben*	27	Nora*	27 years	Newborn	Yes (but Ben not at home any more)
Carla*	24	Kate*	35 years	Before born	Yes (but now also employed by Carla and her husband)
Aaron*	25	Connie*	14/15 years	Newborn	No (retired ten years ago for health reasons)

Ages of participants are those provided at the time of the interview. The extent of time that the domestic workers worked for these families are approximations, as are the ages of participants when their domestic workers began working for the family.

*Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identities of the participants and their domestic workers.

3.3. Design

Qualitative research was deemed appropriate in this context as it allows for an analysis of feelings and attitudes in a deeper and less artificial manner (Fossey et al., 2002). The paradigm within which the researcher operated was the interpretive phenomenological paradigm since its emphasis is on "seeking [an] understanding of the meanings of human actions and experiences" within a social context (Fossey et al., 2002, p.718). This paradigm furthermore allowed the researcher to explore

these actions and experiences through the 'insider's perspective', recognising that subjectivity is a substantial *part* of reality (Smith 1996 as cited in Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006, p.103).

Since this study adopted a critical psychological position, it can be situated within the interpretative paradigm of research. Much of this research revolved around the human quest to make sense and meaning of one's realities. Thus, in line with social constructionist accounts that warn one not to accept one's observations of the world uncritically (Burr, 1995) the researcher attempted to interpret various findings and think about them beyond their face value.

3.4. Method of Data Collection

Considering the complexity of subjective experience, it seemed fitting to utilize a research method which is flexible and makes room for diverse findings. A semi-structured, in-depth interview allowing for open-ended answers was therefore employed as this accommodated first-hand depictions of relevant experiences, while focusing on certain key ideas (Fossey et al, 2002). Prompting questions assisted guidance while still facilitating a conversational style (see Appendix B). Additionally, vignettes were included to help to immerse the participants in the topic at hand. Because this was primarily intended to be an exploratory study, it seemed fitting to utilise techniques that would allow different kinds of information to emerge.

The interview questions were centred on: the nature and quality of the participants' respective relationships with their domestic workers; the place of the domestic worker in the family system; how race and socio-economic status intervened in the relationship; and what all of this means to the participant.

3.5. Procedure

Ethics clearance was granted to conduct this research. (See appendix A for this document.)

The researcher met with participants individually in a quiet, private setting at times convenient to them. After the study was explained to the participants (see appendix C), they were required to sign a consent form for participation in the study (see appendix D). They were made aware that the session would be recorded and were asked for their consent to that too (see Appendix E). Moreover, the researcher verbally related the information on the forms to participants and asked if they agreed to the terms therein. This involved explaining participants' right to withdraw from the study at any

time as well as their right to refuse to answer any question/s they might not have wished to answer. Once these formalities had been met the interviews proceeded for between approximately 30 minutes to two hours. After the interview was completed, participants were briefed on counselling options if they found the interview to have caused any distress (see appendix F).

3.6. Data Analysis

Once the data was collected, thematic content analysis was employed to make sense thereof. This analytic tool was deemed appropriate since it lends itself to constructionist accounts (Braun & Clarke, 2006) but is not tied to any specific theoretical framework, which is important, considering that this research attempted to understand the material gathered from the point of view of the participants. Further, it was useful for identifying themes, or "patterned responses" across the data set that related to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.82). This exploration took place within the data for each participant, as well as across participants (Fossey et al., 2002). Analysis in this study involved data-driven analysis – that is analysis that attempted to control for the researcher's pre-existing ideas. However, the researcher's own views and involvement in the analysis cannot be completely ignored and are therefore considered in a later section on reflexivity. Themes also emerged at the latent level where the underlying beliefs and constructions were interpreted rather than providing simply a description of the findings. Although it was not done in great depth, observations were sometimes made about the wording utilised by various participants as this seemed fitting in the context of what they were expressing. Certain assumptions were also questioned and/or challenged.

The first step in analysing the data was to conduct a thorough and verbatim transcription of each interview. No particular transcription convention was employed. Transcribing and later reading through the interviews allowed the researcher to become immersed in and familiar with the content of these interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As immersion in the data took place, notes were made on any points that seemed to be interesting either in their congruence with preconceived ideas (such as the guilt felt by participants that their domestic workers spent more time with them than with their own children) or in their unexpectedness (such as the real difficulty some participants experienced in talking about racial issues).

Once this initial stage was completed, the data was coded into lists of information relevant to the research questions. The idea behind this was to discover consistent findings that could be grouped into various themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The codes included comments about the nature of the

relationships discussed, the aspects of these relationships that stood out, family dynamics and interactions with the domestic workers and so forth. Once the data had been coded in this way for each participant, the codes were observed *across* participants in order to see whether patterns that could be regarded as themes emerged (Fossey et al., 2002).

At this point, there were many different codes which were not yet as broad as themes. Thus, codes were sometimes collapsed into one theme. For instance, the 'ongoing presence' of domestic workers, as well as their having 'an important presence' were perceived to be of the same theme conceptualising the significance of the domestic workers' presence in the lives of the participants. Hence, it needed to be determined which codes belonged to which themes, which codes were themes themselves and which codes could merge into one new theme.

Once the researcher decided to categorise the findings into three main sections, it became easier to think about the themes that belonged in each category. These sections included separate findings on the nature of the relationship, domestic workers' position within the family context and a final section on the exploration of differences between domestic workers and their employers' children. Thus, the importance of domestic workers' presence emerged both in terms of the pivotal aspects of the nanny-child bond and in the context of filling in for gaps in parental provision. Themes were defined and named in light of their core characteristic/s (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Hence, themes like 'esteem for domestic workers', 'ambivalence' and 'tension' describe quite succinctly the different aspects of these relationships. Thereafter, an elaboration on themes in conjunction with relevant literature was undertaken to explain how the themes fit into the overarching 'story' being told (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Refining these results was then necessary to ensure that themes were relevant and plausible. This occurred by reviewing the data to ensure that the thematic schemes reflected the content of the data without missing important information. Themes that did not seem to be supported by the data had to be discarded (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thus, though there was a notion of perceived shame for domestic workers in certain instances, this could not be fully proved or substantiated and was omitted. An evaluation of which themes were truly present was undertaken to uncover whether the researcher's biases unwittingly influenced the data. For example, the suggestion that the relationship with domestic workers reduced prejudicial behaviour in later life could not actually be verified by the evidence provided.

While the various sections were all discussed separately, the strands which run throughout the data were integrated at the very end in the concluding section. For instance, the idea of a master-slave

dynamic emerged at various intervals but it seemed to fit into a number of different discussions and was therefore not conceptualised as a theme on its own. The report was structured in this way in order to allow the narrative process to unfold while highlighting the important themes that arose. It is hoped that, having followed these steps, the final product presented here conveys the central themes of the participants' interviews in a coherent and integrated fashion.

3.7. Reflexivity

Qualitative research, while allowing more depth and exploration, is inevitably influenced to some degree by the biases of the researcher (Fossey et al., 2002). The researcher herself is a white young adult South African who developed a close relationship with her domestic worker during a period of over ten years. This undoubtedly lent this study its drive and direction of inquiry into understanding the relationships of other white South Africans with their families' domestic workers. While this may have served to create biases in the analysis of the data, it can also be understood to lend an element of authenticity to the research as participants were less likely to view the interviewer as an outsider judging their interactions but rather as someone with a similar experience who could therefore better appreciate their own.

Of course, as each experience is still unique, it would be problematic if the researcher attempted to understand the narratives of the participants through her own lens or any other that was not theirs. In order to tackle this concern, the researcher considered her own thoughts, feelings, attitudes and impressions about the interviews, participants and data. These notes were considered carefully and an inspection was attempted of whether and how much these biases pervade the research. Though the supervisor of this research was, on occasion able gently to point out clear instances of such bias to the researcher, it is assumed that the supervisor himself also has pre-existing notions around the relationships between white children and their domestic workers which may limit the extent to which objectivity was possible. However, addressing these concerns was an important start to ensuring as undistorted a data analysis as possible. In order not to confound the findings with the researcher's subjectivity, more will be said about reflexivity after the results are outlined.

CHAPTER FOUR:

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

Each of the nine participants in this study spoke about the nature of their relationships with their domestic workers. They recalled significant memories of these women, illustrating the pivotal aspects of these bonds. Moreover, each participant described how his/her domestic worker fits/fitted into the family structure. An exploration of difference and the non-relatedness of domestic workers was conducted too and each participant shed light, directly or indirectly, on the complexities of their relationships with their domestic workers. At times, the way in which something was said or that which was left unsaid became relevant for analysis. The mannerisms behind speech in this instance seemed to form part of the dynamics involved in relating to domestic workers generally with certain topics, such as how domestic workers are perceived to have impacted on the participants' relationships with parents being challenging for interviewees to broach. The following analysis will investigate the implications of close relationships between participants and domestic workers with a particular focus on family constructs and social difference. It also explores the underlying and unstated areas of tension and uncertainty.

Interestingly, when participants were asked to describe their relationships with their domestic workers, their responses generally consisted of glowing reports of their bonds with these women. Discussing the same relationship within the context of family and social settings seemed to be trickier. This is not to say that participants did not provide coherent reports. Rather, these reports appeared more guarded as complicating factors were introduced.

4.2. The types of relationships that emerge between domestic workers and the children whom they help to raise

Although all the participants considered themselves as having a close relationship with their domestic workers, different meanings were attributed to closeness. Moreover, the levels of intensity of these relationships varied across participants. Aspects of what allow for these close relationships will be discussed below, as will be the various factors that create distance and ambivalence in the relationship. While these domestic workers would not necessarily be considered primary attachment figures (although in some instances they might be), social network theory emphasises the importance of multiple close relationships throughout one's lifespan (Takahashi, 2005). Thus regardless of the attachment between participants and their domestic workers, these relationships still stand as relevant subjects of investigation.

4.2.1. Understanding closeness

The participants' descriptions of their relationships with their domestic workers ranged from child-mother relationship styles to friendships. Some of these relationships were thought of as not quite familial but still signifying more than an employment contract. On the most basic level, one participant said that his relationship with his domestic worker is "not like an employee-employer relationship". Other depictions of the rapport include that the relevant domestic worker is or was "almost like a friend", a "best friend", "like my mother" and "a second mother".

These bonds were further expressed by participants through various indicators of this closeness. Some showed this through their more demonstrative patterns of interaction: "I'm always hugging and kissing her", while others indicated their difficulties separating from their domestic workers. Jenna highlights this in the following story:

> [W]hen I was two she went away for the December holidays and I refused to eat. I refused to eat, I refused to wear clothes, I refused to, to function until she came home. I just, you know, I wasn't interested in my parents. I wanted to be with *her*. She was, according to me, my mother.

Nick illustrates his intensely close relationship with Melanie saying:

> I was as close to her as I was to my mom… she basically did everything for me so she was really like a second mom to me…I was probably closer to her than my mom in the sense that you know, she was the 'nice mommy'. She wasn't the one who had to tell me what to do or discipline me.

Jenna speaks about how the Christmas gifts to which she paid attention were "a little dustpan and brush or like a little broom or you know something that I could… be like her. And those were always my favourite presents." Hence, the growing child's alliance with his/her nanny was sometimes demonstrated through a strong identification with her. One participant described the daily routine of spending time with her nanny: "When we were kids she sort of worked from six to six, bathing us, feeding us breakfast and feeding us dinner and doing all those things a mom typically would." In line with this, closeness was more often indicated by the participant's comfort in the domestic worker's presence as well as by a sharing of daily experiences with her. Thus Nick felt that "the fact we spent so much time together made us closer."

4.2.1.1. An important presence

The main theme that emerged around the significance of the domestic worker in the child's life seemed to be her actual presence. This presence varied from her being part of difficult times in the participants' lives to moments of fun and excitement to being simply a "weekly fixture". One participant elaborated on her insistence that her family's domestic worker stay on with them:

> We just moved to a new house and my condition was that they had to have a spare room for Prudence. We were going to move into one house but then it didn't have a room so we had to find another house.

Bowlby (1958, p.7) explains why this presence is such a vital factor in any close relationship with specific mention of the nanny:

> People often point to the happy and successful who have been brought up by nannies, and say "What about that?" Well, nannies are valuable people, provided they are good ones and *provided they stay.* It is the chopping and changing of people in charge of a young child which upsets him. And if a mother hands over her baby completely to a nanny, she should realise that in her child's eyes Nanny will be the real mother-figure, and not Mummy. This may be no bad thing, always provided that the care is continuous. But for a child to be looked after entirely by a loving nanny and then for her to leave when he is two or three, or even four of five, can be almost as tragic as the loss of a mother.

Indeed, it seems to be this continuity of care which makes separations so painful. Regardless of whether the nanny is indeed "the real mother figure", her proximity and various interactions with her child charges mean that she is meeting *some* psychological needs. All children require a sense of

safety and continuity in their relationships (Levitt & Cici-Gokaltun, 2011). Considering that each of the domestic workers in this study worked for the participants' families for at least a decade, continuity may definitely have been a factor in establishing close relationships. Moreover, people constantly seek closeness from their main relationships (Takahashi, 2005).

> And I remember being on her back and sleeping a lot, wrapped around her, and it felt – it's such an intimate thing…. I would hold my arms up to her and she would put me on her back and she would tie me there and your arms are around that person, your legs are around that person and your face is pressed to them; you can hear their heart beat and that's what you're going to sleep to you know.

The above narrative captures the real proximity and oneness that sometimes transpired in this dyad However, more than simply having someone close by, there seem to be specific aspects of these women's presence that makes it so valuable. One such factor is their protectiveness over their charge which creates a feeling of safety. While it may seem like quite an ordinary event, Ben recalls the following as a significant memory of his nanny:

> [E]very morning, she used to stand outside with us while we waited for our lift-scheme. And [we were] always messing around and throwing acorns across the street.

This memory is useful in portraying how noteworthy it was for some of these participants to have their nannies around watching over and protecting them while they busied themselves in their commonplace endeavours. Once again, this calls attention to the notion of the 'secure base' in attachment theory (Sroufe, 2005). Alternatively, this can be explained by Winnicott's (1962) emphasis on the importance of continuity of care so that the child need not react to environmental impingements. Jenna states how much she loved it when Betty "would come past every now and then and say *'Hello girlie, what you doing?'"* Similarly, Ella recalls the following calming and containing function employed by Sylvia:

> [We] moved into this house and I was quite nervous about it because it was so big compared to this little flat we lived in before and I remember her doing a puzzle with me and my siblings to try to like…keep us distracted.

Additionally, it appears as though having adult attention was appreciated by these participants when they were children. Ethan, who describes himself as being quite mischievous, recollects "pricking her with a pin the one day because she ignored me so much".

4.2.1.2. Nanny's investment in the relationship

Having the continuous and reliable presence of the domestic worker is of course, not complete without some evidence that she wishes to be there and enjoys her employer's children too (Bowlby, 1951). An evaluation of the domestic workers' investment in the wellbeing of these participants was also a distinct feature of the close relationships described above. Takahashi (2005) highlights the necessity of having the encouragement and affirmation of others. A number of participants enjoyed being considered the "favourite one" amongst their siblings by the domestic worker. Having someone meet their idealising needs in this way, may explain the stronger connection and idealisation of the domestic worker (Wolf, 1988). In other words, children need to feel admired, respected and accepted by someone with qualities s/he has yet to develop (Wolf, 1988). Even those who did not feel specifically favoured within their families enjoyed the knowledge that their nanny viewed them like her own children. Jenna's nanny, Betty, explicitly told her:

> "You are more my family…than anybody else because you are my heart child and I am your heart mother and from the moment I laid eyes on you, that bond was there."

Nick's assurance of his value to Melanie was confirmed too:

> I forgot to phone her for mother's day this year and she phoned and she's like "Who do you think you are? What is your problem?"

Similarly, Ethan remarks that "we were her kids. There was no doubt about it. She would die for us." Jenna, Nick and Ethan are three of the participants who seemed to have the closest relationships with their domestic workers and it is therefore clear that where the feelings were reciprocated by both parties, the relationship was stronger. Some of the other participants believed that their domestic workers were committed to them but seemed more tentative in acknowledging this. For example, Aaron states that "in some ways she must have viewed me as a bit of a son." It seems that this reluctance to state how domestic workers feel about these participants arises from no clear declaration on the part of the nannies of their feelings. Considering that Aaron thought of Connie as his 'Swazi Mamma' he seems to understate the value of what her affections would mean to him. However, a more critical explanation for this phenomenon may be an overestimation of feelings for Connie on Aaron's part. The same can be said of other participants who are uncertain of the extent of their nannies' feelings towards them and do not lay claim to the discomfort this would cause. Nevertheless, these participants are still able to surmise their nannies' care for them through various

indicators thereof. Aaron continued to say that "she definitely seemed concerned about me if anything happened or if; she definitely felt protective over me." Laura could also demonstrate Monica's affection for her through the following narrative:

> She came in crying because she didn't get to see me before my graduation because I left at half past six in the morning and she hadn't come in yet and she was just like…. I know that it's a silly example but it's just something that shows how close we really are. Like that's a big thing for her, and she wanted to be there because we've been through so much, she's been there with us through everything.

In addition to these domestic workers showing their enjoyment of spending time with the participants as children, favouritism and claiming their employers' children as part of their own families, they also seemed to be quite protective over these children. This is congruent with van der Merwe's (2007) strong evidence for the attachment of the domestic workers interviewed in her study to the children whom they helped to raise. Hondagneu- Sotelo and Avila (1997) also found that nannies can cultivate a strong bond with employers' children. After Jenna's mother had disclosed a sordid fact about Jenna's infancy, Jenna remembers that:

> [A] little bit later I actually heard her shouting at my mother, well not shouting, but just saying "It's something that she never needed to know. It's something that you don't need to discuss with her."… So I heard her saying "there are some things Jenna doesn't need to know so don't tell her".

Like Jenna, Aaron recalls Connie protecting him from his father:

> I was a mischievous child and occasionally when I was misbehaved my father would try to discipline me. So he tried to give me a smack but if she ever felt it was unwarranted or too stern, she would, she'd get in the way.

Having the approval and acceptance of their domestic workers was evidently of considerable worth to the participants. Jenna mentions that "When I was young, I thought I was the centre of her universe". Ella takes this one step further and shows how Sylvia's perceptions of her are important: "I should hope she doesn't see me as a brat who kind of leaves everything around for her to pick up after me." In addition to hinting at the complexities of the roles played by domestic workers, this statement once again illustrates a need for participants' affirmation by the domestic worker (Wolf, 1988). Whether this need is in relation to maintaining a self-concept of being liberal or of truly valuing the domestic worker's opinion is a matter requiring further exploration.

4.2.1.3. Esteem for domestic workers

Despite the censure around participants' need for approval from their nannies, having a positive reputation with their nannies seems to be important to these participants to some extent because of their views of these women's worth. A number of the participants expressed their respect for their domestic workers. Nick said: "It wasn't like a 'maid-child relationship'…I respected her as an adult in our family." This is echoed by Aaron: "I recall having respect for her and listening to her when she was stern or insistent about something." Ethan described the familial respect for Erica in his home:

> I would find it weird when I went to my friends' houses and they would speak to their maid and you know they always use that accent, like talking silly. There was never any of that. I couldn't understand why they did it because I would talk to Erica the way I would talk to everyone else. That's how close we were, she was just…there. No one in my family, not even my father, he, he's somewhat of a racist, but even her there was – respect. There was no like looking down on her, well as far as I saw growing up there.

While Ethan indicates his and his family's respect for Erica, there is also a sense that she demanded respect which might not necessarily have been given otherwise. Closeness seems to warrant respect rather than it being automatically bestowed on someone. This respect might partially be explained by the authority that some of these women had with the participants. Ethan, Ben and Jenna who seem to have a high level of respect for their respective domestic workers all speak about the authority they wielded in the house. Ethan's mother gave Erica "full reign" with discipline while Ben feels that Nora "rules the house". Conversely, Carla who has mixed feelings about Kate acknowledges that her parents never really allowed Kate to have any part in discipline. Although it might be expected that these women should implicitly have authority as they are adults, this is not inevitable. Thus, while the interviewees might perceive recognising their domestic workers' authority as a compliment, it really serves to hide their *lack* of power such that it must be granted by other adults. Moreover, the hyperbolic 'full reign' seems implausible and it stands to be investigated why participants should exaggerate their domestic workers' power. These criticisms are not to say that participants do *not* feel respect for their domestic workers but rather that the genesis of this respect is not as simple as might seem.

A different reason for participants' respect may be owing to their admiration of certain actions or character traits of their domestic workers. Jenna listed a number of features she reveres in Betty. These include her being 'intuitive', 'selfless', 'compassionate', 'calm', 'independent' and 'self-sufficient'. Jenna also identifies strongly with Betty's principles. Betty taught her that "If you can help someone and it doesn't hurt you then you must". Jenna tells how:

> Betty believed that… if you get to a point where you're smacking a child, it's not the child that's doing something wrong; it's you that's doing something wrong to make the child behave that way.

Some of the participants expressed being impressed that their domestic workers are the 'matriarchs' and 'breadwinners' of their families. The awe at this industriousness is further delineated by Ben: "For a large part of my upbringing she was saving and building a house, which was a *big* thing for her…. it's an amazing thing".

At times, such admiration can be viewed as idealisation. One participant considered his interactions with his domestic worker as being "perfect". Another one appreciated that "unlike my parents who would always reprimand *me* for fights between me and my brother – she would *always* be able to discern whose fault it was". The absolutism evident in this statement points to a need to categorise experiences of the domestic worker definitively. Although such idealisation suggests a difficulty in accepting any of the less than perfect parts of the relationship and of the domestic worker herself (Watts, 2009), it still indicates the position of importance in the minds of participants that their nannies occupy or once occupied. Self Psychology's notion of the developmental need for focal figures to whom children wish to aspire seems to explain partly why participants were able to develop affectionate relationships with their domestic workers (Wolf, 1988). Respecting and esteeming these women would, according to this theory, encourage children to wish a connection with them.

4.2.1.4. Someone unique

Although social contact theory might explain various factors in the relationship as contributing to greater harmony between the races, thereby allowing for a more optimal relationship (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005), many of the participants argued for the person of their nanny as someone unique. It thus seems that personality plays a part in the close connections developed here. For example, Laura, Nick, Sabrina and Aaron speak about their enjoyment of the humour in their relationships with their domestic workers. They "were always laughing or having fun", sharing "a lot of personal jokes" and sometimes "make fun of each other". As such, participants insisted that these women are more to them than 'maids'. This may be because of the more personalised sharing of experience that occurs in these instances (Takahashi, 2005). Nick says of Melanie: "*No one* that we knew really saw her as a maid. She just had a way of fitting in. She was just very different." The matter of 'difference' emerged a number of times suggesting that these participants perceive the domestic

workers discussed here as exceptions to the rule. Ethan highlighted this difference in the following words:

> I have racial issues but it would never – she's different. She doesn't fall under that category in my book and…the thing is as well; she's the only domestic that we've ever had that I've been close to. The rest have been…they come, they go, they steal, they this, they that. I don't trust them.

It seems as though Erica stands out as an exception with the kind of behaviour described above constituting the norm for domestic workers. This aversion to subsequent domestic workers is apparent with other participants too. Aaron said about new helpers: "it was never the same. It was like they never really had that respect or warmth". Nick is also finding that since Melanie retired, he and the new domestic worker 'clash' and that this new person in the home "just won't take her place". This might indicate that these participants had developed an attachment to their domestic workers, finding separation challenging. Additionally, if these domestic workers are 'exceptions to the rule', then any new domestic workers may be relegated to the class of 'the Other' from which the close figure must be separated. It could be that because the child invests so much emotional energy in his/her nanny this relationship must be held sacred and unmarred by others who threaten to confound the meaning attached to the bond.

One factor that appears to influence this level of investment in a specific domestic worker is trust. Ben underlines the importance of this:

> The one thing with her, I think the biggest thing, is the trust. We all trust her; from my mother, my father, all of us; there's a total trust of her. She's been working for my father for 30 years, 31 years, whatever.

This relates to the concept of the secure base again, highlighting the importance of security and comfort in any significant relationship. Laura verbalises this trust in Monica's presence: "She was there when we needed her. She would still do anything for us if anything happened." The knowledge that a caregiver is there to protect and provide ongoing support and care is one of the most important psychological needs (Bowlby, 1958). The number of years that each of the domestic workers in this study tended to participants ensured the continuity and hence safety of their persons, while their personal characteristics appear, in most cases, to have provided the relevant nurturance.

4.2.2. Understanding Distance

The ambivalence apparent in some of the participants' narratives was made difficult to dissect as there appeared to be an inability to talk about the more strained aspects of these relationships. This might have been predicted from the glowing reports of the relationships described in the above section. A number of factors may have constituted this difficulty. A collaborative silence around racial and social issues may have been employed so as not to destabilise participants' world views or 'expose' them as racists (Sheriff, 2000). Depicting the inequalities that may cause discomfort or illustrate distance was therefore generally avoided. Additionally, as will be discussed in the next section, for some participants, domestic workers occupied the vital roles generally assumed by parents, particularly mothers. Whether this was because of tense parent-child interactions or because of parental absence, it might have felt too threatening for participants to compromise their perceptions of their focal relational figures. However, that said, a few participants did openly air their various frustrations in the relationships with their domestic workers. Examples of this will be transparent in some of the following subthemes.

4.2.2.1. Ambivalence

While a few participants painted a picture of an ideal relationship between themselves and their domestic workers, instances of mixed feelings did emerge. This is evident in Ben's uncertainty of how exactly Nora felt towards him:

> She's very happy to see you when you come home, she's very happy to see you after you've been on a holiday or very sad that you've been away. I mean I think she does care about us, how much I'm not – not like a mother.

Difficulties in thinking about the dynamics of their relationships with their domestic workers seem to have emerged as the participants grew older. Childhood seemed to shield them in large part from many of the complexities of these relationships. Growing up, Clara has come to realise how different positions in society mean different things for this relationship. As Kate is now employed by Clara herself, she acknowledges that "it's much less innocent and it's much less, it's kind of there's more of a business relationship that I have with her". Carla's insight here is symbolic of the master-slave type relationship that exists in these employment contracts. The lack of innocence mentioned may be a reference to the oppressing position occupied by the 'master' (Bulhan, 1985).

For Aaron, recognising that Connie "probably had a few different lives" seems to have been disconcerting as it implies that their lives were not wholly shared. Ella struggled with this too as she

acknowledged how Sylvia determinedly kept her daughter away from Ella's family. Although these participants stated their belief in their nannies' regard for them, these instances of withholding appear somewhat distressing for those who place heavy emphasis on the importance of their domestic worker in their lives. Some of these domestic workers appear to have used their ability to withdraw to some extent as a means of exerting some power over their lives (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997). Clearly, this places their employers' children on unsteady ground as it demonstrates their ability to exit the relationship when necessary or desired.

4.2.2.2. Enforcing Boundaries

In some instances, this distance between child and nanny seems to be formed through the development of various boundaries. Some of these boundaries were put in place by the family of the participant while others seem to have been enforced by the domestic worker. Ben expressed his approval of such boundaries: "I think that not having a distance is more abnormal." This seems contradictory to the closeness of the relationships described above. Moreover, Ben's comment highlights the social norms that mediate what participants have described as a familial bond, showing how these relationships do not develop free of external influences on the bounds and limits thereof. Moreover, the fact that these women are ultimately employees of the family cannot be ignored as this somehow seeps into their relationships with the children of the family. Although participants like Nick described their domestic workers as more than 'just a maid', the knowledge that this job demands that specific tasks be performed is still inherent therein. As one participant stated, "at the end of the day it is her job and she gets paid to do certain things". The underlying irritation towards the domestic worker evident in such remarks around her non-fulfilment of these responsibilities may be a result of her defying the implicit 'master' role embedded in this relationship. By not completing specific tasks, domestic workers are in some ways undermining the recognition of the employer as 'master' (Bulhan, 1985).

Carla reflected on the distance which Kate herself chose to maintain. She conveyed how Kate refused to teach Carla and her sisters Tswana when they were children so that she would have privacy when speaking to her own daughter. Moreover, in telling how she felt that Kate was irritated by Carla and her sisters coming into her house, Carla said, "I think she just felt like it was her space". Not only did Kate keep her own space boundaried, Carla did not think that "she would come and watch TV with us in the afternoon" as this would perhaps be too much of a move into *their* space. Indeed, Lan (2003b) considers that in addition to the *socio-political* boundaries that exist between

domestic staff and their employers, domestic workers (and their employers) may put up *socio-spatial* boundaries to preserve their privacy. According to Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997), domestic workers decide how emotionally involved they can be with their employers' children. Where they cannot bestow their affections on their own children, who might live far away, they may choose to attach themselves more to these surrogate children (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997). This makes sense in terms of Kate whose own daughter resided with her, thereby allowing her to enforce her own boundaries more strictly. Thus in contrast to overt declarations of intimacy, underlying strategies are at hand to ensure that both social and family norms are upheld.

4.2.2.3. Aggravating Factors

In addition to the limits set by the family, domestic worker or child on the scope of the relationship between child and domestic worker, participants spoke of behaviour that they found frustrating which seemed to increase feelings of division between them and their domestic workers. As mentioned above, an awareness of the domestic worker's duties creates expectations of her role. When these expectations are not fulfilled, participants sometimes find themselves feeling annoyed. This is particularly pronounced for Clara as she is now employing Kate herself. However, other than issues concerning task performance, participants occasionally found themselves unhappy with certain attitudes of the domestic workers. Ella said that Sylvia "can actually be very rude to my parents sometimes". No comment was made regarding her parents' conduct towards Sylvia though. It may be that she does not perceive them to be rude; however, there is a sense of deference being owed to her parents as employers. Likewise Sabrina expressed that "I find her quite rude…. I gave her money and she didn't say thank you." Sabrina further pointed to Prudence's personal life as sometimes causing aggravation. This includes imposters entering the family property as well as late night family turbulence in which Sabrina has had to assist. These instances were not looked upon favourably. A number of these aggravating factors seem to have perturbed the family as a whole, not just the relevant participant. This suggests that the family's reception of a particular domestic worker has implications for the children's perceptions of the domestic worker and hence for their ensuing relationship. Thus, an exploration of how these domestic workers fit into the family is necessary.

4.3. Domestic workers' impact on the family

In spite of some of these distinctive relationships between domestic workers and the children whom they help to raise, the domestic worker's place in the family system also affected the types of relationships that developed with participants. The degree to which parents accepted this relationship and their own rapport with the domestic worker were also found to be influential. Moreover, the relationship between participants and their own parents seemed to affect how strong a connection would be formed with these domestic workers. However, notions of the nuclear family as taken for granted also seeped into constructions of how the domestic worker fits in, demonstrating limitations on the extent to which domestic workers can truly be incorporated in the family.

4.3.1. An inside-outside place in the family

Every participant considered their respective domestic worker to be a "part of the family". Ella's family "always tease that [Sylvia's] third surname is our surname". Ella elaborated more on how Sylvia forms a part of this family unit:

> She's pretty much considered as part of the family. I mean I know with my sister's children, they know that it's my mom and my dad and me in the house and Sylvia; she fits in everywhere pretty much. Her name was one of the first words that my niece who lives here said. She knows her as Syl-Syl. We very much, I think, consider her as part of the family. It's not even questionable; if we're giving something to someone or like, I don't know, making a card or whatever, she'll go on the card, for a birthday sometimes or you know, if it's a welcome home sign for someone, her name is on it.

Ethan's evidence for Erica's integration in the family is that "in family photos, you'll see she was always there". Talking about Betty's imminent retirement, Jenna said, "She's definitely one of the family…my parents didn't grieve when my brother left home, they didn't grieve when I left home but they are *terrified* of her leaving."

Not only are these women considered a part of the family but they also seem to have specific positions in the family. Laura and Carla considered their nannies as aunts, Jenna thinks of Betty as a mother and Aaron calls Connie his 'Swazi mamma' while others speak about their domestic workers as a 'friend' of the family. For those participants with divorced parents, domestic workers sometimes stood in as the "second parent". Ethan emphasised Erica's importance in the family over that of even his father's saying, "She was there before him, and she was there after".

Although Sabrina considers Prudence to be a part of the family, she is uncertain whether everyone else in her family feels the same way. While other participants demonstrated particularly close connections with their domestic workers, this generally fitted into a family accepting of such a relationship. Sabrina, on the other hand, seems to have a relationship with Prudence that is separate from the rest of her family.

For most participants though, their domestic worker's place in the family was not so clearly defined when the family participated in various social activities. Jenna was the only participant who said that her nanny joins them for dinners out not only when these are for a birthday party or other celebration. However, it seems that Betty only joined the family on these excursions more recently since Jenna and her brother are grown up. Jenna thinks that perhaps Betty did not choose to come out with the family when the children were younger as this was about "not wanting others to think of her as like, a slave to the family." This is echoed by Nick who described how Melanie did not like to participate with the family in social activities because "I think maybe she felt she was still seen as a maid". It seems then that there is some shame associated with the status of being a 'maid' which these women attempt to ward off.

Like Clara, Ella noted that her domestic worker "would keep her distance a bit" and seemed uncomfortable when asked to participate in family social activities:

> Even if we have people over for lunch you know and we'll call her over to the table to have something to eat, she'll say to me, "Rather make me a plate of food" and then I'll give it to her, you know, and that's fine. And she's quite happy to just stay away.

Domestic workers' choice not to participate in family recreational activities may also be a means of setting up boundaries. More than simply not participating in the participant's family's events, it seems that some of the domestic workers were also strict about keeping their employers out of their own private lives. Speaking about Sylvia's daughter whom Ella's family has never met, Ella said:

> And in a way Sylvia's kind of kept her away from us. We've asked, you know, for her to come and visit us and come and see us but um, we've never met her. We've seen a photo maybe once or twice…. Maybe it's like to protect her daughter 'cause she doesn't want her daughter to see what we have in comparison to what they have.

Aaron summed this phenomenon up well in his comment that "it's a bit weird having someone who's part of the family and who's separate from it at the same time." Lan (2003b) terms this "the intimate Other". This suggests the double standards invoked by naming someone a 'part of the family' while simultaneously keeping that person separate from it (Cock, 1989). As has been

suggested, this separateness can emanate from both employer and employee. Domestic workers may at times choose to maintain a distance from the family for whom they work in order to ward off indebtedness and establish a private identity (Lan, 2003b). Such divisions serve the family in the retention of the classic family structure which this outside influence might disrupt. However, as can be deduced from the nature of domestic workers' involvement in family life, "there is significant disjunction between the way that families live their lives and the way we theorize about families" (Daly, 2003, p.771). Hence, popular notions of what constitutes a family are social constructions that reflect ideology more than reality (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Considering the set-ups of some of the participants' families, it is clear that these do not conform to the traditional family model. Nevertheless, a belief in the principle of such a family is still evident in the way domestic workers are fitted into this structure.

A further point of interest was that while domestic workers are deemed a 'part of the family' for participants, only Ethan considered himself and his family to be a part of Erica's family. Other interviewees participated in the family celebrations or tragedies of their nannies and seemed to know about the general occurrences in their family members' lives, but their proximity to the families of domestic workers does not compare to the place of these women in their own families. Although a reasonable explanation for this might be the inevitability of such an outcome owing to the domestic worker's entry into employers' homes and hence lives, the one-way direction of this trend triggers questions of why this is. Do domestic workers purposefully exclude their employers and their children from their lives? Or does whiteness predetermine which family is more desirable?

4.3.2. Relationship between domestic worker and participants' parents: a predictor of nanny-child bonds

To some extent, the integration of domestic workers into the family can be predicted by the relationship existing between employer and employee. Where parents are accepting of the domestic worker's relationship with their children and when they themselves foster good relationships with these employees, participants seem to have developed closer and less ambivalent ties to these women. Jenna says that her mother and Betty are "best friends" while Nick's mother and Melanie were "very close". Their fathers also approved of these women and concerning Betty's imminent retirement, Jenna's father remarked: "we need to move houses because if I am not, if I'm in the same environment and Betty's not here, I'm going to feel *such* a *loss*, such a deep loss." Interestingly, both Jenna and Nick seem to have somewhat idealised views of their respective

domestic workers. It might be that having their parents hold these carers in high esteem too helped maintain such an image for these participants. Similarly, Erica, who is respected by Ethan's father and appreciated by his mother, maintains a strong place in Ethan's affections. This dynamic is especially evident when the parents in question are regarded warmly.

Although there appear to be more boundaried aspects to the relationships between the domestic workers and parents of Ella, Aaron, Ben and Laura, the respect and care evident in these interactions seems to have permitted these participants to attach themselves to some degree to their childhood nannies. Carla's parents both seem to care for Kate though her father denies doing so. His unwillingness or inability to claim his concern for Kate may be indicative of the residues of the apartheid legacy in South Africa that determine who can care for whom. This ambivalence might lend to the ambivalence Carla herself feels towards Kate at times. However, because a relationship *has* in fact been achieved, both Carla and Sabrina feel that they need to protect their domestic workers from the critical gaze of their fathers even when the same issues regarding their domestic workers irritate them. In order to explain why this might be so, an examination of the participants' own relationships with their parents will be undertaken.

4.3.3. Participants and their parents: what this means for participants and domestic workers

While participants were not specifically asked about their relationships with their parents they often volunteered this information freely. The three main factors that seem to determine whether a particularly close relationship with the domestic worker employed by the family would ensue were: 1) if parents were divorced; 2) if participants did not have a good relationship with one parent; and 3) if parents worked full-time as opposed to part-time or not at all.

Ethan, Laura, Aaron and Carla are all children of divorced parents. In each case there appears to be some distance or perhaps even conflict with one of their parents. In this study this parent has always been the father. These participants value their domestic workers immensely, often not caring what their fathers' perceptions of these women are. Moreover, in these family systems, domestic workers often became a support for the participants' mothers. As discussed above, the acceptance and respect of a domestic worker by a parent increases the likelihood that children will develop positive relationships with their domestic workers. Ethan's case seems to capture this phenomenon well: "I don't really get on with my dad so I don't know how they really got on together but as far as my mom and her went, like best friends".

Both Jenna and Sabrina describe having difficult relationships with their mothers. As such, Jenna says of Kate that "she's even more of a mother than any mother could be, in a sense." Although Sabrina depicts moments of tension and discord between herself and Prudence, she thinks of her as a mother figure. This is also despite the fact that her father seems to have no rapport with Prudence at all. It may be Sabrina's need for this relationship with a third care-giving adult that allows it to flourish. Congruent with the affective relationships model, these participants' dependence on their domestic workers and difficulty separating from them suggests that when one's psychological needs are not met through expected focal figures, other relationships that provide the relevant psychological functions will be sought out (Takahashi, 2005).

Lastly, although Nick did not disclose having any discord with his parents, he did mention that they worked long hours. Having Melanie's constant presence and warmth appears to have been very important to him while he was growing up. Carla too, mentioned the significance of her mother working full-time. She said of her mother that "we also really wanted her to be a stay-at-home mom and maybe it was easier to bear because we had Kate". As the participant who seemed to be the most distanced from his domestic worker, Ben confirms these hypotheses by virtue of the fact that his mother is a housewife. While this does not necessarily mean that he did not need a third adult with whom to identify, it may be that his mother was able to do more boundary work as she was more present (Lan, 2003b). Although their nannies may have been able to substitute for mothers in some of these instances, it seems as though the strong beliefs surrounding mothering in Western ideologies (Arendell, 2000) still caused participants whose mothers were not fully available to feel somewhat deprived. This can be gleaned from Carla's above-mentioned longing for her mother. Perhaps the challenge for some participants of fully laying claim to their domestic workers' centrality in their lives is mediated by this social construction of mothers as the only people entitled to such dominance in children's affections. Alternatively, it may be constructions of blackness which make it shameful to have one's nanny rather than one's mother at one's side.

4.3.4. Effects of relationship with domestic worker on relationship with parents

Because this study aimed to investigate the position of the third caregiver within the family, participants were asked how they perceived their relationships with their domestic workers to have affected other familial relationships. The interviewees seemed to be quite cautious in answering this question – either denying an impact at all or else noting only the most positive results. Reasons for why this might be are provided below.

4.3.4.1 Improving relationships

In line with the function expected of domestic workers (Hau-nung Chan, 2005), these women seemed to create more time for parents to spend with their children after work. Laura expounds on this:

> [W]hen we were much younger it did make a difference because when [my mother] got home there was no homework to be done and it made the time that we had with our mom a lot better than if we got picked up from aftercare and still have to do homework and still have to bath and…also when she got home she didn't have to do everything from scratch for the cooking. Most of it was ready; all she had to do was cook. So I guess that did help the relationship.

Carla takes this further, stating that because Kate was responsible for household chores, she would often ask Carla and her sisters to help. This caused them to direct their displeasure at Kate rather than at their mother who did not have to ask them to help her in the house when she returned from work. As Carla says:

> I think Kate took the brunt of a lot of our frustration growing up, you know, that my parents didn't have to take. We could totally idealise my mom and Kate got devalued all the time.

In other words, the domestic worker would often have more arduous responsibilities to perform, thus freeing up parents' time for leisure and entertainment with their children. It seems that this also alleviates pressure for parents in terms of placing demands on their children. Although Nick spoke of Melanie as the 'nice mommy', this certainly was not always the case with domestic workers taking responsibility for many of the practical aspects of childcare.

4.3.4.2. The 'buffering' effect: mediating difficult child-parent relationships

More than simply freeing up time for optimal parent-child interactions though, the relationship between participants and domestic workers possibly counteracted some of the more complicated dynamics between some of the participants and their parents. Goldman (2003) discovered that nannies could indeed be a 'refuge' for children in fraught family environments. Borrowing Jenna's words, this will be referred to as "the mediating influence of the domestic worker". Two of the participants who reported having quite tense relationships with their mothers seem to value their families' domestic workers tremendously. Jenna explains why this might be:

> [I]f Betty wasn't there I would have noticed sooner. I would have *really* noticed the – what I was lacking. Because when you're a kid you don't think about *who's* giving you what you need, you just, you just want what you need.

The 'buffering' effect addressed by Jenna is also evident in her family history:

> [My mother] was severely beaten as a child and interestingly enough her, her domestic worker was also there for about 30 years and provided for her what she needed and as a result my mom didn't take all the negative things from her relationship with her mother and bring them into our family environment. So the cycle was broken.

Where domestic workers perceived malaise in one parent-child dyad, they were at times instrumental in enhancing the relationship between the child and his/her other parent:

> I think she actually taught me to love my dad so much… I think she realised that if this kid goes trailing after her mother's attention, all hell will break loose.

In line with Poster's (1988) belief that multiple care givers is the optimal condition for rearing children, the third caregivers in this context do seem to have provided the beneficial circumstances promoted by van Ijsendoorn et al. (1992). While it may be argued that they actually took the place of the second, or in some instances even the first care giver, the presence of these women as possible third 'options' created the opportunity for participants to have their needs met when their parents could not do so personally.

4.3.4.3. Offering an ally

Despite their sometimes assisting parent-child interactions, these domestic workers may also have offered a *separate* supportive relationship. These alliances may even stand in opposition to parents. The rebellious partnership of these instances may have been quite exciting for the participants as children (Goldman, 2003). Sabrina, Ethan and Jenna each related stories in which they collaborated with their domestic workers in ventures which were against parents' wishes. When Erica found a kitten she showed it to Ethan despite his mother's protestation and he eventually kept the cat. Sabrina secretly helped Prudence with her financial difficulties when she knew her parents would disapprove. She further told of how she and Prudence are "very dodge":

> My mom makes me do my bed and then I say, "Prudence, I'll give you R29 airtime if you do my bed for like 3 days or whatever" and then like, undercover I'll send her airtime and she'll do my bed and my mom will think I did it.

In addition to mischievousness, some of the participants' domestic workers chose to ignore parental decisions when they felt it was not in the best interest of the child. Like Aaron who describes Connie's protectiveness over him, Jenna remembers the following event warmly:

> I remember my mom once chasing me to smack me… And then I ran out the front door and ran around the entire house and ran into her room and hid in the bathroom and she saw me run and hide in the bathroom and my mom came round and said "Did you see Jenna?" and she said, "Ja, she ran past that way".

Considering the importance of the domestic worker's investment in the participants' well-being discussed above, it follows that this particular alliance provided participants with additional support and affirmation. This is clearly valued by those participants who experienced this special treatment by their nannies.

4.3.4.4. 'They were different relationships': denying the effects of domestic workers on familial interactions

Many participants were unwilling to or could not think of ways in which their relationship with their domestic workers impacted on their relationship with their parents. In answering the question of how his relationship with Connie might have affected his relationship with his mother, Aaron articulated that "They were different relationships…it wasn't like one detracted from the other." This is how most participants attempted to answer this question. Although it may be a valid reflection of their realities, it could be that these participants were attempting to protect idealised images of family structure from being disrupted by too deep a consideration of this question. This seems a possible reason for their answers in that most participants seemed to think the question was aimed at uncovering a *negative* impact on their relationships with their parents rather than effects in general. Indeed, when asked if he thought the relationship with his domestic worker had enhanced the relationship with his mother, one participant responded "That I hadn't thought of."

It seems that most of the participants have indeed bought into the social construction of the traditional family. Thus, challenging the role of the biological mother, for example, may clash with expected social norms (Daly, 2003). Adult children who in fact felt rejected by parents are often likely to be defensive around these matters as normative relationships dictate how parents and children *should* interact (Levitt & Cici-Gokaltun, 2011). This signifies the power of these constructions that influence belief systems even in such private matters. Hence, the valuable service which domestic workers may provide to the children of their employers constitutes what Macdonald

(1998) terms ‘shadow motherhood’. They may perform mother-work but social ideologies call for the biological mother to be more prominent (Macdonald, 1998).

4.4. The meaning of social differences

This section will explore the way in which the participants discussed differences between themselves and their domestic workers. Some participants struggled to point out any differences. Others felt that difference does not matter as far as the relationship with their domestic workers is concerned. Only a few participants spoke about the difficulty inherent in being different in socially important ways from someone who occupies such a vital position in their lives. Some of the differences noted between the speakers and their domestic workers were language, finances, family structures, cultural norms and lifestyle. Race was a factor that few participants chose to speak about and when they did it was often considered insignificant. Although race may not have been discussed it was certainly present. Ella's joke of how she and her siblings used to ask Sylvia "Black mommy, when's white mommy coming home?" shows that differences are unmistakeable. It is therefore how differences are understood, not what they are, which bears meaning. Additionally, the motives for speaking about difference in these ways are important to understand.

4.4.1. Difference as 'a barrier'

Many of the participants spoke of how they became aware of their domestic workers' different language usage from early on. One participant mentioned feeling "confused" when her domestic worker uses male and female pronouns interchangeably. Another one decided to learn Sotho in the hope of communicating more effectively with her caregiver. Not only did language interfere with conversation, but Jenna said that:

> I think it puts you on unsteady ground when you're small and you think that everything in the world is coherent but when you see that and you ask someone to do something and they think that – they *completely* misunderstand and do something that is harmful, you begin to, your world begins to rock…. I was always scared that she would – because of the miscommunication that she would do something I *really* didn't want her to do.

Thus this kind of difference can be viewed as dangerous. Not only can these discrepancies cause miscommunication or danger but they can also be frustrating. Sabrina felt that Prudence had been rude for taking money from her without saying 'thank you'. However, Sabrina recognised that Prudence did not think she was being rude but that this was simply her cultural mode. As such, these

types of differences exist as obstacles that must be tolerated despite their potential for hazard or nuisance.

4.4.2. Difference in lifestyles as a call for sensitivity

Sometimes the socio-economic differences evident between participant and domestic worker led participants to cultivate greater empathy for these women. Ella spoke about how taxing it must be for Sylvia to have to use public transport everyday. She also noted their discrepant living conditions:

> Well, the one *major* difference is where she lives and where I live. It's something that often plays on my mind. Now in winter when it was freezing cold they often had electricity cuts and there were some nights where I was lying in my bed and that morning Sylvia had come in and said they didn't have electricity and I just thought to myself "I'm warm in my bed and she's *freezing* cold because she's got no electricity, she's got no heater, she's got no hot water to shower with."

Likewise, Ben expressed this awareness of the difference in lifestyles: "we don't talk about financial matters in terms of money in front of her because it's just, it's a sensitivity." In addition to considering their domestic workers' living conditions, financial status and frequent removal from their families, some participants felt enraged over prejudiced treatment to which their care givers had been exposed as a result of the apartheid legacy in South Africa. Ethan relays the following memory:

> My mom took me into the Wimpy, I was tiny tiny, and they refused to serve us because Erica was there and at that stage it was still like, some places wouldn't serve blacks and…ever since then none, no one in my family supports that place. I know it's not a big difference but it was that kind of thing.

This protective anger manifested in Jenna too when she learned about what apartheid meant for Betty:

> I was absolutely mortified. I could *not* believe that my Betty, my Betty had to give a ticket to come to my house, had to show her ID book, had to get a card…. I was *furious*…. I felt slighted, I felt like this government was doing me in. I felt like the whole of South Africa was giving me the middle finger because they were making *my* Betty, *my* Betty get a pass.

Despite the real care that is evident in these instances, elements of 'whiteness' are still visible here. The protective stance assumed by participants indicates their position of benevolence towards their families' black employees. Romero (1992, as cited in Lan, 2003b) understood the 'maternalistic' relating to domestic workers as a means of reinforcing social hierarchies whereby employers can be

depicted as magnanimous while their workers are placed in a position of needing their contributions. This is a reminder of how all relationships are mediated by power (Dalal, 2006). As a residue of colonialism and slavery, domestic work inevitably raises these issues.

Participants shared examples of how "if there were ever any issues that we could help her out with we'd be more than glad to do so." Laura described how her family has provided assistance to Monica in various ways:

> Even from a young age we always tried to help her to get better at her English and um, my mom used to pay for her to study while she was working for us so that she could not be a maid but she just chose that that was better for her. But at least she did get an opportunity to study and stuff so, which is good for her if she ever decides to do anything else.

Additionally, Laura and her mother have extended this support to Monica's children too:

> For the youngest one, Monica doesn't pay his school fees; we do. He needs new school shoes; I go and get them you know. In that way, all that we've done for her – all that she did for us as children is paid back for what we do for him now. I mean he's also got a bit of a learning disability, um it's not diagnosed but I'm pretty sure…. And we sit with him, trying to help him with English, trying to help him with homework.

Holding the needs of their domestic workers in mind was expressed by attempts to meet these various deficiencies:

> And the move's actually been nice for Prudence because we've given her stuff – ah! I gave her my bed. Because she was sleeping on this old bed so when we moved I said "Prudence, I'm going to tell my dad to buy me a new bed, a bigger one, and then you can have my bed" 'cause her and Faith used to sleep on a single bed. So then my dad bought me a big bed and I gave her mine, my bed which is double, queen, no just double I think.

In demonstrating the provisions which the families of the participants bestowed on their domestic workers, it was clear that these acts were often expressions of both gratitude to domestic workers for their valuable service as well as concern for their comfort and well-being. As Ben said, "we do care for her." Nevertheless, some of this reciprocation appears to manifest as a symptom of guilt. Laura's inference that her family's generosity is how Monica was 'paid back' seems to imply that a debt to Monica existed. Whether or not debts are assumed, giving to domestic workers beyond their regular income was often viewed as magnanimous behaviour on the part of participants and/or their parents. One interlocutor related that when her mother took their domestic worker for one of her regular hospital visits, another domestic worker in the waiting area declared "Ah, my missus would never do that for me. You're a good lady."

4.4.3. 'Awareness': the pathways and impasses to noting and dealing with difference

For difference to be threatening it needs to be recognised and injected with a particular meaning. Sometimes youthfulness or the need to maintain closeness influenced the ignorance of participants concerning the influence of social differences on their relationships. At other times, the resultant tension and guilt of certain elements of the relationship that manifested in the recognition of difference made awareness undesirable. Knowledge could therefore be exposing and shaming, driving participants to utilise various strategies to deny any discrepancies between themselves and their nannies. The following discussion will address the ways in which awareness may be deferred or prevented (whether purposefully or not) and the reasons for techniques used to remain ignorant.

4.4.3.1. Age

A number of the participants mentioned that they only really started to notice differences between themselves and their domestic workers as they grew older. Sometimes difference was obvious but it seemed to have little meaning until later. Aaron, whose domestic worker left the family when he was in his adolescence, seems to have been "ignorant" of many social meanings attached to Connie's status as a 'maid'. Aaron acknowledges this unawareness: "I very often wonder if, how many things I just didn't realise. I definitely wasn't aware of the political situation." Indeed, the child status in the family creates less of a power hierarchy between child and domestic worker and difference may initially have been distressing for these participants to accept as children. As children, asymmetrical relationships tend to exist with adults who are necessary for the provision of both psychological and physical endowments (Takahashi, 2005). Carla illustrates how diverse the roles of child and employer are in relation to domestic workers:

> And I think maybe how it's changed now, she sees me as someone who…now I 'have money'. I'm paying her so I have some kind of, I suppose I would have more power now for her and so like in the past where she would have kind of, it would have been her patting me on my head type of relationship, now she'll come to me and she'll say she wants to build a house, can I help her? Or she wants to…I don't know, she wants a new phone; can I get it for her?

Thus, it appears that Carla's relationship with Kate was easier in the past when she had less power. Age and the social rights that come with it play a role in destabilising the dynamics between domestic workers and the children whom they helped to raise. Once again the issue of power is relevant here in that this clearly influences the way in which the child and care giver will relate.

4.4.3.2. Closeness

Moreover, the closer the participant appears to have been to his/her domestic worker, the more difference is denied. In line with the above formulation of difference as dangerous, it appears that in order to retain idealised views of the attachment which specific participants had to their domestic workers, difference needed to be avoided. Nick speaks about how difference was embraced:

> I grew up with a bit of her culture in me, she took a bit of my family's culture, you know what I mean? It's not like so – to be honest I didn't really see it in that way at all. I can't say what was really different at all.

Following this strand of thought, Jenna claims that she was "taught to *appreciate* differences." She felt that her parents "*never* taught to see something different in other people and reject it because it's different." This compartmentalisation of experience in absolute terms brings to the fore the defensive strategy utilised in negating any experience of the self as prejudiced. In fact, Aaron suggests:

> I've never really felt anything because anyone *is* a different culture to myself. Even nowadays I'm not prejudiced at all to anyone across any culture. I've got friends across all races, colours, religions, everything. It's possibly because of that; I don't really know.

Aaron proposes that his relationship with Connie might have helped him to be accepting of all people and social contact theory would suggest that such relationships could achieve exactly this (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). Additionally, Thomas (1993) outlines that where both parties in a black-white dyad can address racial differences openly as opposed to suppressing and denying these differences; this will influence the strength of the relationship. Thus, Jenna who seems to have an extremely close relationship with Betty does mention their conversations around the end of apartheid and other such meaning-loaded issues. Nevertheless, silence around difficult topics of conversation was found consistently in this study, highlighting the sensitivity to and difficulty of discussing race and power for many young white South Africans.

4.4.3.3. Tension

While it may be that when relationships between two people of different colour are sufficiently close, race may cease to matter, it seems unlikely in light of the historical context of South Africa. One participant recalls her surprise over the following scenario:

> I was on the phone and I said something about "my maid" and she took quite a lot of offense to that and came up to me and shouted at me and she said to me something about – she said, "I know I'm a bloody

> kaffir", that's what she said to me…I don't know why she took such offence to it…Maybe to her "maid" is a derogatory term.

It would be folly to forget that "some of the tensions…have got nothing to do with the fact that she's black" and that personality invariably plays a role in all relationships. Nevertheless, the national sensitivity over racial issues cannot be underestimated. This seems to have been the mistake made by the participant in the above extract.

Clara illustrates the presumptions made by Kate regarding her status as a white person: "[M]oney has been a *huge* thing…. She kind of thinks that I'm just withholding. And that's something that's really difficult because…it becomes frustrating." Carla's failure to surmise why Kate would assume she has more material worth to distribute highlights once again how the participants often detached from thinking about the implications of relationships that develop within a context of fundamental inequality and oppression. These two examples demonstrate how power dynamics are alive in numerous interactions between participants and their care givers. These tensions create both a distance and a degree of mistrust in these relationships. Regardless of how close the rapport might be, the status of domestic worker is so riddled with various meanings in the South African context that one cannot expect these underpinnings to vanish because of closeness alone.

4.4.3.4. Guilt

Although few participants would broach the notion of guilt, it did emerge explicitly in Carla's interview:

> [S]he'll still come and work in my three bedroom house and move into a two bedroom flat into which I think she's got eight people living there to help her pay the rent. Which is *ridiculous*. But I would never invite her to come stay in our house. We've got two spare bedrooms, we do nothing with them. She could totally come and live there but we would never offer her and I think that's because it's, even though we're aware of it, it's so comfortable how it is. Do you know what I mean? They talk about having to cannibalise your privilege; having to adjust, lose all your money so that everyone is equal. But nobody wants to do that.

Jenna too spoke of the guilt she feels that Betty was able to invest more time in her than in her own children:

> I'm not even her kid and she somewhere, miles away from here has a family that's sitting there, without her sitting by the bedside rubbing tummies, without her filling up little red tubs of water so they can splash in it. Who's looking after them?

These participants allude to the difficult situation in which they indirectly perpetrate the inequalities about which they speak. Carla openly acknowledges the indulgence of the employer which makes it distasteful to have to change the status quo. Despite her earlier grievance with Kate for having expectations of her, she now more openly elaborates on why this would be. Thus, in spite of the complex nature of the relationships that develop out of this scenario, it is easier to maintain the current situation and repress or deny the inequalities and injustices present. It is therefore not surprising that most participants chose not to engage in this level of conversation. Some that did were insistent on the fair conditions with which their families provide their domestic workers. However, the reluctance and defensiveness that emerged suggest that whether or not working conditions are fair, there is something untenable about the work itself.

4.5. Conclusion

4.5.1. Central Findings

The research questions were answered in both definitive and veiled ways. However, both the overt and the implicit aspects of participants' responses yielded a wealth of information explaining what 'close' relationships between white children and domestic workers mean.

It became clear that the domestic workers discussed in this study hold great worth to the participants. Their continuous presence and nurturance seemed to be invaluable contributions to the participants when they were children (and even now for some of them). The interviewees generally praised the personal characteristics of these women, indicating the desirability of cultivating a relationship with them. Relating to their nannies in this way was encouraged by similar positive attitudes of parents towards these employees. Moreover, 'gaps' in parental provision – be it owing to long working hours or complicated parent-child dynamics – enhanced the attachment of participants to their nannies. Hence in past studies, domestic workers were considered indispensable to families who prized them (Hau-nung Chan, 2005).

Nevertheless, limitations on closeness were unmistakeable. While participants claimed that their domestic workers were like mothers, sisters, aunts or friends to them, they were still expected to be domestic workers. Thus, some participants expressed frustration when certain duties were not completed or deviance from the role of the 'maid' was evident. Furthermore, boundary work was present in determining the scope of the relationship between nanny and child with domestic workers choosing to maintain distance, parents limiting the involvement of these women and children accepting the boundaried nature of these interactions. These limitations on the scope of the relationship between families and their domestic workers have been echoed elsewhere. Lan (2003b) considers the active ways in which women put up boundaries to defend against domestic workers being *too* close to the family. On the other hand, Macdonald (1998) discusses the pretend boundaries that show a difference between mother and nanny when really their functions are the same but one is relegated to perform 'shadow mother-work'. The general absence of fathers in this study seems to confirm notions of domestic work as a feminised enterprise (Moya, 2007). While fathers may have opinions about the domestic workers they employ, they appear to be the least involved with these women out of all the family members. Considering the overlap between mothers and nannies, it is no surprise that Nyamnjoh (2005) notes the friction that frequently exists between these two women in what Burman (2008, p.174) declares the 'tug of love' over children.

Though such tension was not clearly delineated in this report, more aloofness was described as existing in mothers' relating to domestic workers.

A number of factors determine this complex way of relating. Constructions of how everyday life *should* be were powerful in creating the above dynamics. Modern notions of the family seem to make it problematic to equate the importance of non-kin to blood relations even when this person's presence may outdo that of a parent. Moreover, the privacy of the home is not immune to the racial divides entrenched in South African society. Rather, the home can be viewed as a microcosm for the subtleties of whiteness as a position of power and superiority that disallow cross-racial relationships to flourish to their full capacity (Cock, 1989). The resistance to speaking about these issues was understood as an unconscious means of maintaining the privileged position of the white participants. However, it may also have been a defensive strategy employed against the discomfort that accompanies the guilt and tension of social discrepancies. Although these reasons were provided, no clear-cut answers can be assumed as these relationships were found to be riddled with the complications of context penetrating the insularity and shelter of a care-giving relationship. This is in keeping with Goldman's (2003) assertions that nannies can have a significant impact on identity formation and personal development but that the dictates of social norms demand that these contributions be screened.

Certain overt displays of whiteness inevitably mediated the discourses of the participants. Thus, participants unknowingly portrayed themselves as being in a position of greater power than their domestic workers. This was evident in the bestowal of provisions on their domestic workers, in the description of 'their' cultural and social differences and in how the domestic workers were, in a sense, allowed into their families. The fact that no consideration of how participants' own cultural norms and differences may have impacted on their domestic workers seems to support this hypothesis. While many of the participants did demonstrate sensitivity towards the difficult living conditions of their domestic workers, this still underlines their own perceived superior position in relation to their nannies.

However, it transpired through these narratives that the domestic workers described here are not completely powerless. Although complicated by social hierarchies, their active decisions to put up various boundaries showed their agency. Interestingly, the control exercised by domestic workers not to join the family in social activities or to retain their exclusive use of their languages for themselves, appears to have been troubling to the participants. Whether this is because it challenged the closeness of the relationship or because it destabilised the advantages of whiteness is a matter of speculation.

The findings in this study support Poster's (1988) argument that multiple caregivers may be an optimal arrangement for healthy psychological development. The nannies of these participants provided their charges with additional support, care and security. Where parents were unable to be fully present for their children, this function was even more significant. Thus these caregivers were often indispensable to some of the participants. However, it is the complicated nature of racial and social hierarchies, family allegiances and domestic work itself that can, to some extent, undermine the role of the additional caregiver in the child's life.

4.5.2. Limitations and Implications for Future Research

Although this study aimed to investigate the relationships between domestic workers and employers' children from the perspective of the 'child' whose voice is so absent from the literature, comparing the child's views of the relationship to those of the domestic worker may be valuable. Because there is investment on the participants' part in upholding an image of positive interactions between them and their nannies, some of the nuances of the complexities in this relationship may have been missed. An indication of how both people in these dyads feel would help to deepen the results found in this analysis.

Moreover, a rating of the domestic worker's importance in the participants' hierarchy of relationships would be a clearer indication of how vital this closeness actually is for those who purport close relationships with their domestic workers. This would also clarify aspects of the assertions made in light of Poster's (1988) endorsement of multiple caregivers. More in depth conversations about children's relationships with their parents would be necessary to establish whether domestic workers are cherished for filling in for parents or whether these bonds can also develop when a child's psychological needs are not going unmet. Additionally, an exploration of the constructions of families might shed light on what extent various people feel able to welcome non-familial focal figures into their lives.

A question that has arisen in conducting this research concerns whether those whose domestic workers worked long periods of time for the family but are not considered close to them would speak about the same functions being met. It seems that some of the important roles played by the domestic workers in this study might be evident in most settings. In that case, what is it that makes these relationships in particular close ones?

Lastly, owing to constraints on the scope of this report, the researcher had to accept only white people who volunteered for an interview. Considering the dominance of social matters intertwined in the fabric of relationships between white children and black domestic workers, it would be intriguing to examine whether the types of findings described above would be relevant where the children in question are black.

4.5.3. The tenth participant: a final note on reflexivity

Owing to my own views on and involvement in this field of study, it is likely that my notions of what constitutes the relationship between domestic workers and their employers' children guided the process of data analysis to some degree. Indeed, my surprise at some of the participants' avoidance of the more contentious issues alerted me both to consider the participants' words for what they are as well as to probe further into the meaning of silences and omissions.

While I initially found it curious that the participants sometimes became defensive or found it difficult to speak, I too, soon became a part of a 'collective silence' and feared excavating too deeply into the interviewees reports. This may have been an unconscious means of suppressing an awareness of our common misdemeanours as whites in cross-racial relationships in South Africa, especially ones that bear such significance. My supervisor gently pointed out my intermittent failures to critically engage with the realities of whiteness in mediating these relationships. I also felt that perhaps, as I supposed of some of the participants, I might be doing damage to any of the real love and affection that may have existed or still exist in the relationships dissected here. Furthermore, as all the participants and myself were once children without a say of whether or not we wanted nannies, the less comfortable aspects of the relationships seemed to some extent an unfair attack on people who had simply embraced the women who entered their lives in such a significant way. Thus, while I stretched myself to adopt a more critical lens, I question whether it is critical enough.

Some moments of astounding honesty and self-exposure in the narratives of the interviewees inspired and helped me to convey the ambivalent, complex positions in which they find themselves with less hesitation. The painful recognition of some of the more under-handed aspects of these purportedly familial connections was too authentic to be ignored.

The fact that such a struggle was involved in opening these avenues of thought and speech testifies to the importance of disrupting social silences. I hope that this report will be a start to dispelling the silence that has lingered for so long in the literature on the place of domestic workers in the South African family.

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Appendix A: Ethical Clearance

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (SCHOOL OF HUMAN & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: MCLIN/11/001 IH**
PROJECT TITLE:	Domestic Bliss: How a group of white South Africans understand their relationships with the domestic workers who helped to raise them.
INVESTIGATORS	Swisa Sarit
DEPARTMENT	Psychology
DATE CONSIDERED	23/03/11
DECISION OF COMMITTEE*	Approved

This ethical clearance is valid for 2 years and may be renewed upon application

DATE: 19 May 2011

CHAIRPERSON
(Professor M. Lucas)

cc Supervisor: Prof N. Duncan
Psychology

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR (S)

To be completed in duplicate and **one copy** returned to the Secretary, Room 100015, 10th floor, Senate House, University.

I/we fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure, as approved, I/we undertake to submit a revised protocol to the Committee.

This ethical clearance will expire on 31 December 2013

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES

Appendix B: Interview Schedule

General Information

- What is the full name of your domestic worker? (African name if known too?)
- How old were you when your domestic worker started working for you?
- How long did she work for your family?
- What were her hours? Did she live on your premises?
- How many hours a day were you in contact with her?

Vignette:

Lilly began working for the Stevenson family when Jane was seven years old. She stayed in the Alexandra township with her three children and travelled to and from work daily, making her hours 7:30 to 17:00 Monday to Friday. Sometimes Mr and Mrs Stevenson would ask Lilly to come in on weekends when they had guests or were to go away, leaving Jane and her two brothers with Lilly.

Everyday, when Jane came home from school Lilly would open for her and make her lunch. When Jane was smaller she would bath her and put her into pyjamas, often blow-drying her hair on a cold day. Jane liked following Lilly around the house as she worked, telling her about her latest news and intrigues. Things were always different on days when Lilly did not come to work and Jane felt her absence. This was probably because Lilly made the house feel homely and warm as she always took pride in her work.

- How does your relationship with ____ compare to that of Jane and Lilly?

The relationship

- Can you describe the nature of your relationship with_____?
- Did _____ ever punish you? If so, how?
- In what ways could you identify with _____?
- What are some of your most significant memories with_____?
- How do you think _____ felt about you?

Fitting in with the family

- Who is in your family?
- What were everyone's roles and responsibilities?
- How did _____fit into the family?
- Did you consider _____ to be a part of the family?
- Did _____ ever join your family in any social activities? What was that like?

- What was _____'s relationship like with the other members of your family? (parents, siblings)
- How do you think your mother felt about the relationship between you and _____?
- How did this affect your relationship with your mother?
- How do you think your father felt about the relationship between you and _____?
- How did this affect your relationship with your father?

Social disparities

- What differences between you and ____ are you aware of?
- When and how did you start noticing these differences between you and your nanny?
- Did the fact that you are white and she black play out in the relationship? How?
- Do you think that if your nanny was white your relationship would be different? How? Why?
- Does she have children? If yes, how much time could she spend with them?

Vignette:

> Initially, caught up in the self-centered adventures of childhood, I was unaware of the full implications of the circumstances that had enshrined Emily as my primary protector. Listening to her I could understand the injustice, but I simply loved the fact that she was at my side morning, noon and night. I enjoyed her full attention and did not ponder what her commitment to me meant for her relationship with her own children….
>
> Gradually I became conscious of the contradiction between the dignified and loving Emily, adorned in her high 'doek' and black-rimmed Malcom X spectacles, and the low status that she occupied in our social world. Emily and her peers lined our homes with their warmth and dedication, yet they usually lived in cramped rooms in the bottom of our gardens, carried their identities in their pockets and lived thousands of kilometers away from their own children and families (Apartheid Archives, N15).

- How does this story fit in with your own experiences of the differences between you and_____?

Appendix C: Participant Information sheet

Dear fellow student,

My name is Sarit Swisa and I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. My area of focus is that of the relationships developed between domestic workers and the children whom they helped to raise. Domestic work constitutes the largest job market for black women in South Africa and it is thus relevant to understand how the socio-political context of this country impacts on the relationships cultivated between these women and their employers' children. This is especially pertinent when noting that these women spend significant time caring for these children and sometimes become a secondary caregiver in the family. Furthermore, exploring how this extra-familial caregiver role affects family dynamics between child and parents is another important element to be researched.

I hereby invite you to be a past of this study. Participation will entail being interviewed by me, at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview will last for approximately one hour. With your permission this interview will be recorded in order to ensure accuracy. Participation is voluntary, and no person will be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not participate in the study. All of your responses will be kept confidential, and no information that could identify you would be included in the research report. The interview material (tapes and transcripts) will not be seen or heard by any person in this organization other than my supervisor Professor Duncan at any time, and will only be processed by myself with his guidance. You may refuse to answer any questions you would prefer not to, and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any point.

If you choose to participate in the study, please contact me on the number or email address provided below.
If you have any questions you would like to ask before agreeing to be a part of this research feel free to contact me.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. This research will contribute to a larger body of knowledge on understanding the relationships between domestic workers and the children whom they help to raise.

Kind Regards

Sarit Swisa

Researcher

084 887 5556

saritswisa@hotmail.com

Professor Norman Duncan

Supervisor

011 717 4525

Norman.Duncan@wits.ac.za

Appendix D: Consent Form (Interview)





Consent Form

I, _____, consent to being interviewed by Sarit Swisa for her study on understanding the relationships between domestic workers and the children whom they help to raise.

I understand that:

- Participation in this interview is voluntary.
- That I may refuse to answer any questions I would prefer not to.
- I may withdraw from the study at any time.
- No information that may identify me will be included in the research report, and my responses will remain confidential.
- The research report may use my quotes as long as they are not identifiable as mine.
- The findings of this study, as informed by my contributions, may be subject to publication at some stage.
- The data will be destroyed after two years if the research is published and after six years if no publication emerges.

Signed _____

Date_____

Appendix E: Consent form (recording)





I, _____, consent to my interview with Sarit Swisa for her study on understanding the relationships between domestic workers and the children whom they help to raise being tape-recorded. I understand that:

- The tapes and transcripts will not be seen or heard by any person in this institution at any time, and will only be processed by the researcher and supervisor.
- All tape recordings will be destroyed after the research is complete.
- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.
- The research report may use my quotes as long as they are not identifiable as mine.
- The findings of this study, as informed by my contributions, may be subject to publication at some stage.
- The data will be destroyed after two years if the research is published and after six years if no publication emerges

Signed _____

Date _____

Appendix F

Dear Participant,

Thank you very much for taking part in this research project. Your contribution to psychological research in South Africa is greatly appreciated. Should you wish to view the final research report, it will be available from me in December. I will also email you a summary of the findings.

If you feel that you would like to speak to a trained mental-health professional, please contact the following organisations. They are available on campus for your convenience. You can utilize their services for free or if possible for a nominal fee only.

Emthonjeni Centre:

011 717 4513/4559

Located on East Campus (please see first map attached)

Career and Counselling Development Unit:

011 717 9140/32

Located in the CCDU building, West Campus, Gate 9, Enoch Sontonga Avenue, Braamfontein (please see second map attached). They charge R30 per session for students.

Furthermore, if you do not feel comfortable with these services or would like extra support or more anonymous professional support, you can contact the **South African Depression and Anxiety Group** on their toll free number 0800 567 567. They offer telephonic counselling and can also refer you to free mental health services in your area as well as provide you with literature on mental health.

Thank you again.

Kind regards,

Sarit Swisa

Researcher

084 887 5556

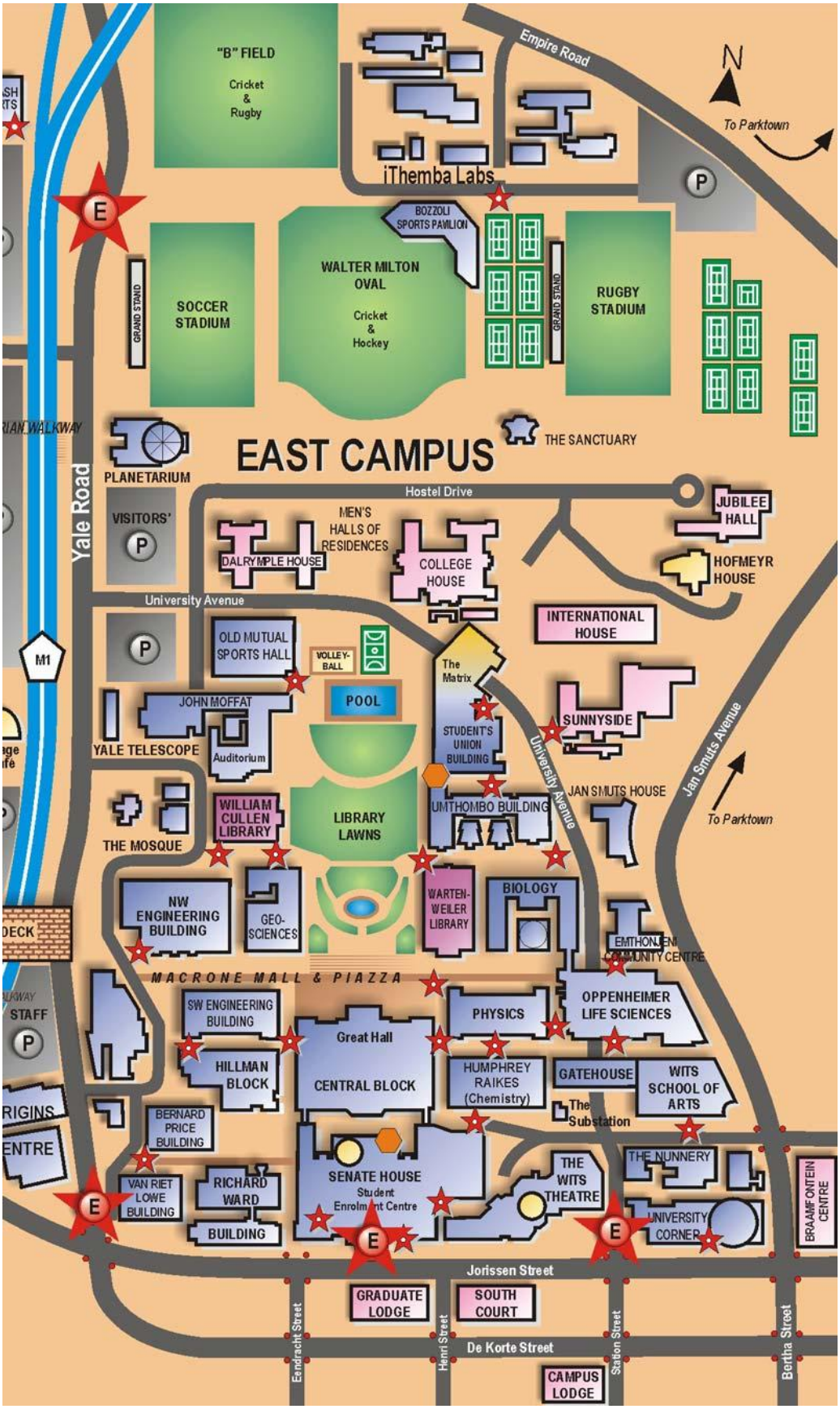
saritswisa@hotmail.com

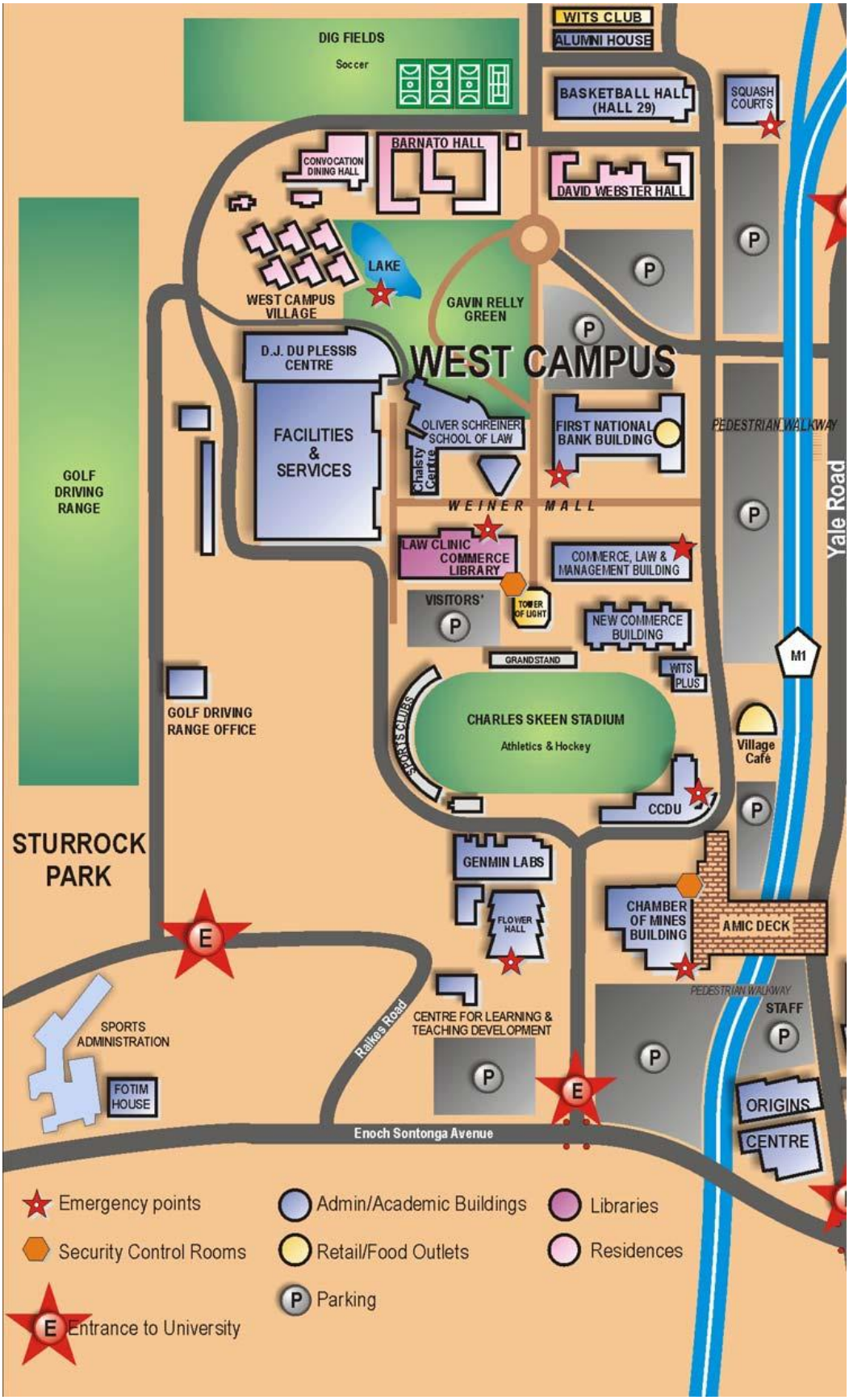
Professor Norman Duncan

Supervisor

011 717 4525

Norman.Duncan@wits.ac.za


"B" FIELD
Cricket
&
Rugby
Empire Road
N
To Parktown
iThemba Labs
P
E
BOZZOLI SPORTS PAVILION
WALTER MILTON OVAL
Cricket
&
Hockey
SOCCER STADIUM
GRAND STAND
GRAND STAND
RUGBY STADIUM
EAST CAMPUS
THE SANCTUARY
PLANETARIUM
Yale Road
Hostel Drive
VISITORS'
P
MEN'S HALLS OF RESIDENCES
DALRYMPLE HOUSE
COLLEGE HOUSE
JUBILEE HALL
HOFMEYR HOUSE
University Avenue
INTERNATIONAL HOUSE
M1
P
OLD MUTUAL SPORTS HALL
VOLLEY-BALL
The Matrix
POOL
JOHN MOFFAT
Auditorium
YALE TELESCOPE
STUDENT'S UNION BUILDING
SUNNYSIDE
University Avenue
Jan Smuts Avenue
To Parktown
JAN SMUTS HOUSE
UMTHOMBO BUILDING
WILLIAM CULLEN LIBRARY
LIBRARY LAWNS
THE MOSQUE
NW ENGINEERING BUILDING
GEO-SCIENCES
WARTEN-WEILER LIBRARY
BIOLOGY
EMTHONJENI COMMUNITY CENTRE
MACRONE MALL & PIAZZA
STAFF
P
SW ENGINEERING BUILDING
HILLMAN BLOCK
Great Hall
CENTRAL BLOCK
PHYSICS
OPPENHEIMER LIFE SCIENCES
HUMPHREY RAIKES (Chemistry)
GATEHOUSE
WITS SCHOOL OF ARTS
The Substation
BERNARD PRICE BUILDING
VAN RIET LOWE BUILDING
RICHARD WARD BUILDING
SENATE HOUSE
Student Enrolment Centre
THE WITS THEATRE
THE NUNNERY
UNIVERSITY CORNER
BRAAMFONTEIN CENTRE
E
E
E
Jorissen Street
GRADUATE LODGE
SOUTH COURT
Eendracht Street
Henri Street
De Korte Street
Station Street
Bertha Street
CAMPUS LODGE


DIG FIELDS
Soccer
WITS CLUB
ALUMNI HOUSE
BASKETBALL HALL (HALL 29)
SQUASH COURTS
CONVOCATION DINING HALL
BARNATO HALL
DAVID WEBSTER HALL
LAKE
WEST CAMPUS VILLAGE
GAVIN RELLY GREEN
WEST CAMPUS
D.J. DU PLESSIS CENTRE
FACILITIES & SERVICES
OLIVER SCHREINER SCHOOL OF LAW
Chaisty Centre
FIRST NATIONAL BANK BUILDING
PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY
WEINER MALL
GOLF DRIVING RANGE
LAW CLINIC COMMERCE LIBRARY
COMMERCE, LAW & MANAGEMENT BUILDING
VISITORS'
TOWER OF LIGHT
NEW COMMERCE BUILDING
Yale Road
M1
GRANDSTAND
WITS PLUS
GOLF DRIVING RANGE OFFICE
CHARLES SKEEN STADIUM
Athletics & Hockey
SPORTS CLUBS
Village Café
CCDU
STURROCK PARK
GENMIN LABS
FLOWER HALL
CHAMBER OF MINES BUILDING
AMIC DECK
PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY
STAFF
SPORTS ADMINISTRATION
Raikes Road
CENTRE FOR LEARNING & TEACHING DEVELOPMENT
FOTIM HOUSE
ORIGINS CENTRE
Enoch Sontonga Avenue
Emergency points
Admin/Academic Buildings
Libraries
Security Control Rooms
Retail/Food Outlets
Residences
Parking
Entrance to University

Appendix G: Poster to Invite Potential Participants to Participate in Study

Dear fellow students

My name is Sarit Swisa and I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Masters degree in Clinical Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand.

My area of focus is that of the relationships developed between domestic workers and the children whom they helped to raise. Domestic work constitutes the largest job market for black women in South Africa and it is thus relevant to understand how the socio-political context of this country impacts on the relationships cultivated between these women and their employers' children. This is especially pertinent when noting that these women spend significant time caring for these children and sometimes become a secondary caregiver in the family. Furthermore, exploring how this extra-familial caregiver role affects family dynamics between child and parents is another important element to be researched.

If you have/had what you consider to be a close relationship with your domestic worker and she worked for your family for five to ten years, I would really like to hear about your experience of that relationship.

Participation in this research will entail being interviewed by me, at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview will last for approximately one hour. Participation is voluntary, and no person will be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not participate in the study. All of your responses will be kept confidential, and no information that could identify you would be included in the research report.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated!



Kind Regards

Sarit Swisa

Researcher

084 887 5556

saritswisa@hotmail.com