

IKITCHINI : THE HIDDEN SIDE OF WOMEN'S LABOUR

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation seeks to examine an area of South African historiography which has largely been ignored, that is, domestic labour. It posits a relationship between working class women, domestic labour paid and unpaid. The material has been arranged around the primary objective of examining the silence around domestic labour and highlighting the gender content of domestic work. It is divided into two parts. The first part examines the conceptualization of class and gender struggles, while the second part examines aspects of working class women's experience of this. Chapter One deals with why women have been ignored in recorded history; Chapter Two examines Marxist approaches to the Woman Question. Chapter Three examines the silence around women's experience in South African historiography, while Chapter Four is a critical examination of the recorded history of domestic workers. Chapter Five examines aspects of black working class women's experience of domestic labour in their own families, while Chapter Six documents the experience of a group of organized workers in Cape Town. The study concludes that the way forward is to develop a gender sensitive class analysis as outlined in the work of Lise Vogel. This will open up new areas for research, for example, the rise of the public and private dichotomy, the separation of productive and reproductive labour, the ideology of motherhood and sexuality as well as the changing nature of the social construction of gender identity.

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For our silenced people, century after century their beings consumed in the hard, everyday essential work of maintaining human life. Their art, which still they made - as their other contributions - anonymous; refused respect, recognition; past.

For those of us (few yet in number, for the way is punishing), their kin and descendants, who begin to emerge into more flowered and rewarded use of ourselves in ways denied to them; - and by our achievement bearing witness to what was (and still is) being lost, silenced.

Tillie Olsen

For the domestic workers and friends who have encouraged and nurtured my understanding. Thank you.

MAY WOMEN'S VOICES BE HEARD!

INTRODUCTION

The ideas examined in this dissertation began to emerge politically and academically as a research focus with the resurfacing of mass-based struggles in South Africa over the last fifteen years. The growth of the independent trade union movement and community-based organizations increasingly resulted in the organization of women workers and the need to challenge the specific nature of their oppression. In the universities this wider development found expression in moves to record and analyse the history of women's struggles. These developments also need to be seen against the background of intensifying international class and gender struggles. Anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles in Asia, Africa and South America resulted in the organization of women on an unprecedented scale. Women's struggle against class, gender and national oppression has developed as an integral part of national liberation movements. With the defeat of imperialism in Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam, Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau workers and peasants began to face the challenge of changing the dominant forms of social relations. Internationally and in South Africa, within mass-based organizations and at universities, workers, peasants and intellectuals, men and women, began a re-examination of the Woman Question. In Western Europe and the United States of America, the rise of the feminist movement in the late-1960s strengthened this process. The crises of late capitalism were also crises of bourgeois ideological dominance. In the 1960s and 1970s at universities in Western Europe and North America, the examination of women's struggles began to develop into women's studies with a form and character of its own. Intellectuals, mainly women, challenged the form and content of academic research and teaching. Arguing that, as presently constituted it was gender-blind, hierarchically structured and resulted in the silencing of women's experience¹. Questions were raised regarding the relationship between intellectuals and women's organizations and around the strategies and tactics of organizing women. Political divisions emerged which coalesced into movements divided along bourgeois-feminist, radical-feminist, socialist- and Marxist-feminist lines as well as more orthodox Marxist approaches².

Finally, socialist societies and movements were critically examined to develop an understanding of how to proceed toward a resolution of the Woman Question. (For more details, see Chapter 2.)

Women's studies led to the development of three broad areas of concern. Firstly, the resolution of the Woman Question was dependent on an adequate theorization of the specificity of women's position in class societies. This in turn demands a theoretical understanding of the reproduction of the relations of production and the forms of ideological and social organization which characterize it. A failure in this regard may have profound consequences for the working class's ability to destroy the forms of social organizations which subordinate women. Secondly, there was the need to begin a process of re-recording history so that it reflects the experience of men and women of the dominated classes. And thirdly, there was the nature of the relationship of women to organizations. In what way could women be effectively organised? What was the relationship of intellectuals to these organizations?

My interest in this area of research began with an honours dissertation which examined the working conditions of domestic workers in Sea Point, a suburb of Cape Town. For me this raised the question of the relationship of women to domestic labour. However, I was unable even to begin to resolve this question as there was so little primary and secondary material available. Thus, when this research project was begun, a necessary starting point and objective seemed to be attempting to explain the silence around domestic labour, as well as clarifying the nature of the relationship between women and domestic labour. This objective raised the following questions: How can we explain the silence around domestic labour? Have we been successful in theorizing the specificity of women's position in class societies? What have some of the class and gender struggles been which have characterized domestic work as a form of wage labour? What has been the effect on domestic

workers of having to labour in two families - their own and their employers? How do we begin the process of recording history of domestic labour? How do we break the silences around rape, battery and other forms of gender socialization and subordination? How do we develop a gender sensitive approach to research?

The process, however, was a slow and often confusing one. The silence surrounding women's experience and the sexist nature of much primary and secondary material, coupled with diffuse ideological and theoretical works characterizing Women's Studies in first world countries, often clouded rather than clarified issues. Furthermore, the individualistic nature of academic research served to reduce co-operation between others engaged in similar projects. The difficulty of attempting to develop a concept of gender-sensitive research while at the same time trying to clarify the conceptualization of gender, created a number of structural problems in the research. Attempting to concretely define what gender is and how it relates to class and race are issues that have still not been adequately resolved. Consequently, the relations between the sexual and racial divisions of labour are imperfectly dealt with in this work as I have attempted to unravel the intersections between class and gender as a first step in this process. Secondly, the work lacks historical depth as the changing nature of the relationship between class and gender can not be adequately documented until many further studies have been undertaken. Lastly, all these problems have been compounded by the intensification of popular struggle during the period of research. Successive states of emergency in South Africa, increasing censorship and social upheavals on campuses have made research in working class communities extremely difficult while simultaneously calling into question the nature and value of such research.

Despite these problems, concentrating on the relationship between class and gender, has helped to clarify and define a concept of gender and its interconnections to other social divisions in capitalist

societies. At the same time, by challenging the power relations between researcher and researched, domestic workers helped define the nature of gender-sensitive research. This allowed workers to speak of their experiences and begin the process of taking control of their history. Two examples illustrate this point. Firstly, workers were intimidated by the use of a tape recorder during interviews and suggested using drama as an alternative way of telling their stories.

Secondly, informants emphasized the importance of the double shift, that is, the relationship between paid and unpaid domestic labour. Previously, South African studies had only concentrated on domestic work. However, workers I interviewed stressed the connections between domestic labour and domestic work and this forced me to try and find the theoretical tools to explain this relationship. The approach which seemed best able to grapple with these questions was Lise Vogel's Marxism and the Oppression of Women : Toward a Unitary Theory. Her work uncovers a classical tradition of Marxism that sought theoretical and political answers to these questions, but which was, like so much of women's story, silenced by Stalinism, reformism and repression. Vogel argues for a return to historical materialism and a development of ideas contained in the works of classical socialist militants. This approach poses solutions to the Woman Question without attempting to borrow from feminist theory. Thus, to an extent, the objectives of the research project have been fulfilled. Yet, as with all research, the process raised more questions than were answered and highlighted more weaknesses than were resolved!

The material has been arranged around the primary objectives of examining the silence around domestic labour and highlighting the gender content of domestic work. The thesis is divided into two parts. Part One focusses on the conceptualisation of class and gender struggles. Chapter One deals specifically with why women have been ignored in recorded history, while Chapter Two examines Marxist approaches to the Woman Question and attempts to develop a theorization

of the relationship between women and domestic labour. Part Two examines aspects of women's experience in South Africa related to domestic labour in its paid and unpaid forms. Chapter Three constitutes a starting point with an examination of the silences around women's experience within South African historiography. Chapter Four is a critical examination of the recorded history of domestic workers. In both these chapters, the aim is to develop a class and gender-sensitive assessment of some of the recorded history of working class women's relation to domestic labour in South Africa. Chapter Five examines black working class women's experience of domestic labour in their own families. Chapter Six seeks to document the oral testimonies of a group of organised domestic workers. These experiences were supplemented by an attempt to record some of the understanding of domestic labour gained in the process of organizing domestic workers over the last 10 years. The first part of this chapter examines the methodology used to collect these stories. The Conclusion returns to the original set of questions in an attempt to conclude the research project.

PART I : Conceptualizing Class and Gender Struggles

Since it is not for us to create a plan for the future that will hold for all time, all the more surely what we contemporaries have to do is the uncompromising critical evaluation of all that exists, uncompromising in the sense that our criticism fears neither its own results nor the conflict with the powers that be.

Karl Marx, letter to Arnold Ruge, 1884

CHAPTER ONE : THE HIDDEN SIDE OF HIS-STORY

For hundreds of years, the dominant classes in South Africa have been serviced by millions of domestic slaves and workers. Food has been cooked; clothes have been sewn and washed; houses have been cleaned; children looked after and the sick and elderly cared for by these workers. From the earliest penetration of merchant capital, slaves, captives and subsequently workers have been forced to enter domestic work. As merchant capital gave way to industrial forms of capitalism, domestic work was increasingly performed by members of the newly proletarianized and developing working class. Domestic work was thus an important source of wage labour for workers, and especially for women workers after 1914. Coerced into domestic service by the shortage of housing and alternative jobs, these workers laboured for long hours in poor conditions and received very low wages.

Despite the fact that the nature of the power relations which underpin this master and servant relationship has become deeply embedded in the consciousness of black and white South Africans, little of the story of domestic workers has been written. The physical, emotional and psychological trauma of working "in the kitchens" has largely been an invisible part of South African history. Jacklyn Cock draws our attention to this by arguing:

Domestic service constitutes one of the largest sources of employment for black women in South Africa. Yet it is largely an unstudied occupation. There has been no previous investigation of domestic workers in the Eastern Cape, and to date only two comprehensive studies of domestic workers in other areas of South Africa. This neglect is significant, for such inquiry involves questioning the accepted pattern of inequalities on which the entire social order is based.¹ (my emphasis)

Consequently, this project started as an attempt to address the neglect identified by Cock. It analyses aspects of the class, gender and racial struggles which have characterized domestic work since the

political unification of South Africa. It appeared, at first, that the major obstacle to documentation was the lack of primary and secondary material. (See below.) The explanation for this appeared to lie in the class position of the domestic workers. Given the development of racial capitalism and the ideology of apartheid, the dominant forms of historiography have ignored the participation of workers in the development of South Africa. The dominant history reflects the ideology of the ruling class. This also is true for schools of historiography, such as the liberal school, who have opposed apartheid but not capitalism. Concentrating on race as the primary category of analysis, liberals have ignored the importance of class and gender struggles in the shaping of South Africa's history. A history of domestic work within the overall development of capitalist social relations lay outside the scope of the work of liberal historians. It was left to radical scholars to begin the process of recording the history of the working class. But they also have, by and large, ignored domestic work. Thus, an explanation for the lack of primary and secondary material cannot be based on the class position of domestic workers alone for this would fail to explain the silence in radical historiography. ~~It~~ It increasingly appeared as if this lack was related to the fact that the majority of domestic workers in the twentieth century were women. The problem this presents is twofold. On the one hand there is the silence around most aspects of working class women's history, and, on the other hand, there is an inadequate conceptualization of domestic work generally. Starting from the assumption that the shortage of material was also related to the gender content of domestic work, I began to examine the relationship of working class women to domestic work. The result was an awareness of the need to develop a gender - as well as class and race - sensitive analysis of domestic work which will explain the participation of working class men and women in this form of wage labour. Furthermore, it highlighted the need to challenge the dominant forms of historiography, as their conceptual tools proved inadequate for the task of writing this history.

Women and History

Until very recently women's struggle for emancipation has been largely excluded from recorded history. Bourgeois social scientists have paid attention to women as "homemakers", "housewives" and "mothers", their contribution was mostly assessed in terms of the adequacy of their performance in these roles. On the whole, dominant social theories have failed to document and assess the contribution of women to social life. Instead they have ignored and obscured this contribution. For example, the Concise Oxford Dictionary defines history as "the continuous methodical record of public events", but the most important point here is precisely that the great majority of women have been excluded from the "public" events in capitalist social formations. The general tendency of bourgeois class domination has been to force women into the family/household and their only access to the "public world of men" has been through wage labour. Consequently, women have had a different historical experience to that of men - which is not reflected in the recording of HIS-story.

Working class women have fought hard against this attempt to silence their history.² This struggle has confronted oppression within the working class itself as well as against capital. In anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movements of national liberation, as well as in feminist struggles in the first-world, women have struggled against both relegation to the "private" sphere of the family, and to the silencing of their history. The most serious challenge to bourgeois ideology has come with the crises of late capitalism, the anti-colonial struggles and the feminist movements of this period. A growing body of literature has arisen out of these struggles and has started the process of examining women's exclusion from history and to record their story. In one such study, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese notes

The nearly universal exclusion of women from history as it has been written and taught has been no accident or mindless oversight. The best available evidence suggests that the great world historical religions, like powerful and successful states, have systematized and extended the ubiquitous patterns of male dominance that pervade

most societies. The same can be said of most formal institutions including the modern professions, labour unions and political parties. In important ways, capitalism accelerated this process...Western imperialism exported it. And few socialist revolutions have done much to correct trend. Precisely those institutions and groups most interested in producing histories as the record of their own rise and mission have reflected male intentions.³

"Man" has occupied a central and exclusive place in much recorded history. However, the subject of history has not been "man", but ruling class "man", and in many cases white (Western) ruling class "man". Radical historians have attempted to correct this by recording the history of the working class. Corrective studies have, however, only succeeded in challenging the dominant ruling class and racial character of the subject of history. As Fox Genovese points out:

The historical subject has overwhelmingly been male. In this perspective, history records man's escape from and triumph over the submerging claims of domesticity and nature...Man has made history by defining not man as other and then identifying his success with the triumph of universal values of justice and order.⁴

Adrienne Rich goes further in pointing out the danger of allowing this division to obscure reality: "The dominant male culture is separating man as knower from both women and nature as the objects of knowledge, evolved certain intellectual polarities which still have the power to blind our imaginations."⁵

The centrality of man to recorded history has also often resulted in a male-orientated periodisation of historical processes. Working class women, having been forced into taking primary responsibility for domestic labour, experience the laws of capitalist accumulation differently to working class men. Obviously though, given their class position and subjugation to the discipline of the wage, they share many common experiences. But only working class women experience the problems and struggles related to their primary responsibility for domestic labour which is socially organised within the family/household. Gerda Lerner argues: "Women's history presents a

challenge to the periodisation of traditional history. The periods in which basic changes occur in society and which historians have commonly regarded as turning points for all historical development, are not necessarily the same for men as for women."⁶

Whether periodisation is based on political, economic or conceptual criteria, it is most often a periodisation of male experiences and consequently this brings into question all historical periodisation. The task falls to us to re-periodize history so that it includes women's experience and the history of the private sphere in capitalist societies. As Thomas Pynchon's character Hanne muses:

Damn men and their politics. Perhaps it was a kind of sex for them. Didn't they even use the same word for what a man does to a woman and what a successful politician does to his unlucky opponent? What was Fashoda to her, or Marchand or Kitchener or whatever their names were, the two who had "met" - met for what? Hanne laughed, shaking her head. She could imagine for what.⁷

We need to synthesize both the meeting of Fashoda and the experiences of Hanne to begin the process of recording history.

The analysis so far raises the question of why women's experience has been different from that of men. Although a full discussion of the historical process which led to this situation falls outside the ambit of this thesis, some contextual remarks are necessary. The answer lies, in part, in the class and gender struggles which characterized the emerging capitalist social relations in nineteenth century Britain. These struggles led to the development of a sexual division of labour which has come to be a dominant characteristic of capitalism. During the nineteenth century, the development of manufacture and eventually machinofacture in Britain finally resulted in the disintegration of the pre-capitalist household unit. This process began with the development of commodity production and the rise of capitalist relations but reached maturity in the course of the nineteenth century. The process of machinofacture seemed to force productive labour from households into the factories. The integrated household unit of pre-capitalist

society was split in two : productive labour increasingly taking place in the factory and reproductive labour in the family/household. Working class women and children were drawn out of the household into productive labour as source of cheap labour power. The result was an increase in mortality rates of the working class and its long-term reproduction was thus threatened. Workers struggled hard against this process by fighting for a shorter working day and for protective legislation. These struggles and corresponding bourgeois and aristocratic interests led to the enactment of a number of Factory Acts designed to force women and children back into the home, thus ensuring the reproduction of the working class in mid-nineteenth century Britain. Where working class women continued in wage labour, it was on severely disadvantaged terms as their primary responsibility now lay with ensuring the reproduction of the working class. This process was, however, extremely uneven and slow.⁸

However it suggests that the laws of capitalist accumulation tend to result in certain generalized patterns of development of the sexual division of labour. Firstly, there appears to be a tendency to reinforce and intensify the contradictions that existed in the pre-capitalist sexual division of labour. The separation of productive and unproductive labour and the development of public and private spheres has fundamentally altered the position of women of the dominated classes. Like working class men, working class women have been separated from the means of production and of exchange through the destruction and replacement of home-based food and craft production with commodity production. The result of these two simultaneous processes was to destroy the productive basis of reproductive labour which in turn resulted in a devaluation of domestic labour and those who performed it (see Chapter 5). Secondly, the separation of productive and reproductive labour has altered the nature of the family as a form of social organization of these activities. This has resulted in the family developing into a repository for reproductive domestic labour. The productive basis of the family has been completely destroyed by

capitalist relations of production. Productive and reproductive labour have become spatially separated and this has led to a very sharp divide between public - social, political and economic activities - and private relationships. The family still remains the site for the reproduction of labour power but in a highly truncated form. Without its productive base, isolated from the public material world of class struggles over economic, political and ideological power, the family remains a major site of women's daily experience. However, the family must not be viewed as separate from class struggles in the public arena. Rather a history and understanding of the capitalist family must be placed firmly within social relations of production and reproduction. The relationship between the public and private, the material world and the family, must be clearly established as must be class and gender struggles which give rise to it.

Thirdly, an ideological devaluation of reproductive labour was a crucial consequence of the separation of productive and reproductive labour. Tasks such as cooking, sewing caring for the sick and elderly, childbirth and childcare, separated from their productive base, have become devalued and associated solely with women.⁹ Working class women were physically, emotionally and psychologically "ground down" by this devaluation which formed the basis of male ideologies related to sexuality and value. Women were judged as mother, lover and house-slave.¹⁰ In her documentation of this process, while noting its uneven development, Anna Davin concludes:

A powerful ideology of motherhood emerged in relation to...problems of the early twentieth century, though it was firmly rooted of course in nineteenth century assumptions about women, domesticity and individualism. Motherhood was given new dignity...The authority of state over individual, of professional over amateur, of science over tradition, of male over female, of ruling class over working class, were all involved in the redefining of motherhood in this period...¹¹

The devaluation of women's reproductive labour inherent in the emergence of motherhood is a crucial ideological determinant of women's oppression. Value has a positive ideological content with its material

roots in the production process. Workers create value for the bourgeoisie. Bourgeois ideology gives positive content - value - to this exploitative relationship and by so doing masks the nature of this relationship. But the determinant bourgeois is also male and thus there is positive value in the work that men do. In other words, productive activities are valued positively and associated with men.¹²

The bourgeois is not only masking the exploitative relationship of production between himself and the worker, he is also masking an exploitative relationship of reproduction with women through the ideology of motherhood. However, the male proletariat, divorced as he is from the means of production, has no option but to sell his labour power if he wants to survive.¹³ Women do have an option, however, they can refuse to undertake domestic labour. They can refuse to bear the next generation or maintain the present. Thus reproductive labour is enforced through a system of gender hierarchies and male domination which takes a violent form - rape and battery and the ideology of motherhood. The institution of motherhood, however, conceals intense psychological and physical violence. As Rich points out:

How have women given birth, who has helped them, and how, and why? These are not simply questions of the history of midwifery and obstetrics: they are political questions. The woman awaiting her period, or the onset of labour, the woman lying on a table undergoing abortion or pushing her baby out, the woman inserting a diaphragm or swallowing her daily pill, is doing these things under the influence of centuries of imprinting. Her choices - when she has any - are made, or outlawed, within the context of laws and professional codes, religious sanctions and ethnic traditions, from whose creation women have been historically excluded.¹⁴

Like bourgeois conceptions of individual freedom, parliamentary democracy and equality before the law, the ideology of motherhood obscures the real historical experience of working class women. The result is an almost complete silencing of women's historical experience. As Fox-Genovese argues, the separation of public and private and the ideology which supports it allowed women to be relegated to silence:

It helped to legitimate the economic dependence of women upon men and the exclusion of women from the expanding worlds of politics, business, the professions and organised labour: it proposed a model of womanhood that paradoxically permitted a greater licence in the exploitation of women who did not enjoy freedom from labour force participation; it cast a veil over the contradictions that divided women by race and class, and it afforded even privileged women no access to the experience of authoritative selfhood that for men was embodied in the notions of property, work and political responsibility.¹⁵

The destruction of the productive base of the pre-capitalist family; the separation of productive and reproductive labour; the rise of the public and private dichotomy and bourgeois ideology which characterize it are general tendencies of the development of the capitalist laws of accumulation. They must not be seen ahistorically and outside the context of class struggles within particular social formations. Rather, their nature and character have varied over time and between social formations depending on the outcome of particular class struggles. Central to this has been the resistance of working class women and men. However, in this regard a further point needs to be made. The role of working class men has often been contradictory. For example, in nineteenth century Britain, the trade union movement, representing mostly men, fought for a family wage. Yet such a family wage was based on women remaining outside wage labour and in the home undertaking domestic labour. In this particular case, where working class men struggled to implement a sexual division of labour, the consequences for working class women were extremely oppressive. Similarly, working class men are often the perpetrators of the most violent forms of control - rape and battery - of the sexuality of working class women. Because of the nature and form of the capitalist sexual division of labour, working class men and women have had different historical experiences and taken up different struggles.¹⁶

This is not to overlook their common struggle as workers against the yoke of capitalist exploitation. But one must also note that the dominance of the capitalist sexual division of labour results in the division of the working class into, often competing, genders. This division results in the working class family becoming the site of

intense struggles over the division of the wage, domestic labour and sexuality. The bourgeoisie have deflected struggle away from the nature of class relations and into the working class family. Further research is needed on the role of working class men in this process. The categories of "men" and "women", sexuality and motherhood are socially determined and vary over time. They are not static historical categories but shift with the class struggle. What is needed is a history of how the social construction of gender identity had changed with the development of class struggle. We are only approaching the beginning of such a task.

Male-orientated periodisation; women as objects of history; the nature of the ideology of motherhood and the social construction of gender identities are the "intellectual polarities" which blind the imagination of historians and obscure and silence women's experience of reproductive labour and our ability to research and record it. If this experience is to be documented, a way forward is the adoption of gender as a category of analysis. In this way, we can begin to explore and document the creation of gender identities and hierarchies and uncover their relationship to class struggles in a particular social formation. As Fox-Genovese argues:

Historians must accept the gender identities and roles that different societies assign to males and females as historical facts that require historical analysis. They must also recognize the characteristics ascribed to males and females as interrelated, as integral parts of a dominant gender system. The primary theoretical implication of the confrontation between women's history and official history is this recognition of gender systems as a prime category of historical analysis as deeply ingrained in social and economic formations and the political institutions to which they give rise as class relations.¹⁷

The adoption of gender as a prime category of analysis raises questions of procedure. There appear to be two options: firstly, rewrite all history so that it is gender-sensitive or, secondly, add to existing versions of history by writing the history of women. A method of placing women in history needs to be found so that history

adequately records women's perceptions and experiences. The dominant categories of history need to be challenged. The categories of sexuality, reproduction, the link between childbearing and child-rearing, role indoctrination, sexual values and myths and female consciousness need to be added to or replace existing ones.

A gender-sensitive approach will pose new questions about the past by adding new categories of historical experience to existing ones, thus broadening the present limitations of history. Women and men are the subjects of history and this could be recorded in a way which reflects the struggle between classes and genders and their historical development. We need to uncover how, why and which class and gender struggles forced women into fulfilling a daily and generational reproductive role and how this differed for women of different classes and races. We need to examine how these struggles defined the social construction of gender identity, of sexuality and consciousness. This needs to be done in a way which does not deny the historical experience of either women or men, their similarities and their differences. Gerda Lerner argues that what is necessary is:

...a history of the dialectic, the tensions between the two cultures, male and female. Such a synthesis could be based on a close comparative study of given periods in which the historical experience of men is compared to that of women, their tensions and interactions being as much the subject of study as their differences (and) thus all history as we know it, is merely pre-history. Only a new history firmly based on this recognition and equally concerned with men, women, the establishment and passing away of patriarchy, can lay claim to being a truly universal history.¹⁸

Finally, we need to lift the wall of silence around women in general, and domestic work in particular by bringing to light inherent gender oppression.

Present-day capitalist society conceals within itself numerous cases of poverty and oppression which do not immediately strike the eye. At the best of times, the scattered families of poor townspeople, artisans, workers, employees and petty officials live in incredible difficulties, barely managing to make both ends meet. Millions upon millions of women in such families live (or, rather, exist) as "domestic slaves", striving to feed and clothe their family on pennies, at the cost of desperate daily effort and "saving" on everything - except their own labour.

Lenin, 1913

CHAPTER TWO : MARXISM AND THE WOMAN QUESTION

The history of working class struggles for socialism is also in part the history of the struggle for the emancipation of women from the crushing burden of "domestic slavery". At particular historical moments working class political parties and movements of national liberation have fostered the development of women's organizations to help organize and put forward the interests of women workers. However, the gains that working class and peasant women have made have varied enormously depending on whether or not their organizations have seen the Woman Question as a fundamental aspect of socialist transformation. While it falls outside the scope of this thesis to assess the gains and failures of these struggles, if a materialist theorization of domestic work in South Africa is to be developed, some general assessment of socialist responses to the Woman Question is necessary in order to develop the clearest theoretical position. This would also facilitate our understanding of the relation between working women and the sexual division of labour.

While socialist countries have made advances in the public sphere, it is necessary to understand why this has not in itself solved the Woman Question.¹ As Lenin pointed out in an evaluation of post-revolutionary Russia:

Notwithstanding all the liberating laws that have been passed, women continue to be a domestic slave, because petty housework crushes, strangles, stultifies and depraves her, chains her to the kitchen and the nursery, and wastes her labour on the barbarously unproductive petty, nerve-wracking, stultifying and crushing drudgery.²

Maxine Molyneux in her review of socialist countries policy on the Woman Question notes:

The most significant difficulties lie, ... in the forms of inequality which are inherent in the policies of these states; these are often hidden behind formal equality that women have acquired and behind the accession of women to previously unconventional occupations. These problems have been identified as the persistence of the sexual division of labour in employment, in which the tasks allocated to women are less

well rewarded and less esteemed than those of men; and the failure to alleviate the burden of housework or to equalize the burden of domestic labour and responsibility between the sexes. The result is that in effect women working outside the home have to perform the notorious "double shift". Underlying this untransformed domestic situation is the failure to re-define men's roles in a manner comparable to the redefinition of women's roles - so that the latter become not so much a re-definition as the addition of a new role (participation in the labour force) onto an almost completely unreconstructed older one (mother and housewife).³

Socialists and socialist countries have tended to stress women's incorporation into social production and changes in legal relations as necessary and sufficient to the resolution of the Woman Question. Despite advances in access to education, childcare facilities, maternity rights and marriage laws, socialist policy has tended to be characterized by economism and legalism. According to Joanne Yawitch, the underlying assumption of this economism is:

That the origins of female oppression lie in the institution of private property, and that with its abolition, and the economic independence of women who are able to earn a wage, the basis for male domination disappear.⁴

This results in failure to understand women's reproductive labour and the ideology of male chauvanism. More specifically, this has meant that relations between men and women and the different effect of class relations on women have been inadequately theorized. As Molyneux points out:

Neither Engels nor subsequent official theorists have satisfactorily established the link between women's subordination and class relations and there are many problems with the explanation of the origin of women's subordination as lying in their marginalisation from productive work.⁵

The inability to satisfactorily establish this link has been compounded in socialist practice by an emphasis in policy on reforming the public sphere.

Sheila Rowbotham argues that it is more than a result of economism and/or inadequate theorization, that has led to present socialist policy on the Woman Question. She suggests that reformism and distor-

tions of Marxism in the process of its history and development are also responsible:

The Marxist tradition...increasingly emphasized the economic improvements of women's position at work and the changes in legal relations. Important as these changes were, they obscured the ideological role of the family in maintaining capitalism and also led Marxists completely to ignore the nature of female production in the family...the distortion in the Marxist tradition which tended to identify the material world only with the conditions of commodity production...held back an understanding of the interaction between commodity production and other aspects of life under capitalism.⁶

If Rowbotham is correct in her assessment, how are we to understand this distortion in socialist tradition? How can we account for the economism and inadequate theorization of women's position under capitalist relations? It is necessary to begin with an explanation of why socialist women's struggle has not always been able to solve the Woman Question. Furthermore, explanations are needed to understand why socialist historiography has at times inadequately reflected women's experience and has also seen women as objects of history, utilized male-orientated periodization and failed to explain bourgeois male ideologies. The answer is varied and complex. In part it lies in the particular conditions of struggle facing working class women's organizations in different social formations. Some general comments are necessary, however, and what follows serves to raise questions, while not providing definitive answers.

Central to the classical socialist conception of the Woman Question was Fredrich Engels' Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, written in 1884. This work has a number of serious theoretical flaws which have become absorbed into the international socialist movement. Firstly, central to Engels' analysis is an assumption that domestic labour - "family duties" - are the sole responsibility of women. This "natural division of labour within the family" is not seriously challenged by him and reflects Victorian morality and possibly Engels' own relationship to domestic labour. However, it is precisely these "family duties" that need to be challenged, theorized

and documented. It is necessary to explain how the family developed as a site of the reproduction of labour power and how women became primarily responsible for this. The family needs to be placed firmly within the development of social relations of production and cannot stand as an autonomous sphere of development. Although this is fundamental to historical materialist methodology, Engels, for some unexplained reason, moves away from his basic principles in his characterization of the family and social relations. Lise Vogel argues:

Engels made one argument in the Origin that the socialist movement later endorsed, but which has recently been taken up by the theorists of the contemporary women's liberation movement. In a frequently cited passage from the 1884 preface to the Origin, Engels spoke of two types of production proceeding in parallel: on the one hand, the production of the means of subsistence, and on the other, the production of human beings...Socialists at the turn of the century found the preface's assertion concerning the duality of social reproduction "very remarkable", indeed "almost incomprehensible"...What disturbed these theorists was the implication that the family represents an autonomous, if not wholly independent, centre of social development. And it is precisely this implication that has caught the imagination of contemporary socialist feminists....⁷

This theoretical dualism has serious consequences for the socialist movement. It has allowed those following Engels to concentrate on the production of the means of subsistence- the public sphere (see above); while their own chauvinism and subordination of women's labour has allowed them to ignore the "production of human beings". Consequently, this dualist theoretical formulation has characterized reformist tendencies within Marxism and hindered a theoretical formulation that seeks to integrate the relations of production and reproduction.

Engels' formulation is problematic for other reasons as well. As Hartmann points out:

Engels argued further that as the extension of wage labour destroyed the small holding peasantry, and women and children were incorporated

into the wage labour along with men, the authority of the male head of household was undermined, and patriarchal relations were destroyed...For Engels, then, women's participation in the labour force was the key to their emancipation. Capitalism would abolish sex differences and treat all workers equally. Women would become economically independent of men and would participate on an equal footing with men in bringing about the proletarian revolution. After the revolution, when all people would be workers and private property abolished, women would be emancipated from capital as well as from men.⁸

Here Engels seems to descend into a romantic utopianism that probably stems from his failure to analyze the intersections between social relations of production and the sexual division of labour. By accepting women's relation to domestic labour as given and believing it will disappear with the advent of socialism, Engels' fails to come to terms with social relations which produced the public-private dichotomy and bourgeois ideology that characterizes this divide. The socialist movement, however, seems to have absorbed his contention that the absorption of women into wage labour and the juridical abolition of private property will fundamentally alter the structures of women's oppression.

The second major work of classical socialism is August Bebel's Women and Politics, published in 1879. This work reflected the reformism of the Second International and clearly highlights Rowbotham's "distortion of the Marxist tradition" theory. Lise Vogel argues that:

Bebel, caught up in the reformist tendencies of his time, replaces Marx's concept of class exploitation with the vague and far less confrontational notion of dependence, particularly the independence of the individual on others...Despite Bebel's commitment to socialism, his emphasis of the full development of the individual in future society recalls nothing so much as liberalism, the political philosophy of the nineteenth century bourgeoisie.⁹

Women's economic dependence on men is certainly a feature of the public-private dichotomy characterizing capitalist social formations. Yet the replacement of the concept of class exploitation with the notion of dependence leads to a muddled theorization of the specificity of women's position rather than significantly developing our under-

standing of this. It too formed a basis for economic solutions which argued that once women became productive workers, then dependency would be removed.

An alternative formulation to that of Bebel and Engels emerged out of the works of other classical socialist militants like Lenin, Kollontai and Zetkin. They argued for the examination of the position of women in historically specific classes and modes of production. They specifically rejected universalistic notions of "women" and "the family" and highlighted the necessity for challenging bourgeois ideology and working class women's position in reproductive labour. They began to develop an understanding of the relationship between working class women, reproductive labour, the public-private dichotomy, the sexual division of labour and bourgeois ideology. Linked to this was women's exclusion from political power and social inequality with men. They argued that the transformation of both bourgeois ideology and domestic work would form the basis of new social relations between men and women.¹⁰ As Lise Vogel points out with regard to Lenin's work:

From the start, Lenin always put more weight on the problem of women's material oppression within the individual family household than on their lack of rights, their exclusion from equal social participation, or their dependence upon men. Speaking of peasant and proletarian women, and sometimes of petit-bourgeois women as well, he repeatedly drew a picture of domestic slavery, household bondage, humiliating subjugation by the savage demands of kitchen and nursery drudgery, and the like. This emphasis was unique in the Marxist literature....¹¹

For Lenin, women were oppressed by "domestic slavery", that is, the performance of unpaid domestic labour within the household:

The female half of the human race is doubly oppressed under capitalism. The working woman and the peasant woman are oppressed by capital, but over and above that, even in the most democratic of the bourgeois republics, they remain, firstly, deprived of some rights because the law does not give them equality with men; and secondly - and this is the main thing - they remain in "household bondage", they continue to be "household slaves", for they are overburdened with the drudgery of the most squalid and backbreaking and stultifying toil in the kitchen and individual family household.¹²

Lenin also pointed to the contradictory role that working class men played in perpetuating and reinforcing the nature of "household slavery". He emphasized that the personal consciousness of socialists must not be divorced from the economism and reformism already mentioned:

Unfortunately, we may still say of many of our comrades, "Scratch the Communist and a philistine appears". To be sure, you have to scratch the sensitive spots - such as their mentality regarding women. Could there be any more palpable proof than the common sight of a man calmly watching a woman wear herself out with trivial, monotonous, strength- and time-consuming work, such as her housework, and watching her spirit shrinking, her mind growing dull, her heartbeat growing faint, and her will growing slack?¹³

Many socialists, scholars and organizers alike have become trapped within the public-private dichotomy. This has resulted in a failure to challenge the nature of this dichotomy and an acceptance of the sexual division of labour which underlies it. For too long what is private has been seen as apolitical and this has obscured the political nature of personal relationships and the power struggles which characterize them. As Sheila Rowbotham observes: "The intimate oppression of women forces a re-definition of what is personal and what is political."¹⁴ Unfortunately, this aspect of Lenin's work, like so much of women's history, was suppressed by the strength of bourgeois ideology and reformist and Stalinist tendencies within the socialist movement. Underlying this has been an acceptance of this division of labour and a concentration of efforts for the resolution of the Woman Question in the public sphere. Some Marxist traditions have served to reinforce the separation of the public and private and the ideology which characterizes it. The failure to build on these foundations has obscured the specificity of women's position and the political nature of women's oppression. We should theorize more adequately the sexual division of labour in the household, the role of working class women in generational replacement, the nature of their incorporation into wage labour and bourgeois ideology that arises from and is crucial to these divisions. Only then will we be able to move toward a resolution of the Woman Question.

Revisionist tendencies within the classical socialist tradition have left us with an inadequate, economistic and at times reformist formulation of the Woman Question. This has been absorbed into socialist policy and reinforced by chauvinistic practice, and is a partial explanation for some socialist societies having failed to move beyond a narrow economism and bourgeois ideological conceptions of the family, motherhood and sexuality which form the basis of bourgeois social relations of reproduction. As Ginny Volbrecht has argued:

If we understand that the social relations of capitalism and their social reproduction provide the material basis for deeply entrenching the public-private distinction, for giving generations an ideological inheritance...to secure and maintain the contradiction between man and woman, then it is clear why the struggle against bourgeois ideology must be given the historical weight we are proposing.¹⁵

Furthermore, if the working class is to end bourgeois class rule then it must struggle against the dominant forms of social organization which subordinate women and "the attempt to dismantle the structural and ideological foundations of the public-private dichotomy, therefore necessitates the struggle against specific mechanisms of women's subordination."¹⁶

If Marxism is to answer the challenges of the feminist movement, dispel economism and reformism and provide a solution to the Woman Question, then it is necessary to uncover the material roots of women's oppression and the forms through which this is articulated in different social formations. This can only occur by examining the relationship between class inequalities and gender hierarchies. Thus, there is a need to examine and theorize such socially determined categories and constructs as "woman", "family", "the division of labour" and "sexuality" by firmly locating them within social relations of production and reproduction. This must be done in such a way that the relationship between class and gender is theorized and explained. What is necessary is a theoretical formulation that provides a materialist explanation of women's role in daily and generational reproduction and her situation within different forms of social organization and ideology. There is also a need for a re-examination of the private sphere, to see women as subjects of history, to uncover and examine

the nature of control and oppression and women's struggle against them.

Corresponding to the resurgence of women's struggles, attempts have been made to build on the work of Lenin and Zetkin, in order to develop a scientific Marxist understanding of women's oppression and challenge bourgeois ideology. Women's struggles to break out of the private sphere by challenging the sexual division of labour, created the necessary conditions for a theoretical re-examination of the "production of human beings". The "rediscovery" of classical socialist debates on this issue was a necessary part of this re-examination. One such attempt emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s and became known as the domestic labour debate.¹⁷ Despite the sometimes sterile and over-theorized arguments around whether or not domestic labour is productive or unproductive, and the inherent failure to move beyond narrow economic categories, a number of advances were made. Many of these theorists sought to explain the specificity of women's oppression by examining their relationship to unpaid domestic labour in the reproduction of capitalist social relations. Thus, they attempted to establish the material basis of women's oppression by examining unpaid domestic labour in the family household. These theorists concluded that women who undertake this labour produce use values for direct consumption. In the Marxist sense they are neither exploited nor unproductive workers. However, the debate has not helped to explain what domestic labour actually is; what its character was in pre-capitalist societies; nor has it facilitated a clear programme of action for the removal of women's "household slavery".

A second attempt in this respect has been made by socialist feminists.¹⁸ Vogel points out the important advances that socialist-feminism has made:

Socialist feminist theory starts from an insistence that beneath the serious social, psychological and ideological phenomena of women's oppression lies a material root. It points out that Marxism has never adequately analyzed the nature and location of that root. And it hypothesizes that the family constitutes a major if not the major terrain that nourishes it. With this position, socialist-feminism

implicitly rejects two fallacious, as well as contradictory, currents in the legacy of socialist theory and practice on the question of women. First, the socialist feminist emphasis on the material root of oppression counters an idealist tendency within the left, which trivializes the issue of women's oppression as a mere matter of lack of rights and ideological chauvinism. Second, socialist feminists' special concern with psychological and ideological issues, especially those arising within the family, stands opposed to the crudities of an economic determinist interpretation of women's position, also common within the socialist movement. These perspectives - which make up the implicit theoretical content of the slogan "the personal is political" - established guidelines for the socialist feminist consideration of women's oppression and women's liberation.¹⁹

The socialist feminists, however, appear to have made two crucial theoretical mistakes, the one following from the other. In arguing that Marxism has ignored the issues of women's oppression, and is thus "sex blind", they have sought to borrow categories of explanation from radical feminism. The "marrying" of Marxism and feminism accords the family an autonomy from social relations of production which fails to clearly draw out the relationship between class relations and women's oppression. Class and sex are seen as equal determinants of women's position and experience. They both become the motor forces of history. Little attention is paid to the possibility of gender divisions and identities developing from concrete class divisions and struggles. An example of this approach is the work of Michelle Barrett. She argues:

Marxism, constituted as it is around relations of appropriation and exploitation, is grounded in concepts that do not and could not address directly the gender of the exploiters and those whose labour is approached...Feminism, however, points in a different direction, emphasizing precisely the relations of gender...that Marxism has tended to pass over in silence...Thus it falls to Marxist-feminism to explore the relations between the organization of sexuality, domestic production, the household...and historical changes in the mode of production and systems of appropriation and exploitation...Marxist-feminism approach will involve an emphasis on the relations between capitalism and the oppression of women.²⁰

The unification of Marxism and feminism is reformist because by postulating the family as an independent sphere of production it gives an equal importance to class and gender division within society. In this way, the revolutionary content of seeing class struggle as the motorforce of history is surpassed. Marxism is a revolutionary ideology which has grown out of concrete conditions of working class struggle, not from the "marrying" of two ideologies for the convenience of theoretical clarity. The theoretical importance of class as the primary contradiction has grown out of struggle by members of the dominated class - men and women - and this historical experience cannot be put aside by intellectuals. Furthermore, the importance of this can be seen if we draw out the political implications of the position of socialist-feminism. The political implications of this approach is a call for sisterhood and a uniting of women of all classes as women, thus obscuring the programmatic importance of working class struggle and leadership. Alexandra Kollantai's 60-year old warning against sisterhood still rings true today:²¹

Class instinct - whatever the feminists say - always shows itself to be more powerful than the noble enthusiasms of "above class" politics. So long as the bourgeois women and their "younger sisters" are equal in their inequality, the former can with complete sincerity, make great efforts to defend the general interests of women. But once the barrier is down and the bourgeois women have received access to political activity, the recent defenders of the "rights of all women" become enthusiastic defenders of the privileges of their class, content to leave the younger sisters with no rights at all. Thus, when the feminists talk to working women about the need for a common struggle to realise some "general women's" principle, women of the working class are naturally distrustful.²²

Secondly, to argue that Marxism is "sex blind" is to distort historical reality. Marxism has addressed, albeit imperfectly, women's oppression. Socialist feminists make this mistake because they approach a reading of Marxism in search of explanations for the situation of the family, patriarchy and women. But, precisely because Marxism has grown out of working class struggle, it has different starting points and the answers that feminists are searching for do not appear in the way they would like them to.

The failure to note the importance of these different starting points has meant that the socialist feminists have sought to marry two different ideologies rather than develop an understanding of Marxism. Vogel moves beyond the constraints of socialist feminist theory by arguing for a return to historical materialism. She attempts to build on the strengths and overcome the weaknesses, of the socialist tradition rather than a search for answers in feminist theory. Noting that:

Female oppression...derives from women's involvement in processes that renew director producers, as well as their involvement in production. While women's oppression in class societies is experienced at many levels, it rests ultimately on these material foundations. The specific working out of this oppression is a subject for historical not theoretical investigation.²³

She provides us with a theoretical formulation which uncovers the material roots of women's oppression and thus the starting point for historical investigation. Vogel starts from Marx's argument:

A society can no more cease to produce than it can cease to consume. When viewed, therefore, as a connected whole, and as flowing on with incessant renewal, every social process of production is, at the same time, a process of reproduction.

Social reproduction is thus the reproduction of the conditions of production and that this is:

...a circumstance which remains the same under all modes of production. For it is not the result of their specific form, but a natural requisite of all continuous and reproductive labour in general, of any continuing production, which is always simultaneously reproduction, that is, including reproduction of its own operating conditions.²⁴

Vogel develops this further by arguing that:

The bearers of labor power are, however, mortal. Those who work suffer wear and tear. Some are too young to participate in the labour process, others too old. Eventually, every individual dies. Some process that meets the ongoing personal needs of the bearers of labor power as human individuals is therefore a condition of social reproduction, as is some process

that replaces workers who have died or withdrawn from the active work force. These processes of maintenance and replacement are often imprecisely, if usefully, conflated under the term reproduction of labor power.²⁵

Under capitalist relations Marx argued that there was a division of the working day into necessary and surplus labour, that is, into paid and unpaid labour. However, Vogel argues that:

Marx did not discuss a second component of necessary labor in capitalist society, one that we can call the domestic component of necessary labor - or domestic labor. Domestic labor is the portion of necessary labor that is performed outside the sphere of capitalist production. For the reproduction of labor power to take place, both the domestic and the social components of necessary labor are required. That is, wages may enable a worker to purchase commodities but additional labor - domestic labor - must generally be performed before they are consumed.²⁶

Vogel identifies three aspects of necessary labour:

- (1) daily maintenance and reproduction of the direct producers;
- (2) daily maintenance of non-productive members of the dominated class;
- (3) generational replacement process.

It is only the third aspect - generational replacement - that requires a sexual division of labour, for anybody can undertake daily maintenance of productive and non-productive members of the subordinate classes, but only women can carry and deliver children. However there exists a contradiction here for the dominant classes. For production to occur, reproduction must take place - for the dominant classes to ensure the continued production of surplus the dominated must be reproduced generationally by women. But women of the subordinate classes will, during pregnancy and lactation, make a reduced contribution to production of surplus value.²⁷ Vogel argues:

Out of class struggle over resolving these contradictions, a wide variety of forms of reproduction of labor power has developed in the course of history. In virtually all cases, they entail men's greater responsibility for provision of material means of subsistence, women's greater responsibility for the ongoing tasks of necessary labor, and institutionalised forms of male domination over women.²⁸

Thus gender systems and gender struggle emerge.

Vogel provides us with a theoretical explanation of the material roots of women's oppression. The creation of gender systems is placed firmly within class struggle and the nature and form of these systems are left to historical investigation of the class and gender struggles which gave rise to them. Furthermore, Vogel argues that in order to control working class women's reproductive labour, the ruling class encourages male supremacy within the exploited class. At the same time, working class men are forced to be responsible for the provision of subsistence to women, especially during the childbearing period. Consequently, working class men have found themselves in a contradictory position of providing the means of subsistence and enforcing control of women's reproductive labour all of which aids and facilitates their own exploitation in the production process. With the development of capitalist relations of production, daily and generational reproduction have been undertaken within the private sphere of the family-household. But since the class struggle results in continuously changing forms of social relations, this is not a static process. There is a tendency within capitalism to socialize labour and reproductive labour is no exception. The development of creches, laundramats, dry cleaners, ready-made clothing, fast and prepared foods, hospitals and nursing homes as well as schools have to an extent socialized aspects of daily and generational reproduction. By socializing these tasks, they are turned into profit-making enterprises under the control of the ruling class or state:

To the extent that the domestic labor of a capitalist society takes place within private households, the pressure of capitalist accumulation results in a tendency to decrease the amount performed in each household. A major way to reduce domestic labor is to socialize its tasks. Laundramats, stores selling ready made clothing and fast food chains, remove domestic labor tasks to the profit making sector, where they provide new opportunities for capitalist entrepreneurs...The domestic component of necessary labor cannot be completely socialized in capitalist society. The main barrier is economic, for the costs are extremely high in such areas as childrearing and household maintenance...Political and ideological barriers to the socialization of domestic labor also play a role.²⁹

It is necessary to add, firstly, that members of the working class may not have access to, or be able to afford, these socialized services. Secondly, while political and ideological barriers can be broken down, it is a difficult and slow process to alter the consciousness of the people who made/internalized them. These changes develop slowly out of the process of class struggle and may act as a fetter on developing social relations of production and reproduction. For example, the ideology of the nuclear family serves to constrain the development of one parent and women-headed families. Evidence of these assertions can only be found in examining the nature of specific class struggles. The living standards of the working class vary enormously between social formations, while changes in consciousness will depend on the nature, form and content of the organization of working peoples. The assertions contained here are drawn from my experiences in the South African struggle.

Vogel, however, does not describe in any detail the nature of domestic labour since her task is to provide a theoretical formulation and analysis of the underlying tendencies of the laws of capitalist accumulation on domestic labour. Socialist feminist Ann Oakley, on the other hand, has made an in depth study of the role of the "housewife" and housework in Britain.³⁰ While her work arises out of the particular social conditions of the British class struggle and thus must not be transferred to other social formations uncritically, Oakley points to a number of general characteristics which supplement certain of Vogel's insights. She lists these characteristics as:

(i) The "housewife" is not engaged in productive labour, but by serving others she allows them to engage in productive work. This observation supports the position that women doing domestic labour do not produce surplus value but rather use-values. However, Oakley's observation does not take into account that working class "housewives" may themselves be engaged in productive labour and thus result in the "double shift". The nature of reproductive labour must not be seen in isolation from the type of wage labour women engage in. It would be incorrect to assume that all "housewives" do not participate in wage

labour. The family-household is also a repository for the reserve army of labour. "Housewives" can be absorbed into the economy or returned to the family depending on the state of the economy. Similarly, many "housewives" are forced into wage labour in order to support their families.

(ii) The "housewife" is a consumer rather than a producer:

The tools of her trade are mostly bought by her outside the home - the food with which meals are made, the furniture with which the home is filled, the clothes with which the family is dressed, the appliances with which the housework is done. "Shopping" is one of the housewives main work activities.³¹

As a consumer the "housewife" is the target of massive advertising campaigns aimed at encouraging her to consume in a particular way or to purchase special products. It is important to note that these advertising campaigns do more than simply encourage a pattern of consumption. They also help to define the self-image of the "housewife". Constantly bombarded by images of what she should look like or the way she should behave toward her family, the "housewife" struggles to gain a sense of self that exists outside the world of advertising. It is not advertising alone which creates these dilemmas. Advertising is but one part of an overall onslaught by the capitalist mass media which seeks to determine women's image as "mother", "wife" and "household slave". It is important to note that gender identities are socially defined and that this will change with the development of the class struggle and vary from culture to culture. We must note that historical changes in these conceptions and seek out the material reasons for these.

(iii) Domestic labour is not regarded as wage labour because the "housewife" receives no salary for it. She also receives no sick pay, unemployment or maternity benefits. However, the nature of conditions under which the "housewife" works goes beyond the lack of provision of these benefits. We must not lose sight of the tremendous physical and emotional burden of "household slavery" that women, especially working class women, are subjected to. The form of domestic labour under capitalist relations drive women into serving their families emotional, physical and sexual needs. This often means little time for

her own well being. However, it is important to note that the class position of women will determine their exact relationship to domestic labour. Bourgeois and petty-bourgeois women may be able to escape some of the degradation of domestic work. Access to electricity, good sanitation, labour-saving appliances like washing machines, carpet cleaners, dish washers and sewing machines and being able to employ another women to do the domestic labour may all ease the burden. Similarly, access to higher education for these women may mean meaningful careers which may offset the loss of value and low status inherent in domestic labour.

Although capitalism has revolutionized the domestic work with the development of labour-saving appliances and household chemicals, many of these "advances" do seriously affect the health of the domestic labourer. Harriet Rosenberg points out that:

The experts advice to women centres on the areas of housework, childbearing and rearing, and sexual performance. Books on these subjects are cheap, written in simple language, and readily available...While it is a question how much of this advice is valuable, how much is idiosyncratic, and how much blatant guilt-inducing propaganda, one thing is clear: we are surrounded by it...On the other hand, it is very difficult to find information about product or appliance safety. Women who do domestic labour are forced to rely on advertisers for information about chemical content or safety aspects of their products. When the powerful myth-making machine of advertising enters the household, it swirls around like a white tornado, leaving behind the feeling that nothing bad could happen in these happy homes. However, chemicals, toxic substances, pollutants, and safety hazards do not lose their potency when they cross the threshold of the household.³²

Rosenberg also identifies other household health and safety hazards besides those related to capitalist technology. Stress, which can lead to emotional instability as well as physical diseases such as highblood pressure, is caused by a wide variety of factors relating to housework: lack of participation in decision-making, low job satisfaction, discrimination and rigid work roles, loneliness caused by isolation in the home, lack of job security and physical and verbal abuse.

In a recent North American study, the Women's Occupational and Health Resource Centre point to other long-term problems resulting from housework. Domestic labour may cause severe muscle and/or bone damage:

Your muscles and back can be injured if you must lift or move things that are too heavy or must carry things that are too bulky...Also working for long periods in uncomfortable or unnatural positions may damage muscles, bones, joints, or the ligaments and tendons that hold the body together. All of these problems are made worse if you work for long periods in extreme cold or heat (as in a hot kitchen or laundry room) or if you must keep your hands in water (as while scrubbing floors).³³

Arthritis, bursitis ("housemaids knee"), rheumatism, tendonitis and tenosynovitis are common problems of those doing domestic labour and ones for which no compensation is provided.

Clearly, then, the environment in which the housewife works is full of health hazards, but since she does not "work" and because reproductive labour is in the private sphere, these hazards are ignored. As Rosenberg notes:

One of the key features of the division of labour by sex in the household is that it perpetuates a widely held ideology that what women do in the homes is not really work. This basic myth...serves to obscure the often stressful and physically hazardous nature of domestic labour...Housewives...are considered to be married to their jobs and are under enormous pressure not to admit or analyze the negative aspects of the work they do. When they do so, however, they are setting the stage for allying themselves with waged workers who are also struggling for safer, healthier working conditions, in which they will be treated with dignity.³⁴

(iv) Housework has a very low status.

Some of housework's low status is due to the low status of the people who do it - women. A phonetic reduction of the term "housewife" produces the appellation "hussy". "Hussy" means "worthless women". This equation of linguistic meaning reflects the equation of social meaning. A housewife and a woman are one and the same: one and the same they are subjected to deprivation and oppression.³⁵

It has already been noted that the separation of productive and reproductive labour, which characterizes the capitalist epoch, results in a devaluation of reproductive labour. Concomitant with this is a

process of ideological revaluation, that is, an attempt to give reproductive labour a false value through motherhood. The ideology of motherhood serves to obscure the real nature of domestic labour and leaves the housewife struggling with the false values of motherhood and the reality of "household slavery".

(v) Housework differs from most other forms of labour in that:

It is private, it is self-defined and its outlines are blurred by its integration in a whole complex of domestic family based roles which define the situation of women as well as the situation of the housewife. Housework is an activity performed by housewives within their own homes - the home is the work place, and its boundaries are also the boundaries of family life.³⁶

Oakley argues further that the physical isolation of housework results in a self-definition of what it constitutes. While there are certain basic necessities - such as providing meals, washing clothes and cleaning the household - how well these are done or how often are in theory up to the "housewife". Since there are no laws or "public rules" stating what the "housewife" should do, the ideology of motherhood becomes the basis of the definition of "housewife". The capitalist mass media acts as the purveyors of these standards. As Oakley notes:

In the social image of woman, the roles of wife and mother are not distinct from the role of housewife.

Reflections of this image in advertising and the media generally, portray women as some kind of statistical mean of all three roles combined..."Housewife" can be an umbrella term for "wife" and "mother"...Women's expected role in society is to strive after perfection in all three roles.³⁷

(vi) Housewives' labour in isolation and lack "the sociability of a work group". There are no trade unions to fight for better conditions of employment as there are few opportunities for collective decision-making and bargaining. However, we must not approach this situation uncritically since housewives do resist on a daily basis. While there may be few opportunities for collective decision-making, daily gender struggle still takes place. When meals are not cooked or the house not cleaned, this is a form of resistance. Even though this

challenges the sexual division of labour, only an organized challenge which will succeed in complete restructuring of this. Oakley is wrong to look to trade unions alone to perform this task. Women's organizations, which challenge their position as "household slave" and the class relations which underpin it, offer crucial challenges to the sexual division of labour.

(vii) Under capitalist relations of production the role of "housewife" is often tied to marriage and economic dependence on a husband. This dependency results if the "housewife" does not participate in wage labour and thus has to rely on the husband for money to buy necessities for herself and her family. This may result in the division of the wage packet being a source of much tension within the working class family. More case studies of the history and development of working class families - which is not Eurocentric - are urgently needed that we may have a clearer understanding of the relationship between gender struggles and the material basis of the family. The formal agreement of marriage, that is, the marriage contract, is enforceable by law and results in exchange of domestic labour for material support of the woman and her family. As Marx and Engels pointed out over 100 years ago in the Communist Manifesto: "The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation."³⁸ The growth of the ideology of motherhood and marriage has obscured the reduction of family relation to money relation by creating false concepts of "duty" and "love" which force women to be party to the exchange inherent in the marriage contract. It must be noted, however, that this is not a unilinear process and will develop unevenly within different social formations. This is also true of women's resistance to this form of bondage.

(viii) The "housewife role" is exclusively allocated to women rather than all adults or adults and children, and it has a determining priority for women over all other roles in society.³⁹ How this came to be; why women have historically borne the responsibility for reproductive labour is, as Vogel notes, the basis for historical investigation.

(ix) Included in the role of "housewife" is caring for children, that is, the role of "mother". To the caring for children should be added the "carrying" of children. It is important to note how capitalism has fused daily and generational reproduction in the role of "housewife". Davin's work on "Imperialism and Motherhood" clearly shows how in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the bourgeoisie in Britain, for particular historical, political and social reasons, consolidated a family form which fused the role of homekeeper and childrearer. She notes that:

This in turn served the interests of industry and empire in a number of ways: by increasing the ties and responsibilities of male workers, and enabling them through the unpaid services of thrifty conscientious and hard working wives to survive and keep better health without the need for industrial or state provision of maintenance; by ensuring that children - the next generation of workers and of soldiers - would be raised at minimum cost to the state and in serviceable condition; and by setting ideological barriers to married women's work outside the home, which where possible would keep women as a reserve labour force, available in an emergency (as in two world wars) but not clogging the labour market in normal times, nor requiring state subsidy when not employed...The unpaid housekeeper performing miracles on a low budget; the ideal housewife putting her energies (and her money) into careful shopping to make and maintain the ideal home for her family; the office cleaners or the twilight shiftworker adding low paid wage labour to her domestic shift because money is needed for the children's clothes, shoes or food, or for holidays or toys, but she can't leave them in the daytime - all these are incarnations of motherhood.⁴⁰

(x) Housework is "prefaced" by a very long period of apprenticeship:

Among work roles it is unique, in that it is prefaced by an extremely long period of apprenticeship. The apprenticeship is not subject to voluntary contract. Since sex - being born female - is the relevant criterion for admittance, a women's apprenticeship to housewifery is part of her overall socialisation into the feminine. During childhood, an identification with the mother or other female adult who cares for the housewife-to-be instills a sense of housework as a feminine responsibility.⁴¹

(xi) Housework integrates both familial responsibilities with that of work:

The role of housewife reconciles two opposed structures in modern society: home and work. Industrialisation, which calls for the concentration of economically productive effort in large scale organizations outside the family, is the primary agent in this opposition between the private, economically non-productive life of the home, and the public world of wage and salary earning work...The unit of production is the unit of kin relationships, and life is not divided into what one does to earn a living - called work - and what one does the rest of the time. The location for work does not entail separation from family life, and the values relating to performance in the work role and the family role do not prescribe different and conflicting goals in each.⁴²

Class and gender struggles have resulted in women being primarily responsible for generational reproduction. The form of social organization within which this labour takes place is the family. Within the family individuals are linked by kinship relations and marriage. Being located in the private sphere, the family, as a site of reproductive labour, is isolated from social production of wage labour. We must be careful not to assume a uniformity of family forms. Even though under capitalist relations the dominant form of organization may be the nuclear family, this dominance may only extend to certain classes - the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie - and the ideological level. For the working class, the family may take many forms ranging from the nuclear family to an extended family network consisting of a number of generations of adults and children. Again, the particular form of the family will depend on the outcome of class and gender struggles within each social formation. This site of reproduction becomes a major focus of women's oppression.

Vogel underpins Oakley's research by arguing that the:

Performance of the domestic component of necessary labor constitutes the material pivot of the working class family household. Given that this task has historically been carried out primarily by women, in a context usually characterized by male supremacy, the working class family becomes a highly institutionalized repository of women's

oppression. As domestic laborers in the private household, women seem to devote much of their time to performing unpaid services for wage earning men, a situation that can give rise to antagonistic relationships between the sexes. In addition, women's political and social inequality, and their struggle to acquire rights, provide another potential source of conflict between the sexes. In this atmosphere of chronic tension within private family households, women's oppression may appear to be solely an oppression by men, rooted transhistorically by an antagonistic sex division of labour and embodied in the family. Nonetheless, it is responsibility for the domestic labor necessary to capitalist social reproduction - and not the sex division of labor or the family per se - that materially underpins the perpetuation of women's oppression and inequality in capitalist society.⁴³

The theoretical advances made in the process of struggle in the present epoch provide us with the basis for a socialist resolution of the Woman Question. Vogel's contribution helps develop some of the necessary conceptual tools for the historical examination of the relationship between class and gender. By arguing for a return to historical materialism, it reinforces socialist women's history of struggle which emphasizes the importance of building a working class women's movement which challenges the relations of production and reproduction, as a necessary condition for the emancipation of men and women from gender oppression.

For the study of domestic work in South Africa, Vogel's work provides us with the possibility of explaining the relationship between unpaid domestic labour and its wage form, domestic work. It also helps clarify the relationship of black working class women to domestic work and an understanding of its gender content, may help build the process of recording their history. A starting point in this regard would be a critical examination of the different approaches to documenting women's history within South African historiography. This is by way of "clearing the ground" before the necessary historical materialist recording can begin.

PART II : Ikitchini : Working in the Kitchens - Women's Experience.
Process and Testimony

So I've left my history somehow - I'm happy that I've got somebody who will introduce me. Let me make history please. Johanna Masilela. My number is 827.

Johanna Masilela

CHAPTER THREE : THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT ; SILENCE AROUND WOMEN'S HISTORY

In the 1970s the resurgence of mass struggle in South Africa stimulated the reinterpretation of history from a radical perspective. Marxist analyses, however, are not simply a feature of the last two decades but are a result of a heritage of struggle that extends into the earliest years of this century. While it is not possible in the space available to trace the history of revisionist scholarship, this chapter serves to contextualize the development of the Woman Question within South African Marxist historiography over the last 20 years.¹

The radical reinterpretation of South African history should not be seen in isolation from international class struggle. The 1960s was a period of intensification of class struggles all over the world. Anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggles in the third world; the rise of the first world student movements and the "new left" all helped to kindle new interest in Marxism in the post-Stalinist and Cold War era. The intensification of class struggles ushered in the possibility of advances being made in the resolution of the Woman Question. Continual resistance and organization by women against the dominant forms of social relations challenged bourgeois ideological hegemony and resulted in a ever more fundamental challenge to the forms of subordination of women's labour.

In Southern Africa, this development can be seen in the development of socialist programmes in Angola and Mozambique by MPLA and Frelimo. Anti-colonial struggles grew into anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist struggles. Attempts were made to formulate programmes of action which would fundamentally alter women's position. Within South Africa itself, the re-emergence of mass resistance in the 1970s, aided by developments in Southern Africa as a whole, and the concomitant organization of women, all reflect general tendencies within the

international class struggle. Within this context of intensified struggle, South African Marxist historiography re-emerged. An important stimulus to this development was the role of exiled intellectuals such as Martin Legassick and Harold Wolpe, as well as the filtering of international trends into the work of South African-based academics.² Yet the close links to international developments have meant that the problems inherent in European versions of Marxism were "imported" into South Africa. The radical historiography which emerged in this period, was to an extent gender-blind.³ Women continued to remain objects of history and periodization remained based on an economistic notion of class struggle. As late as 1983, Belinda Bozzoli remarked

Our understanding of South African society has been radically revised and deepened over the past decade - but the recent radical revision of South African history, sociology and politics has not, by and large, been interwoven with feminist re-interpretations of conventional wisdoms... There has, of course, recently been a growth of interest in the study of women in South Africa. But this field has remained largely segregated, with all its attendant risks of ghettoisation. Thus with a few outstanding exceptions, there is a lack of awareness on the part of many radical South African scholars not concerned centrally with issues of gender, of the major issues which feminists have raised about social explanation. And, concomitantly, writers concerned centrally with the analysis of gender have not often extended their findings into wider fields of social analysis.⁴

However, despite this gender-blindness within mainstream Marxist analyses, there has been a parallel development of the recording of women's struggle. This trend has constantly served to challenge the abovementioned tendencies and to develop a gender-sensitive class analysis.

As already noted, the growth of women's studies is mirrored internationally. The intensified period of class conflict has seen the rise of women's organisations within national liberation movements in the third world and feminism within the first world. This resurgence of women's struggle, with its material base in the increasing incorporation of women into wage labour and the urban areas, resulted in a renewed challenge to the gender blindness of certain tendencies within

Marxism.⁵ Similarly, in South Africa, the growth of mass struggle over the last 10 years has also been a growth of working class women's resistance to capitalism. This must be seen against the background of increasing urbanization and incorporation of African women into wage labour.⁶ In the schools and with the youth; in the factories and in the communities, in the public and private spheres of their existence, women have been organized on an unprecedented scale. Consequently, it has been the struggle of working class women which has forced academics and intellectuals to begin the process of recording their history.

In South Africa this process has suffered from a number of similar problems experienced elsewhere (see Chapter Two). Firstly, as already noted, any attempt to record women's history must record the experience of women under social relations of production AND reproduction. The development of capitalist relations of production has resulted in a separation of productive and reproductive labour which has been hidden behind the ideology of motherhood and housewifery. The commodification of the productive content of reproductive labour has resulted in a loss of social value of this labour. Thus this labour has hardly been viewed as meriting serious research. As Cock has pointed out (see Chapter One): South African historiography is marked by a silence regarding this form of labour.

Secondly, even where serious attempts are made to record women's history, researchers have to confront the problem of the shortage of information. Conventional sources of primary information such as official archives, church and missionary records all reflect events in the public sphere thus limiting our ability to record crucial aspects of women's historical experience. Furthermore, the value of many of these sources is limited by their racist and sexist bias: a problem which confronts radical historians constantly although few have adequately dealt with sexism. For example, when one examines government statistics on domestic workers, ruling class perceptions of what

is necessary to document become clear. One such example will suffice to emphasize the point:

(i) Racist Bias: "It must be understood that in towns the majority of non-Europeans are not seen by the enumerators but are accounted for by the European householder on whose premises they reside or by whom they are employed."⁷ (my emphasis) The collecting of information about the black population through, in part, white employers raises serious problems regarding the accuracy and bias of this information. The problem is deeper than just the collecting of information. Often black people are simply not enumerated, for example, in 1918 and 1926. In other instances, comparable statistical breakdowns are not made for the white and black populations.

(ii) Sexual Bias: Evidence of sexual bias can be found in the choice of the unit of enumeration - the nuclear family - this is especially problematic when used as a basis of enumeration of the African population in which the extended family is more dominant. If the basis of enumeration is the male breadwinner, plus dependent wife, plus children, then this is not adequate, at least where the form of social organization extends beyond the narrow confines of the nuclear family unit. The breadwinner in a working class family may be grandparent, mother, sister or aunt involved in the informal sector or in subsistence production. Sexual bias also extends into the lack of comprehensive historical data on domestic work: "Omitting the Domestic and Dependent classes, which consist mainly of women and children, the agricultural class is the principle one (employer)."⁸ (my emphasis) The nature of domestic labour in its paid or unpaid forms is not documented. The myth that "housework is not work" is directly carried over into determining what is or is not necessary to document.

Under capitalist relations in South Africa, women exist amid the constantly changing definitions and perceptions of a ruling class which is dominated by white males. Information is generated to reinforce and extend these definitions and perceptions. Consequently, owing to the

shortage of information from conventional sources, a gender-sensitive approach will have to seek new methods of generating data - for example, oral histories. Yet at the same time, we will also need to accept that much of the past may have been lost as a result of women being marginalized by ruling class men. We may never find all the pieces in the puzzle.

Thirdly, problems of undervaluing women's labour and the shortage of information have been reinforced by the failure of radical historiography to overcome theoretical and political weaknesses. One problem which has resulted in this regard is the internal sexism of the left. For example, Marxist academia is dominated by left-wing men who either work full-time as researchers or lecturers at universities. Clearly, somebody is performing their reproductive labour whether as a wife, lover or domestic worker. The subordination of women's labour in this manner traps these men in the ideology of sexism which is integral to it.⁹ As Lenin pointed out over 60 years ago, Scratch any good "progressive" and a philistine appears! The development of a gender-sensitive class analysis amongst left-wing men is dependent upon a break with the material and ideological subordination of women's labour and the development of new social relations. Central to developing women's studies is the dictum "the personal is political". Unless this is internalized, the divide that exists between Marxist historiography and HER-storiography will continue.

Bozzoli identifies further ways in which practices of radical historians reinforce the problems the shortage of information and the undervaluing of women's labour. She identifies two approaches both of which, she argues, are problematic:

The rectifactory approach, which she characterizes as having undertaken:

The essential and as yet incomplete task of rectifying the imbalance in history - writing by recovering the hidden history of women and of gender relations. The value of such studies in initiating the discovery of the character of female oppression in South Africa as well as in restoring to women both dignity and pride in their heritage of resistance, is enormous.¹⁰

However, many of these studies have been undertaken by feminists and suffer from a lack of explanation of the material roots of women's oppression. Furthermore, there is also a danger here of developing two bodies of history: one of men's history, one of women's history - that is, separated and unintegrated. These dangers may result in a failure to clearly highlight the relationship between class and gender struggles. The functionality approach: Bozzoli argues that within South African Marxism attempts have been made to search for a materialist explanation of women's oppression. However, these tendencies usually stress the functionality of women's oppression for capitalism:

The problem of functionalism rests in the fact that descriptions are presented as explanations. Because female oppression performs certain functions for capitalism, this does not mean that it was a pure creation of capitalism. To posit this would be to deny the history of female oppression in other, non-capitalist societies, and to fail to acknowledge its existence in socialist ones. This functionalist tendency in Marxist attempts to cope with female oppression reflects an anti-historical and economistic bias...The "functions performed for capitalism" argument deflects concern completely from any consideration of the fact of male dominance...The collapsing of female oppression into the capitalist mode of production has been the dominant tendency in analysis of women in South Africa today. It is a tendency which has suited the indigenous left, reluctant as it is to consider the implications of its own internal sexism. It appears to be far more comfortable for the left to absorb feminist struggles, or indeed subordinate them, into the general struggle against capitalism, than to begin to consider the vast implications of admitting the relative autonomy of female oppression.¹¹

The demands of capital are but one set of factors, albeit extremely important ones, in the overall class struggle. Class struggle needs to be examined as a whole from all levels and not merely that of capital. A functionalist approach can also result in a failure to come to terms with the ideology that underpins the divide between public and private.

Sexuality, motherhood, the social constitution of gender identity have no place in such approaches.

An alternative to the rectificatory and functionality approaches has developed within a tendency of socialist-feminism. While it is not possible to review all these works, my underlying critique is of their attempt to "marry" Marxism and feminism (see Chapter Two). Such an approach has severe political and theoretical results. Bozzoli's work is chosen as an example because her review article offers us a very clear alternative based on this "wedding" approach. As Marx and Engels correctly pointed out over 100 years ago, marriage is a bourgeois institution.

Bozzoli argues that the rectificatory and functionality approaches are themselves insufficient to explain and record the oppression of women. Instead she puts forward an analysis based on struggle combining Marxism and feminism:

What is Marxist about this approach is that it retains a materialist dialectical and historical focus. It posits that social change is based upon the results of contradictory and opposing forces, rooted in material reality, confronting one another, coming to a temporary resolution, and yet further contradictory and opposing forces emerging from that resolution. What is feminist about it is that it posits that relevant conflicts and contradictory forces for our purposes are located in the "domestic sphere", and that in certain crucial cases they involve conflicts between certain men and women.¹²

Bozzoli develops concepts of "internal domestic struggle" and external domestic struggle to explain the relationships between the public and private, capitalist society and the family:

The first...concerns the extent to which the domestic sphere is the site of labour, income and property relations. If these factors are present, the domestic systems will become an arena in which struggle takes place over the control and distribution of these factors...The fact that some members of the household draw upon external social resources (such as ideologies of male superiority) leads us to introduce the concept of "external domestic struggle"...By this is meant the conflicts and compromises which take place between the domestic sphere and the wider capitalist society. (my emphasis).¹³

Bozzoli's attempt to "marry" Marxism and feminism creates theoretical and political problems characteristic of socialist-feminism. Her

work is characterized by the dualism originating in Engels' defective theoretical formulations discussed in the previous chapter. Her crucial mistake, as with socialist-feminism in general, is that she attempts to find explanations for the relations of reproduction in feminist theory, rather than seeking answers in historical/materialism. Class and gender are posed as two equal primary contradictions. The division between "internal and external" spheres gives to each an autonomy as if there exists two systems operating independently but intersecting with each other. This results in an obscuring of the relationship between the domestic labour component of necessary labour and social production. It is precisely from social relations of production and reproduction that gender divisions and hierarchies grow. This problem in Bozzoli's analysis is compounded by her use of such terminology as "spheres" and "factors". This type of language tends to introduce a structure and functionalism into the analysis because it helps to obscure the class relations which underlie these structures and reinforces a sense of dualism and this is exactly what Bozzoli is trying to overcome. We should be concentrating more on class and gender relations, consciousness, process and ideology as primary areas of analysis. And examine the forms through they are articulated, for example, the family. To start with the forms - "internal and external domestic spheres" - is to slide back into the trap of functionalism and obscure the dynamic process of struggle.

Bozzoli's dualism also has crucial political implications for the emancipation of women in the context of the South African class struggle. The marrying of Marxism and feminism seems to lead to an argument for organizing women as women on the basis of their common oppression. It also raises questions of the relationship of such organizations to the movement for national liberation. Should such women's organizations be autonomous or part of this struggle is a very crucial question. Such an approach derives directly from the obscuring of the relationship between the relations of production and reproduction and the maintenance of class control. This derives directly from attempts to marry Marxism and feminism. Bourgeois class control

subordinates working class women's labour to ensure social reproduction, and as such, this labour is a crucial determinant of the continued existence of capitalism. Consequently, in order to challenge this situation women must be organized as workers first and as women second. They must be organized as part of and not separate from the democratic movement. The call to build working class leadership must be realized by organizing working class women to give direction to the struggle to resolve the Woman Question. Cross class coalitions of women will serve to obscure the importance of workers' interests and thus detract from the revolutionary content of this struggle. An alliance between women of different classes is a strategic, not a principled question. Despite these criticisms of Bozzoli's work, we must not lose sight of the importance of her contribution. She has provided us with a critique of prevailing tendencies within South African Marxist historiography. She correctly charts a course which moves away from functionalism and which emphasizes the importance of struggle and the social relations characterizing the family household. Unfortunately, she strays from her materialist position and seeks support in feminism rather than searching for a way forward within historical-materialism.

In the South African context, Ginny Volbrecht advances a powerful argument for the importance of seeking answers to the Woman Question within historical-materialism. She supports Vogel in arguing for the development of a theory building on the classical socialist tradition represented by the works of Lenin, Kollantai and Zetkin. However, she warns against an uncritical use of socialist theory and suggests that we must be aware of both the shortcomings and the strengths of this approach:

To counter any accusations of dogmatism, it must be stressed that the return to historical materialism is not statically (undialectically) conceptualized. This journey does not suggest that there is a classical map, that if well read and correctly interpreted will provide precise co-ordinates indicating the road along which we should go.¹⁴

Rather what we need to do, argues Volbrecht, is develop a new "discourse in historical materialism". This will allow us to grasp "the

specificity of women's position and to conceptualize gender relations". Such a task must be based on the examination and challenging of the "ideological and material foundations of the public-private dichotomy" and will of necessity move beyond narrow economism and incorporate the slogan "the personal is political".

If gender hierarchies are understood as part of the relations of production, then the processes which secure the contradiction between men and women must be explained in terms of economic structure and relations of dominance as a whole and the dominant ideology. By seeing gender hierarchy as part of the relations of production, we are obliged to seek what specific mechanisms reproduce the overall social relations of production, and what do these processes reveal about the way in which class inequalities intersect with gender hierarchies. In short, divisions between men and women do not exist independently of class relations but the specific contribution to class inequalities to male dominance must be revealed.¹⁵

A necessary pre-condition of such a process is to develop a clear political and theoretical critique of feminism and its "unhappy marriage" to Marxism. Volbrecht begins this process by rejecting feminism for five reasons. Firstly, she argues that the term carries with it a historical heritage of nineteenth-century bourgeois conceptions of equality. This has resulted in the socialist tradition clearly distinguishing between bourgeois-feminism and the Woman Question. Secondly, she points out that:

Given the historical and cultural context of the national question in South Africa, feminism is often interpreted or perceived as the preoccupation of middle-class white women.¹⁶

This arises out of the different historical experience of women of difference classes. Related to this is her third reason. The organizational starting point of feminism, gender relations in the home, are inappropriate for organizing a mass women's movement in South Africa. While working class women may agree to the oppression nature of these relations:

For black, mainly working class women, the realisation that conditions in "the home" must change, flows from their political power and democracy.¹⁷

Fourthly, feminism puts forward an organizational alternative of cross class unity of women which may result in ignoring or obscuring class differences. Women of different classes may have contradictory interests and thus experience the class struggle differently. Such an alliance is a question of strategy and not a principled position. Lastly, and related to this is the question of an autonomous women's movement attempting a feminist resolution "of the contradictions in the relations between men and women". Volbrecht argues that in anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggles, this form of organization has been explicitly dismissed in favour of a "programmatic link to political organizations" as the only way organizations can build a women's movement, and unite working class men and women to destroy the source of their oppression - capitalism.

While advocating a return to historical materialism and critiquing feminism, Volbrecht fails to provide a clear theoretical alternative to Bozzoli's Marxist-feminism. Instead she highlights the theoretical tasks which lie ahead.¹⁸ This may not be a weakness of the paper but more a matter of emphasis. Volbrecht's intervention is not only theoretical but political as well. Her aim is more to clear the ground so such a process may begin, as well as to emphasize the need to view the Woman Question as a strategic issue within the liberation movement.

The task of developing a historical materialist approach, within the context of the South African class struggle, will emerge not from the work of one or two academics but out of concrete conditions of struggle. It is through the development of a mass-based women's movement that our theoretical and political understandings will develop. Clearly, the re-emergence in the 1970s of mass-based working class women's organisations has already led to advances in attempts to find a socialist resolution to the Woman Question.

The developments within women's struggle have definite implications for the recording of domestic workers' history. The development of trade unions, first regionally and then nationally, suggest domestic

workers are adopting the strategy of organizing themselves as working class woman, rather than as women only. The affiliation in 1987 of the South African Domestic Workers Union to the Congress of South African Trade Unions highlights attempts to form alliances with workers as workers and not across class barriers as women. Thus the concrete organizational experience of domestic workers tends to support the importance of the return to historical materialism. This raises the need for a class analysis of domestic work which lays bare the struggle between men and women over domestic labour and the gender hierarchies which emerge out of it. On the "factory floor" of domestic work, ruling class men, women and children and working class women experience gender relations as part of their class position. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven. Before this analysis, however, it is necessary to review the recorded history of domestic workers as a first step to beginning the new discourse argued for by Volbrecht.

The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of the class struggle.

Karl Marx

Everything in my life is struggle. I work the whole day in the kitchens then I come home and start all over again. I start before my family wakes up and finish when they are sleeping.

Mr N D W, "household slave"

CHAPTER FOUR : STRUGGLING AGAINST THE SILENCE : THE FIRST STEPS FORWARD - A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE RECORDED HISTORY OF DOMESTIC WORKERS

INTRODUCTION

Until the 1970s, domestic work was hardly researched at all. Such studies as were undertaken were from a liberal perspective which sees race as the determining factor in South African history.¹ These studies were very often anthropologically based and tended to place much emphasis on racism, poor working condition and moral appeals to employers' consciences to change these conditions. While they did emphasize the poor working conditions of domestic workers, and thus the nature of the relationship between employer and domestic worker, they failed to deal with the more fundamental issues of domestic work and provide an overall history of this form of labour. Liberal concerns with the position of domestic workers were also reflected in the rise of the Domestic Workers Education Project (DWEPE) and its offshoots, the Centres of Concern. DWEPE was initiated by the Institute of Race Relations in 1970 and its aims were:

...Firstly to train domestic servants in their trade, providing facilities for a Diploma in Domestic Housekeeping, and secondly to improve the relationship between employer and worker and a minimisation of the traditional servant/employer relationship.²

Although DWEPE and those who researched domestic work failed to understand and place domestic work within the context of class struggle, it would be a mistake to dismiss their contributions. Out of DWEPE rose the South African Domestic Workers Association, one of the few domestic worker organizations. Liberal academics broke the silence around domestic work and provided a starting point for the work that was to follow.

As noted in the last chapter, the 1970s saw a reinterpretation of South African history from Marxist perspectives, thus offering a challenge to liberal historiography. This was partially a response to, and was

developed and strengthened by, the resurgence of mass struggle in South Africa. Inevitably, out of the combination of working class women's struggle and Marxist historiography, women's contribution began to be examined and recorded. It is this re-examination and re-interpretation of "HIS-story" that raised questions about women and history and provided the impetus to begin the recording of domestic workers' history. This reinterpretation also gave rise to the beginnings of a gender sensitive approach to history.³

Rather than review each work individually, this chapter has been divided into a number of themes:

Conceptualization of domestic labour and domestic work and an examination of research methodologies where appropriate.

History of domestic work and an examination of concepts and history of resistance.

Conclusion : toward a gender-sensitive approach?

It is hoped that this will allow for a more clear appraisal of how far we have come and to note how we can build on the advances already made.

Conceptualization of domestic labour and domestic work.

Almost all materialist analyses of domestic work attempt to examine the relationship between class struggles, domestic work, domestic labour, sexual division of labour and reproduction. No matter how brief this examination is, this relationship is seen as given and it is the nature of this that is at question in this thesis. In other words, it is generally accepted and noted that there is a specific relationship between class and gender which helps to determine the nature of domestic work. Obviously, different writers place different emphases on the importance of this relationship.⁴ The only exception is the seminal work of Charles Van Onselen.⁵ His failure to examine this relationship results in his inability to develop a gender-sensitive approach to domestic work. His history of domestic work highlights the relationship between gender and class, but this is more implicit than explicit. Gender issues are raised mainly by implication in his examination of why there are so few studies on

domestic work, the tasks of domestic workers, the black peril scare and the amalaita gangs. They seem forced on him by the nature of the struggles he is researching. Van Onselen's gender sensitivity lies hidden and one wonders if this is not a product of his gender socialisation.⁶ He develops no conceptualization of domestic work and domestic labour and the nature of the public and private dichotomy. He seems merely to record history "as it occurred". This is unsatisfactory, however, as Van Onselen needs to draw out more clearly the conceptual links and understandings inherent in his historical example. For research is aimed at not only the recording of history but also drawing out the understandings we have gained from the examination of a particular historical epoch. The historian is not a passive recorder of events. Theory and practice must exist in a dialectical relationship, the one building an understanding of the other. The socialist historian cannot leave these concepts implicit and hidden, they must be clearly drawn out so as to advance our understanding. In the case of gender, such a failure contributes to the existing silence around gender oppression.

As mentioned above, a number of writers have examined the nature of the relationship between class struggles, domestic work, domestic labour, the sexual division of labour and reproduction. Some of these examinations will be analysed below.

Erica Boddington's major contribution to our understanding lies in her attempt to examine the nature and form of domestic work within changing class relations.⁷ She attempts to explain why certain groups predominated by relating this to the process of class, colour and sexual oppression. Her location of domestic work within changing relations of class domination is important in that it places domestic service within the overall development of the working class. By emphasizing class, Boddington rejects a feminist analysis of domestic work, arguing:

It was felt that an emphasis on women's oppression would only obscure a broader understanding of domestic service in a class society where domestic service has been a major component of class, colour and sex oppression. A class analysis was used which allowed questions of gender to be posed.⁸

Thus, starting from a class perspective, Boddington emphasizes the following characteristics of domestic work:

(i) Domestic work is unproductive labour; consequently domestic workers are not, in the Marxist sense of the word, exploited. Domestic workers produce use-values "and are thus important in reproducing labour power".

(ii) Domestic workers are not of "direct interest" to fractions of capital since they do not produce surplus value. She argues, however, that an exception to this might be their role in the reserve army of labour.

(iii) Domestic service was an important mechanism of class control in the developing capitalist relations in South Africa since many workers first form of wage labour was domestic service. In this work they learnt the discipline of wage labour. Boddington specifically rejects any relation between domestic work and reproduction, arguing:

Dominant ideology tends to see production and reproduction as separate and this has resulted in much of women's work ("reproductive") being ignored...Marxist feminists have rectified this neglect by analysing the importance of and forms which reproductive labour takes under capitalism. However, by accepting a distinction between productive and reproductive labour one is trapped by the same sterility as dominant ideology and this leads to an emphasis on women's oppression within "the family" rather than seeing "reproduction" within the broader context of the process of reproducing class society...Thus, a rigid distinction between productive and reproductive labour is an economic exercise which negates the complexity of production. An understanding of domestic service as "reproductive" labour would compartmentalise domestic service and place too much emphasis on the actual work done rather than understanding the wider significance of domestic service within relations of class domination in South Africa.⁹

While correctly dismissing dualism and a static, economistic notion of reproduction, Boddington, however, fails to develop a concept of reproduction "within the broader context of the process of reproducing class society". Reproductive labour does occur, on a daily and generational basis, and if concepts of it are dismissed, alternatives must be offered. Boddington's failure to do this results in much confusion in her work. Three examples suffice:

(1) "One of the major benefits of class analysis is that it allowed the historical and theoretical links between class and sex oppression to be made clear, while at the same time showing that the link between class and sex is not the key to understanding domestic service"; (2) "Domestic service does not illustrate the oppression of women by men of their class nor even men of the dominant class. Domestic service instead illustrates part of the process of subordination of the indigenous people of South Africa in order to obtain cheap labour"; and (3) "...Domestic service is central to explaining the oppression of Black women within South Africa's working class. This approach does not deny women's oppression; domestic service, however, is not central to explaining this oppression as women experience other sources of oppression outside domestic service (for instance, one would also have to look at other aspects of the sexual division of labour and wage labour, family, sexuality, ideologies surrounding motherhood among others...)."10 11 12 (my emphasis)

In not examining a conceptualization of the class and gender struggles which determine the relationship between productive and reproductive labour, Boddington fails to note a number of very crucial points: Sex and gender are not the same and it is important to develop and draw out the differences. Gender identities are socially constructed and emerge out of particular class struggles. It is a socially imposed identity which grows out of biological differences. As Michelle Friedman points out:

(Gender) has a specific social meaning that changes over time, depending on historically existing material conditions. Furthermore, this meaning is an intrinsic part of the definition of individual women and men within specific "race" and "class" groupings.¹³

Under capitalist relations of production, the dominant gender identity of women, is directly related to her role within reproductive labour. From this flows the other forms of women's oppression. The ideology of motherhood, the nuclear family and the dominant form of sexuality are directly related to working class women's prime responsibility for reproductive labour.¹⁴ This assertion does not deny the importance of other contradictions which give rise to women's oppression, for example, between the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie. Rather, it seeks to emphasize the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and working class women as the primary contradiction. The relations between men of the dominant class and women of the dominated class are crucial to determining the nature and form of reproductive labour and thus domestic work and gender identity. Bourgeois gender constructions of "masculinity" and "femininity" have served as an important ideological weapon for dividing the working class. Different gender identities are linked to different power inequalities: "masculine" - powerful; "feminine" - powerless. This causes workers to struggle amongst themselves rather than unite to destroy the source of these power inequalities: bourgeois class control. The obvious example is the "macho male gangster" who may rob and rape a working class woman on her way home. While stealing her money, he is also exerting his control over her body and environment. However, these contradictions are not specific to capitalism. They grew out of pre-capitalist social formations. More importantly, however, the power relations are often more subtle and affect the strength of working class organizations. Lydia Kompe, trade unionist, explains how difficult it was - and is - to work with working class men in a union:

They expected me to do things. For example, at lunch time people would put in money and they'd nominate me to go and buy lunch with the excuse that I could choose better because I'm a woman. It became a habit that every lunch time I ran around buying lunch, making tea for them, after washing the dishes. My job would fall behind because I'd have to finish all the jobs they left behind from lunch time.¹⁵

Consequently this thesis argues that the relation between class and gender is one of the keys to understanding domestic service as it

determines what sector of society performs it and why it is working class women that do so. A clear theorization of the relationship between generational and daily reproduction and the relations of production would allow Boddington to highlight the gender content flowing out of the class relations characterizing domestic service. This would allow her to see how the sexual division of labour, the public-private dichotomy and the ideology which characterizes it are crucial to the continued subordination of all sectors of the working class. Boddington's confusion around this relationship results in a one-dimensional understanding of why African women came to dominate domestic work. She argues that this was due to demand for cheap black male labour as well as African women entering the labour market last. This is a functionalist explanation that fails to take into account the nature of the pre-capitalist sexual division of labour, forms of proletarianization and the developing capitalist sexual division of labour. In short, her failure to adequately theorize the nature of domestic work and its relationship to class (that is, domestic work is the wage form of domestic labour which is linked to the domestic component of necessary labour) and class struggles, leads her into the functionalist trap she criticizes. Boddington's contribution, however, does serve to emphasize and document the importance of class and this is a necessary starting point.

Jacklyn Cock attempts to place the institution of domestic service within developing capitalist relations of production, as well as the resulting sexual and racial division of labour.¹⁶ To date Cock's analysis is the most thorough attempt to analyze domestic work from a class, race and gender perspective which is also firmly rooted in the developing political economy of South Africa. Cock advances the following concept of domestic work and domestic labour:

Domestic work...(is) a form of production in which the goods and services produced are for the exclusive use of the domestic unit, are produced within that unit and are exchanged for wages.¹⁷

She links domestic work to reproductive labour by noting that "domestic servants play a major role in the reproduction of labour power. They do so in a double sense for they are responsible for the reproduction of both their own families and those of the dominant class...Domestic service is thus an important element in the accumulation of surplus value for capital."¹⁸

In an article published some years after her book Maids and Madams, Cock moved towards an examination of the double oppression of domestic workers, noting that "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."¹⁹ However Cock only mentions these points in passing and neither develops them nor integrates them into her case study as a whole.

She notes that both women employers and domestic workers are women who, due to their differing class positions and the racial division of labour, experience their discrimination as women differently.

Cock attempts to draw out the relationship between domestic work, domestic labour, the household and the reserve army of labour:

Married women form a hidden reservoir of labour power - the employment of domestic servants creates a particular flexibility in terms of which capital may draw upon this reservoir according to its needs. "Nannies" release their employers for wage labour...In the present situation of growing structural unemployment, the institution of domestic service absorbs large numbers of mainly unskilled black workers...This suggests that the household acts as a source of the reserve army of labour in a double sense: firstly for white married women who comprise an important part of the "floating" relative surplus population; and secondly for black women who are part of the "stagnant" relative surplus population...living close to bare subsistence levels in an occupation characterized "by a maximum of working time and a minimum of wages" (Marx 1976:796).²⁰

Cock characterizes the position of domestic workers as being trapped "within a tightly woven structure of constraints: a condition of subjugation and immobility." This results in domestic workers becoming "markedly powerless to alter their situation."²¹ The domestic worker

is trapped by the nature of apartheid controls, for example influx control as well as by the high level of control exercised by employers in the workplace. She likens the nature of control in the workplace to ideas of "total" and "greedy" institutions in which inmates have little or no control over their lives.²² Employer and employee relations are characterized as paternalistic:

Overall the relationship between domestic workers and their employers is intensely paternalistic. This has two implications: it consigns the worker to a dependent and powerless position and it generates a sense of power and superiority in the employer.²³

In her later work this argument seems to shift somewhat as she sees more of a "mutual dependency" between employee and employers:

The pivotal point of the relationship between employer and servant is their mutual dependence. Employers are dependent upon their servants' labour...Servants are dependent upon their employers for most of the necessities to support themselves and their children.²⁴

She argues further that dependency and control of wives and servants are mediated through the state in the form of influx control of marriage contracts. Finally, Cock argues that domestic work has a number of characteristics different from other forms of labour but true of all capitalist societies: long irregular hours; payment in cash and kind; a high level of employer control of "personal lives" (regulation of visitors); personalized relationship with employers and low level of specialisation.²⁵ She notes that the cost of this labour power may be seen in two ways: it may increase or reduce the cost of labour power of the white working class. However, this depends on particular historical examples and this relationship must not be assumed as given.²⁶

Cock clearly highlights the relationship between capital, domestic labour and reproduction. Her conceptualization of domestic labour tries to draw these concepts together by noting the intersections of class, race and gender and how they reinforce each other. Cock's work, however, suffers from using a functionalist analysis which is most clearly highlighted in her discussion of "trapped", "powerless"

and "dependent" workers. Her analysis is almost completely devoid of any ^{explicit} concept of struggle, especially daily class and gender struggle. While objectively, in a capitalist society the bourgeoisie are powerful and the workers relatively powerless due to their different relationship to the means of production, this must not degenerate into static and functionalist notions of class relations. Workers and capitalists struggle each day to reconstitute the basis of exploitation and oppression. The workers' daily struggle attempts to alter their situation by seeking short-term immediate gains; for example, a day off, small wage increases, freedom from sexual harassment.

In her work published after Maids and Madams, Cock begins to move in this direction by introducing the notion of struggle and resistance:

(This paper) attempts to show that the household is the sight of important contradictions...It suggests that the reproduction of labour power which takes place within the household is a crucial subject of struggle...The fact that women perform most of the domestic labour involved in the reproduction of labour power is a subject of feminist struggle.²⁷

Thus Cock moves toward a concept of "mutual dependency" between employer and employee. But this is a static concept as the outcome of these struggles cannot be subsumed under the notion of "mutual dependency". The outcome is not always so clear and generalized. The notion of "dependency" and "powerless" is at variance with her attempt to place domestic service within capitalist relations of production, for they are characterized by class struggle. The conditions under which domestic workers labour are not a result of the "powerlessness" or "dependency" or workers, but the outcome of concrete class struggles which shift and change over time.

Perhaps part of Cock's problem comes from her eclecticism. She notes that "this study has drawn on a variety of different disciplines and intellectual traditions."²⁸ Attempts to synthesize a Marxian analysis with ideas of "total" or "greedy" institutions, dependency theory and feminism are bound to falter. Marxism is not a framework to be

altered at will by petty-bourgeois intellectuals. Developments emerge out of concrete conditions of struggle. Cock's attempt to strengthen this "framework" by drawing on bourgeois sociology and feminism ultimately lead to reformism which ignores the concept of struggle. Volbrecht has clearly critiqued the dangers of this tendency of Marxism (see above). One final point relates to Cock's research procedure. Her static and economistic concept of Marxism means that Cock developed an orthodox bourgeois sociological notion of research procedure. She employed a part-time Xhosa domestic worker to do 225 interviews as "it was felt that a more educated person might have inhibited the respondents."²⁹ But among the central tenets of Marxism are struggle and the dialectical process. By not attempting to break down the relationship of domestic worker to intellectual, Cock entered no struggle with workers and thus no dialectical process. The workers she tries so hard to give voice to are often written in the third person once removed and her own perceptions are not directly challenged. Also, Cock's interviewing of employers and not domestic workers as well, results in her missing the nature of domestic workers' struggle and becoming a "trapped" intellectual - trapped in the dogmatism and orthodoxy of bourgeois research procedure thus failing to "give back their history" to the workers. The failure to address the power relationship between worker and intellectual is summed up in a comment of a domestic worker after being abused by her employer for being interviewed: "She shouted at me for telling your madam (Cock) what I earn."³⁰ (my emphasis) From a Marxist perspective, Cock cannot analyse the "dependency" and "powerlessness" of workers without challenging her own relationship to those whose history she is recording. Her own hidden assumptions about power must be carefully examined and challenged.

The work of Van Onselen, Boddington and Cock provides us with crucial starting points and directions for further research and conceptualization. While Boddington and Cock fall into the traps of functionalism at times, the work of these writers has ended the silence around domestic workers' history and begun to draw out the nature of the

complex intersection of class, gender and race struggle within the lives of domestic workers. Building on these starting points, Gaitskell, Kimble, McConachie and Unterhalter (hereafter referred to as Gaitskell et al) develop the following ideas about domestic work:³¹ Domestic labour is viewed as "concrete privatised labour which is concerned with the production of use-values for direct consumption within the household."³² They also argue that since domestic workers do not produce surplus value, they cannot be in a "narrow economic sense" exploited by capital.

They argue that domestic work is a particular form of domestic labour and has three main characteristics:

Class : "Domestic servants, as members of the service sector of the working class, tend to exhibit similar characteristics all over the world: isolation, dependence, invisibility, low level of union organization. Some of the reasons for this pattern are recognized: the particular character of the labour, usually labour intensive and unskilled, and the social relations between employer and worker."³³

Gender : "It is mostly done by women. This is so despite the fact that it has been, and continues to be, done in part by men. There are three reasons why... Firstly, the actual tasks associated with it - cooking, cleaning, washing, childcare - have been almost universally assumed to be naturally part of women's sphere. Secondly, it is assumed that such tasks are normally performed within the household. Thirdly, the personal service aspect of such labour resonates with the ideology of women as wife."³⁴

Racial : "Almost everywhere in the world it is performed by socially inferior groups : immigrants, blacks and ethnic minorities. In South Africa, from the turn of the century, household based domestic service has been above all a black institution, whether performed by men or women."³⁵

They draw a distinction between the housewife and domestic worker noting "the definition of the housewife as the women who is not only responsible for the performance of the domestic labour within the home, but who also performs this labour under familial or kin relations without direct remuneration. The domestic worker... is defined as a

worker, as a person who performs the domestic labour in this case in exchange for a wage."³⁶

Finally, they also emphasize the importance of noting struggles over the sexual division of labour:

It is now generally acknowledged that the allocation of jobs, all of which have particular skill connotations, within the working class is a process subject to continuous struggle. This struggle goes on both between the working class and capital, and within the working class as a whole. Increasingly, this kind of struggle is being shown to have taken place over sexual division, as much as over racial division...an examination of the dynamics of this struggle could go some way towards explaining how black women "ended up" in domestic service.³⁷

Thus a conceptualization of domestic work begins to emerge in terms of which domestic work is a particular wage form of domestic labour. Domestic labour is not productive labour and thus workers are not, in the Marxist sense, exploited. Domestic work is clearly related to reproductive labour both in employers' and workers' homes. This takes the form of both paid and unpaid labour. Consequently domestic workers, if they are women, are doubly oppressed - slaving in two households. The household acts as constant source for the reserve army of labour. While domestic work in South Africa has a class, gender and racial character, the position of the housewife and domestic worker are different as the domestic worker is subject to the discipline of wage labour and the household is a site of class, racial and gender struggle.

However, it must be pointed out that the conception of domestic work is lacking or not satisfactorily theorized in a number of areas:³⁸

The relationship of domestic labour and reproductive labour is not clearly conceptualized. This thesis has already argued that the nature and form that reproduction takes, that is, the relations of reproduction, will differ depending on the outcome of particular class and gender struggles. The writers examined, however, offer us no insight into the separation of the productive/unproductive aspects of

the household, which is crucial if we are to understand the changed form that domestic labour took under capitalist relations. Why were some tasks socialized, for example, the manufacture of textiles but not others like childcare. Or put differently, what are the underlying laws of capitalist development as regards domestic labour? Answering this question will help us to conceptualize domestic labour and its relationship to the public/private dichotomy which characterizes capitalism. This is important, not only in the narrowly economic sense, but also to understand the interconnections between domestic labour, the form of the family, the ideology of motherhood, dominant concepts of sexuality and the social construction of gender identity. The failure to draw out this relationship, so common in functionalist tendencies of Marxism, results in a failure to correctly theorize the specificity of women's oppression. It is not enough to argue that domestic labour has a gender content because "the actual tasks associated with it...have been almost universally assumed to be naturally part of women's sphere." Why this is so must be clearly spelt out as Vogel has done. This will help us to clearly define women of the dominated classes relationship to domestic labour and explain why African women came to dominate the domestic work sector. In other words, why women bear primary responsibility for reproductive labour. The role of the state in reinforcing and creating particular forms of the sexual division of labour. While this is often documented historically, it is not conceptualized at all. The nature and form of domestic work as a form of wage labour. The relationship between paid and unpaid labour for domestic workers, that is, the double day and labouring in two private spheres (family households). This also extends into the nature of this wage relationship and the daily class, gender and racial struggles which characterize it. For instance, struggles over the length of the working day, price of wages and the "housewife"/domestic worker relationship (see Chapter One above).

While we have made a start in our task of the conceptualization of domestic labour, its specific relationship to women and its ideological

and political ramifications need to be drawn out so that it may elucidate reality more clearly.³⁹ The development of adequate theoretical tools will help to explain the nature of domestic workers' struggles and clearly define a future programme of action. However, such a development will need to come from vigorous open debate with intellectuals and organizations. This process cannot be started if the nature of domestic labour is relegated to silence. The new discourse Volbrecht argues for can only begin if domestic labour is generally acknowledged as a crucial and fundamental aspect of the Woman Question.

Historical Overview

Changing the Social Composition of Domestic Work

Domestic work has always been an important source of wage employment for the working class. Its importance for men and certain groups of working class women declined with industrialisation in South Africa. This was a very complex process that varied according to geographical regions and the outcome of local struggles around the sexual division of labour. Cock notes that:

Viewed over the last two hundred years of South African history domestic service is a kaleidoscopic institution. It has involved slaves, San, Khoi, "coloureds", Indians, Europeans and African men as well as women. Its development reflects changing patterns of both racial and sexual domination.⁴⁰

Cock fails, however, to point out that those who have laboured as domestic workers have been members of the dominated classes. It is workers who have served in the homes of the bourgeoisie, petty-bourgeoisie and the white working class. To date there are only three studies of the early history of domestic work.⁴¹ The class, race and gender struggles characterizing the South African social formation over the last one hundred years have resulted in the transformation of domestic work from a "kaleidoscopic institution" into a form of wage labour dominated by black, mostly African, women. This process has not occurred evenly throughout South Africa. In the Cape and the Orange

Free State, domestic work as a form of wage labour was from the beginning dominated by women, while in Natal and the Transvaal, it was initially dominated by men:

In the town and on the farms of the Cape and the Orange Free State (OFS) women generally predominated in the performance of domestic tasks in settler homes. There were racial variations of course: in Cape Town, coloured women servants have long been in the majority, while around Grahamstown in the nineteenth century, it was African women who gradually replaced white women as cooks, nursemaids and general house servants. A very different situation developed in Natal and the Transvaal, particularly in Durban and along the gold mining Witwatersrand. Although white female domestic labour had some initial importance on the Reef, and was especially encouraged by female emigration societies after the Boer war, it was black men who early cornered the labour market. African women servants began to outnumber them only around the time of the Second World War.⁴²

Explanations for this development vary. Firstly, Cock argues that in the Eastern Cape because of poor wages and working conditions "whites escaped from it as blacks were increasingly coerced into it." She also argues that domestic service was the point of incorporation of African women into the colonial economy and the "main factors propelling them into domestic work were direct coercion, economic and extra economic compulsion."⁴³ Missionary education played a role in facilitating and reinforcing these processes:

Xhosa women were initially incorporated into missionary educational institutions, which were the crucial point of transition in the incorporation of Xhosa women into colonial society proper. The missions elaborated occupational skills and an occupational ideology which then found expression in the employment of Xhosa women largely as domestic workers. An ideology of domesticity rooted in European gender roles was linked to an ideology of domestication generated by the problems of controlling a colonial frontier.⁴⁴

Similarly, Boddington argues that due to the collapse of the rural economy, Xhosa women were forced into wage labour. However, working class black, especially African, women became trapped in this sector as there was little or no demand for their labour elsewhere. Black males were drawn off into other sectors due to capital's demand for cheap black male labour. But Boddington does not clearly explain that this demand for cheap male labour was premised on the assumption that

African women were responsible for reproductive labour in pre-capitalist social formations. This alternative explanation is discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Van Onselen shows how shifts in the nature of the demand for domestic workers, due to the changing class composition of Johannesburg as well as the changing form of proletarianization, structured the domestic work sector. It was only with the rapid proletarianization of women in the 1930s and 1940s and the demand for black male labour in other sectors that domestic work became female dominated.

Gaitskell et al emphasize the need to examine and account for the "nature of African proletarianization and the sexual composition of the migrant workforce" as these were crucial in determining the character of domestic service. They also point to the lack of alternatives for black women as a reason for them dominating this sector. However, they argue that the explanation lies in the "need to investigate changing patterns of racial and sexual domination in South Africa and their connection with changing patterns of economic development and employment."⁴⁵

In accounting for the dominance of black women in domestic work, it appears that a very crucial reason has been neglected since there is an underlying tendency of capitalism that is not being accounted for. One of the advantages of scientific Marxism is that it allows the "discovery" of the laws of capitalist development that characterize all capitalist social formations. In other words, capitalism is characterized by general tendencies despite the particular forms this takes as a result of specific class struggles. One of these laws or general tendencies is related to the sexual division of labour. There is a tendency for capital to exert a particular form of the sexual division of labour which results in women being primarily responsible for reproductive (unproductive) labour. The site for this labour in the family, located within the private sphere. Thus the separation of productive and unproductive labour of the integrated economic unit of the pre-capitalist family, of the development of the public-private

dichotomy and the development of bourgeois ideology of motherhood are general tendencies of capitalist development. As Vogel notes (see above) there are also contradictory tendencies towards socialization of many of the tasks of domestic labour; for example, fast foods, laundrettes, hospitals, ready-made clothes. This is supported by an overall tendency toward the equalization of labour and thus today we see working class, even African women, increasingly drawn into productive sectors of the economy. Yet this does not counteract their responsibility for reproductive labour. It merely increases the burden of working class women.

Underlying the changing patterns of racial and sexual domination and the lack of alternatives for black working class women were the laws of capitalist development. The general tendency exerted was a sexual division of labour which forced women to take prime responsibility for reproductive labour. This affected domestic work as well by obliging women to take up this labour. The speed with which this law developed depended on the nature of capitalist penetration. For example, in the Cape where capitalist relations were dominant from very early on, and the material basis of pre-capitalist societies were destroyed, women came to dominate domestic work from the 1890s. In Natal and the Transvaal where it took capital longer to exert its hegemony over pre-capitalist societies, the capitalist form of the sexual division of labour took longer to become dominant.

Arguing for an examination of these underlying laws of capitalist development does not negate the specificity of the South African social formation. The way that these laws articulate within a particular social formation depend on the outcome of particular class, race and gender struggles and does not deny their validity. The forms of proletarianization, the nature of migrant labour, the lack of alternative employment for black women and the demands of capital for cheap black male labour are the ways in which these tendencies have been articulated in the South African social formation. Furthermore,

the fact that South Africa was a colonial society and class struggle resulted in a racial division of labour means that these general tendencies developed a racial character. In this case responsibility for reproductive labour, paid and unpaid, was increasingly the burden of black working class women. Finally, it is worth noting that it is only when capitalist relations exert their dominance throughout South Africa and enter the mature phase of secondary industrialization, that the sexual division of labour becomes firmly entrenched.

In South Africa, because of the dependent nature of secondary industrialization and the development of the racial division of labour, domestic workers continue to constitute a major part of the workforce and black, mostly African, women continue to dominate this sector. The way forward in terms of research is to examine and uncover these general tendencies of capitalist development and begin a process of documenting the class, gender and racial struggles which characterized its articulation in the South African social formation.

Relations Within the Household

Most studies of the working conditions of domestic servants, whether liberal or Marxist, have documented the devastating and degrading conditions under which they labour within the household.⁴⁶ Long working hours, poor food and living conditions, little or no paid sick or holiday leave, sexual harassment, physical and psychological abuse have been and are characteristic of domestic work. Studies point to a high degree of employer control over workers, especially living-in domestics. Employers control the daily routine as well as private lives of workers. This control is reinforced by ideologies of racism and sexism, which are concretized in daily intimate contact within the household, and have a profound effect on employer-worker relations. As Boddington notes "both racism and sexism served to subordinate and were informal measures of control acting alongside formal measures of control like legislation."⁴⁷ In this way they also served to reproduce

ruling class ideology and oppression. The isolated nature of domestic work tended to reinforce workers' sense of powerlessness and lack of control over their lives.

These studies fail, however, to document a number of crucial areas:

The relationship of paid and unpaid labour for the domestic worker: the burden of caring for two families. Labouring in two private spheres can be extremely heavy for workers. Constant worry about children at home or the length of the double day for live-out workers are sources of extreme anxiety and physical suffering for workers. This needs to be adequately documented.

The daily class struggle: the nature of the relationship between employer and employee tends to be viewed statically. This is a result of the functionalist view of Marxism used by most writers on domestic labour. Characterizations vary from "mutual dependency" or "tensions" to "dependency" and "powerlessness". These are often in the face of evidence of workers' struggles over length of the working day, working conditions and wages. Cock comments on worker consciousness:

"...domestic workers don't accept the legitimacy of their own subordination" and have "a high consciousness of exploitation; a sense of community of interests; and considerable insight into the structures which maintain their subordination."⁴⁸ Yet these selfsame workers are dependent and powerless! Their consciousness does not force them to struggle at all! The notion of daily class struggle does not mean workers will succeed in fundamentally altering power relations within society as a whole. This would need united class organization and mobilization. Similarly, it is crucial to note the daily struggle of workers to reconstitute the frontiers of their exploitation and oppression. It is this struggle which underlies Cock's ideas on consciousness and is a necessary precondition for unified class action. The nature and depth of sexual harassment as a form of control. Rape in all its forms lies hidden and buried in our social formation. Although mentioned in some works, we have very little documentation of how prevalent this is within domestic service.⁴⁹

Health and safety in the home: Health and safety have formed one of the major areas of working class struggle in South Africa over the last decade. Domestic workers constantly work with many poisonous household chemicals or suffer from occupational diseases such as arthritis. Yet this is hardly documented at all.

The position of the domestic worker within the employer's family. Feminists and Marxists have long argued that the family is a site of struggle. Struggle tends to be on the basis of age and gender. However, the employment of a domestic worker introduces class struggle directly into the family while intensifying the gender struggle. Very often the domestic worker becomes a focus for family tensions and problems. Although this is noted we need to have more studies which adequately document each of the struggles within the family: husband-employer/domestic worker; housewife-supervisor/domestic worker; children/domestic worker. It is not enough to point to the family as a site of socialization where the dominant power relations within society are engendered; it needs to be examined in more depth.⁵⁰

None of the writers reviewed below view the household in isolation from wider class, gender and racial struggle in the social formation as a whole. Firstly, the work of Joanne Shindler is important in that it attempts to draw out relations between the economy and the household.⁵¹ Her work examines the reasons for the decline in the number of full-time domestic workers and the relationship between domestic work and the development of labour-saving appliances. She notes that the decrease in the number of domestic workers in the 1970s is due to an interrelationship of three factors: (1) economic recession has made it more difficult for employers to be able to afford full-time domestic workers; (2) the availability of labour-saving appliances has made it possible for the "housewife" to do her own domestic tasks with less physical labour and time; and (3) the state has reacted to this reduced demand by stringent enforcement of influx control therefore preventing black women coming to the cities looking for work. Shindler notes that the development of labour-saving appliances has given "housewives" the choice of whether or not to employ a domestic

worker, as these appliances save time and energy. However, the effect of these appliances is contradictory, given the availability of cheap labour:

Those women who worked, were able to complete their chores either before they went to work or after they arrived home. The other women, however, were busy in their homes all day and had very little interests, if any at all, outside their homes and families...The same phenomenon emerged amongst women who employed full-time domestic workers. Although they did not housework, they were always busy - fetching and carrying their children, baking, pottering in the garden and doing other minor chores in and around the house...much too busy...to manage without their domestic worker.⁵²

For the domestic worker, labour-saving appliances do not necessarily mean shorter working days as their routine is structured by that of the family. For example, even though the worker may finish the housework earlier, her day ends when the family finishes eating supper. On the contrary, labour-saving appliances may increase the rate of work as employers expect MORE to be done in a day because of their help. Shindler's study is crucial in that it tries to relate wider economic trends - the business cycle - like recession and technological changes to developments within the household. She has opened up a whole new sphere for research. The nature of the intersection of the relations of production and reproduction need to be carefully documented.

Secondly, Van Onselen's study of the "black peril" scares on the Witwatersrand in the period 1890 - 1914 and Boddington's documentation of an incident in the history of Cape Town in which domestic workers were accused of spreading syphilis, provide us with crucial insights into the relationship between the business cycle, gender struggle in the household and dominant forms of sexuality.⁵³ Van Onseler characterizes these scares as "periodic waves of sexual hysteria" adding that:

During these violent storms of social tension...white women, on an unprecedented scale, alleged that they had been sexually molested or assaulted by black males. At the very eye of these storms by the European household, and within it, the relationships between black and white servants on the one hand, and houseboys and mistresses on the other.⁵⁴

These scares corresponded to periods of social and economic stress in the Rand area. Van Onselen argues that anxieties caused by stress in the wider society surfaced in the form of black peril scares. Keegan critiques Van Onselen for being functionalist in seeking to explain the "black peril" scares in terms of underlying attempts by employers to find ways of not paying workers' wages.⁵⁵ He argues that there was more fundamental ideological crises reflected in these scares:

Social controls and discipline were breaking down as the first really substantial wave of proletarianized blacks and landless whites made their presence felt in the towns...This posed a real threat to racial hegemony and to the control agencies...Here is to be found the source of ideological crises. New mechanisms of social control and psychological manipulation had to be vigilantly created to meet the new situation.⁵⁶

Whatever the underlying causes of this phenomena, Van Onselen's and Boddington's studies raise questions of the relationship of sexual relations within the household - even between white women employers and black males - gender struggles, sexuality and the struggles in the wider social formation.⁵⁷ Further work needs to be done to document the historical development of these relations.

Thirdly, the nature of the relationship between the state and the family-household. Although, as noted above, this was not conceptualized very clearly, Van Onselen, Boddington, Cock, Shindler and Gaitskell et al provide evidence of how the state has sought to enforce a system of cheap labour through political and economic controls (for example, influx control) and repression. This in turn has guaranteed a source of cheap domestic labour for employers.⁵⁸ Furthermore, the state has made doubly sure of this by specifically excluding domestic workers from legislation setting out the basic conditions of employment, leaving domestic workers with little or no legal protection against the whims of employers.⁵⁹ The nature of these controls has varied over time and developed with the growth of the South African social formation. However, the reasons for this specific exclusion are not always clearly drawn out. Historically, the

lack of legal protection may represent an attempt by the state to force down the wages of domestic workers so that there would not be a need to raise significantly the wages of employers to cover the cost of paid domestic labour. There is a complex relationship here which needs to be further researched.

The studies referred to also ignore other significant aspects of the state's involvement in domestic labour, for example, state ideology on the nuclear family which is often concretized in programmes of family-planning on the one hand, or restricting "single" black women's access to housing, on the other.⁶⁰ Access to housing is crucial for black women in the urban areas and, as many studies point out, the lack of accommodation often forces black working class women to accept domestic work with low wages and poor working conditions. Again, the question is raised of whether or not this is a deliberate attempt by the state and capital to force black working class women into poorly paid jobs and thus reduce the cost of the domestic component of necessary labour. In other words, if workers are forced due to lack of accommodation into poorly paid jobs, and workers' wages are linked to that of their employers, then the cost of reproduction of their employers' families will be less, and so the cost to capital will also be less. Evidence to support this assertion is difficult to obtain; however, it does serve to emphasize the need for an examination and historical documentation of the relationship between the state and the domestic component of necessary labour.

Lastly, the studies reviewed seemed to ignore the issue of childcare and who provides it. The state's relation to childcare is crucial as its failure to provide adequate childcare has created huge problems for domestic workers with children.⁶¹ This burden has been increased by employers also ignoring this problem. How and why this policy developed and how it is related to domestic workers are crucial questions for further research. Research on the relationship of the state to domestic work needs to go beyond narrow economic

notions of facilitating a supply of cheap labour into areas such as ideological conceptions of the family, sexuality and childcare.

In reviewing the works cited above, this thesis has tried to develop a critique that argues for an examination of the relationship between domestic labour and the specificity of women's position. It has argued that one of the general laws of capitalism is a tendency towards the creation of a specific sexual division of labour which forced women, and working class women in particular, to take primary responsibility for domestic labour. In South Africa where this has assumed a racial dimension, black working class women are primarily responsible for this labour. Domestic work has also taken the form of wage labour and is one of the major areas of economic involvement for these women. Flowing out of this relationship is the ideology of motherhood, the family, sexuality, paid and unpaid labour, and their relationship to the wider forces within the social formation as a whole - all of which are crucial to the lives of domestic workers. And lastly, this section has also consistently emphasized the importance of moving away from a static analysis of the development of domestic work towards an understanding of both daily and long-term class, gender and class, gender and racial struggles that underlie these relationships.

Resistance

In the literature, two main forms of resistance are recorded:

Informal/unorganized resistance. Given the isolated and spacially fragmented nature of domestic work, resistance that takes place within the family-household may remain hidden and difficult to document. As Cock notes:

The domestic servants' silence and secret mockery of employers might thus be viewed as muted rituals of resistance...The petty pilfering, in which all said they engaged, might also be seen as a situational rebellion. The crucial point is that servants, as well as wives, rebel as isolated individuals. Both are atomised workers who in situations of dissatisfaction confront individuals (whether employers or husbands) in the privatized sphere of the home. A collective response is displaced by individual attempts at

negotiation...requesting small wage increases or a day off in the case of servants.⁶²

Boddington points to the difficulty of documenting such informal methods of resistance given the nature of domestic work.⁶³ Her examination of police records for infringements of the Master and Servants Act is one way of uncovering the resistance, but other ways must also be established. While it may be difficult to document this adequately, however, because it is hidden, does not mean it does not exist on a large-scale. Resistance of this kind is an expression of the daily class struggle and too many writers attach a section on "Resistance" to the end of their work, without integrating it into the notion of struggle. If resistance were not "tacked on" to the end of histories but integrated into the body of the work, the functionalism that is so prevalent may be eliminated and the notion of class struggle assume its correct place - central to any Marxist analysis. The relegation of resistance to a separate section of a particular work results in a historiography dominated by the demands of state and capital. The nature of the class struggle must inform all aspects of historiography and not only particular sections of it.

Formal or organizational resistance. The literature is characterized by two kinds of organized resistance. Firstly, the Amalaita movement, the activities of which van Onselen characterized as:

In essence it was a movement of young black domestic servants and their unemployed peers born out of hard times in a new and harsh environment. It drew cousins of both sexes together in unfamiliar urban surroundings...It was also, however, a movement which sought to give its members who laboured in alienated colonised isolation a sense of purpose and dignity - in short, it transformed "Saucepan" into a "Sergeant" in the army of the people. Hardly surprising then that some of the "worst" Amalaita had the best references...It was precisely because he was such a "good", "polite" and servile "boy" during the day that "Saucepan" had to become that virile, manly aggressive "Sergeant" of the night. It is in this latter light that the Amalaita should be seen as the "houseboys" liberation army fighting to reassert its decolonized manhood during one of the first major waves of South African proletarianization.⁶⁴

With its para-military uniforms, parades and hierarchy, the Amalaita provide a perfect example of male organization not too removed from the impi. Occurring in the first two decades of this century, this movement provides an example of the transition of resistance from pre-capitalist to capitalist forms. It also provides us with an example of the resulting gender frustration and aggression that male domestic workers encountered as a result of being forced into domestic work, a form of labour they would not have undertaken in their own homes. The gender conflict that resulted might have found an outlet in paramilitary male forms of organization such as the Amalaita. It might have been necessary for the male domestic worker to re-establish his "manhood" through belonging to such an organization.

Boddington's documentation of the struggles of washerwomen in Cape Town in the early-twentieth century, provides a contrasting example.⁶⁵ As noted earlier, in the Cape Province, unlike the Transvaal, domestic work was dominated by women. Boddington's example highlights the use of peaceful resistance - the stayaway - by the washerwomen to gain their ends. Although Boddington does not draw this out, it seems as if this different form of organization may be related to differing results of gender conflicts and gender identities. It is necessary to explain why men on the Rand chose a para-military form of organization, namely the Amalaita, while women in the Cape chose a peaceful form of resistance - the stayaway. One could speculate that this is related to the social construction of gender identities. To take us beyond speculation, much attention needs to be given to the relationship between gender identity and the forms of protest adopted.

The second form of resistance highlighted is that of the rise of domestic workers' unions. This form of resistance is clearly within the capitalist mode of production and unlike the Amalaita bears no resemblance to pre-capitalist forms of struggle. We must be careful to note that this form of organization does not necessarily promote resistance as trade unions may accommodate workers to the rule of capital. McNeil and Gaitskell provide us with clear accounts of the

unions may accommodate workers to the rule of capital. McNeil and Gaitskell provide us with clear accounts of the development of domestic workers' unions in the 1970s.⁶⁶ Gaitskell et al document the rise of two streams of union organisation:

The first is associated with liberal and church bodies like DWEP (Domestic Workers Employers Project), which have initiated projects among domestic workers; the second is a move toward forming unions which originated with the workers themselves.⁶⁷

McNeil records how out of liberal, employer-based projects like DWEP, the workers organized themselves into an independent union - the South African Domestic Workers Association. She also highlights a number of problems facing domestic workers trying to organize themselves into unions:

- (i) the spatial separation of workers which makes collective action difficult;
- (ii) domestic workers are not recognized as domestic workers by the state, therefore, they cannot form registered unions;
- (iii) the objective situation of domestic workers may result in passive conditioning;
- (iv) domestic workers are primarily women and the burdens of the double day make little time available for organization.

Mcneil points out, however, that the weakness of women's unions in South Africa should be understood as flowing out of the forms of wage labour women are engaged in and is not related to their "passivity".

While McNeil does contextualize her study by pointing out the long, rich history of women's struggle in South Africa, most of the writers fail to take into account a third form of organization, that is, community organizations. There is a need to broaden concepts of organized resistance to include community-based and political organizations which challenge the dominant sexual division of labour. Since many working class women are domestic workers, many of the women in community-based organizations will be domestic workers. However, if we fail to correctly draw out the relationship between paid and unpaid

labour; if our studies of domestic workers concern themselves only with the paid aspect of their lives, then this form of resistance will be ignored. In the ANC Women's League, how many member were or are domestic workers? In the anti-pass struggles, were domestic workers involved? How does the dominance of domestic workers in organizations like the United Women's Congress affect resistance? How can we assess the strike by black women in Port Alfred against sexual harassment?⁶⁸ (It is important to note that many of these women were domestic workers.) Women workers have organized themselves as women workers, in community/political organizations and as workers in trade unions. A gender-sensitive approach to documenting the resistance of domestic workers must include this form of resistance as well.

Historians attempting to document the history of workers' struggles must adequately reflect the totality of these experiences. The history of all classes is the history of a complex intersection of many struggles - class, gender, racial. These struggles occur in many different areas such as economic, ideological, psychological/emotional and political and documentation must reflect this. Intellectuals cannot define a specific area of interest at the exclusion of other aspects of people's lives. Neither can they attempt to squash workers' lives into some functionalist intellectual-theoretical construction. The task is to record struggles and attempt to clearly define the victories, defeats, their causes and results that arise out of these struggles. Marxism as a theory of working class struggle offers us the necessary conceptual tools to reflect the workers' lives and struggles. However, if these tools are removed from their context of struggle, they become static, functionalist and reformist. Very often this is a result of the historian standing outside the context of struggle, and recording history as a "passive observer". Thus do notions of Marxism get divorced from struggle. The historian cannot reflect that which is beyond their life experience. Borrowing from feminism or bourgeois sociology will not help to overcome these problems. It will intensify it and hinder the process of an historical materialist analysis.

Writers reviewed above have made a start in this direction, and despite the dominance of functionalist analyses, they have clearly pointed the way forward. To quote Lilian Ngoyi* "I have opened the road. Now you must go forward!" I intend to go forward by attempting a gender-sensitive class analysis of working class women's experiences of domestic labour in its unpaid and paid forms. The first part is based on secondary texts; the second part is based on a case study.

*Executive member of the Federation of South African Women in the 1950s.

So the truth began to dawn then how I keep him fit and trim
So that the boss can make a nice fat profit out of me and
him,
And as a solid union man he got in quite a rage
To think we're both working hard and getting one man's wage,
I said "And what about the part-time packing job I do?"
That's 3 men that I work for, love, my boss, your boss, and
you!

He looked a little sheepish and he said "As from today,
The lads & me will see what we can do an equal pay.
Would you like a housewives union? Do you think you should
be paid
As a cook and as a cleaner, as a nurse and as a maid?"
I said "Don't jump the gun, love, if you did your share at
home,
Perhaps I'd have some time to fight some battles of my own!"

Feminist Song

CHAPTER FIVE : MY HOME, MY PRISON - UNPAID REPRODUCTIVE LABOUR IN THE FAMILY

The history of the process of proletarianization in South Africa has until recently ignored aspects of women's experience.¹ It has very seldom recorded how changes in the pre-capitalist relations of reproduction affected these societies. We have no history of the changes in the material basis and form of the family; we have not adequately documented the process through which bourgeois concepts of sexuality, motherhood and marriage destroyed pre-capitalist ideas. Nor do we have a history of the changing nature of the social construction of gender identity and the effect of the development of the public-private dichotomy on gender relations. It is not possible to re-write over three hundred years of history within the space of this dissertation. Nor is it the responsibility of those involved in documenting women's story. For the changes in the relations of reproduction affected all aspects of society, women and men alike. This is a task which faces all progressive historians.

The aim of this chapter is to account for, as far as possible, the nature of unpaid reproductive labour and the black working class family in the 1980s. An attempt is also made to examine aspects of the historical development of this reproductive labour. However, even this limited task is fraught with difficulties caused by the shortage of information. For example, much of the recorded history is of the development of the African sector of the working class. Much still needs to be written about the historical experience of "coloured" and "Indian" (sic) women. Until such time as this is undertaken, it will be impossible to write a rounded account of the development of the relations of reproduction. Furthermore, the process of the development of capitalist forms of daily and generational reproduction was an uneven one. Consequently, more regional studies need to be undertaken before a clearer picture emerges. Despite these problems, this chapter attempts an overview because in the course of fieldwork it became clear that the domestic workers' relationship to their own families determined many aspects of their life. Domestic workers

consistently drew out the relationship between domestic labour at home and at the workplace. Both forms of domestic labour - unpaid and paid - were seen as part of the special burden that women have to bear. This seemed to support Vogel's contention that the specificity of women's position is related to the relations of reproduction. Thus what follows attempts to contextualize the case study while noting the importance of recording the history of the relations of reproduction and the ideology which supports it. It also serves to emphasize that by not correctly theorizing domestic work, previous attempts at recording its history have overlooked a crucial aspect of female workers experiences - that of domestic slave in their own families.

A necessary starting point is the examination of the pre-capitalist sexual division of labour and how it was transformed by capitalism. For the nature of the domestic component of necessary labour, under capitalist relations, developed out of the pre-capitalist sexual divisions of labour and may still retain some of its forms. The relations of reproduction did not develop with capitalism alone but arose out of class and gender conflict between pre-capitalist and emerging capitalist classes. As part of the general tendency of social divisions to deepen with the growth of class societies, the capitalist sexual division of labour has intensified as well. Since capitalism represents the most mature form of class society, the sexual division of labour reaches its most advanced state under these social relations. Thus an examination of the pre-capitalist sexual division of labour may provide us with an understanding of how class struggles have transformed and intensified this division of labour. It may also begin the explanation of how the public and private dichotomy and the ideology which characterizes it, arose within the context of the South African social formation.

Pre-capitalist social formations in South Africa were characterized by a family-household structure which was an integrated unit of production and reproduction. Both men and women provided the means of subsistence and the labour of all its members was crucial to its continued exist-

ence and functioning. This formed the material basis of the family and determined its social organization. The family-household was characterized by an internal division of labour. Integral to this was a sexual division of labour. Arising out of this were the dominant forms of gender relations and identities, marriage and sexuality. There are features common to this sexual division of labour in all pre-capitalist African societies:²

Women were responsible for agricultural production as well as daily and generational reproduction. This included productive aspects of reproductive labour, that is, producing the tools necessary for this labour. For example, pots, baskets, clothes and mats. This labour, combined with agricultural production gave value to women's participation in the social formation. This did not mean that the relations of reproduction were not oppressive to women. For despite their involvement in productive activities, women were denied access to and control over their own surplus production. They were also denied access to other sources of wealth such as cattle and trading and thus also to political power. The internal division of labour was premised on the subordination of women's labour. Women were crucial to the pre-capitalist economy in that they were both productive workers and the source of further and future labour (generational and daily reproduction). The subordination of women's productive and reproductive labour was tightly controlled by the system of lobola through which women's labour was valued in terms of cattle. Polygamy allowed men to accumulate workers for their land and lobola provided compensation for the workers that the father lost through marriage. Class divisions were also crucial for the larger the wealth the male head of household had accumulated, the more labour he could acquire in terms of second or third wives. Thus, the more surplus he could produce and alienate because of the increased amount of labour at his disposal.

Men were responsible for cattle herding, hunting, land clearing, ploughing, trading, fighting and the administration of their society. One example of this internal division of labour is provided by Delius examination of Pedi society:

There was a broad, although by no means static or absolute sexual division of labour. Women undertook the bulk of the work in the fields. They were the potters and also did the clay work on the huts and courtyards. Women made sleeping mats and baskets, they also ground grain, cooked, brewed beer and collected wood and water. Men undertook some labour in the fields during peak periods of activity in the agricultural cycle and hunted and herded. They performed woodwork in hut construction and also did the roofing, prepared hides, sewed pelt karosses and made wooden storage vessels, they were also the principal metal workers and the relatively specialized smiths.³

On the importance of polygamy and the subordination of women's labour in Pedi society, Delius notes:

Differential accumulation of cattle and other bridewealth goods also facilitated and was, in turn, promoted by differential rates of polygamy. The evidence of Pedi society suggests that polygamy on any scale was principally the prerogative of the chiefs and the bakgomana (nobles). This pattern of polygamy had a number of consequences. Women played the key role in agricultural production in Pedi society and, crudely put, more wives meant more labour power, as well as the ability to claim and work larger areas of land. Chiefs and royals explicitly defended polygamy against the missionary onslaught in terms of their need for labour and grain. Access to and control over women and cattle were key components in relations of power at all levels of society.⁴

Consequently, the subordination of women's labour, productive and reproductive, was integral to developing and maintaining class relations in pre-capitalist social formations. This was achieved by controlling sexuality through polygamy and a complex system of kinship networks while, materially, women were denied access to the means of production and distribution - land, surplus and trade.

The penetration of capitalism, in its merchant and industrial forms, led to the slow erosion of the material base of pre-capitalist social formations. This produced changes in the political and ideological levels of these societies. With regard to the sexual divisions of labour, merchant capital initially intensified its pre-capitalist forms as women carried the additional burden of performing the labour of the men who migrated.⁵ Bozzoli also points to other consequences of the penetration of merchant capital:

However, what is known is that there were important changes inflicted upon patriarchal systems by the penetration of merchant capital and colonial conquest...these changes may have been to the detriment of women. We know that in general merchant capital acts as force which modifies but does not revolutionize, pre-capitalist forms. In some cases it has been shown to strengthen the power of men over women. If men possess greater physical mobility (by virtue of not being tied to the domestic domain) they are better able to respond to the demands of trade. Mercantile penetration may involve the appropriation by men of craft and other productive activities previously associated with women; or indeed the effects of commodity exchange may be to eliminate crafts altogether...These various effects may introduce substantial modifications in male-female relations. And yet merchant capital on its own does not destroy or create uniformity among the systems which it encounters.⁶

The mineral revolution and the development of industrial capitalism began to transform pre-capitalist social relations of production and reproduction even further. One of the outcomes of these struggles was the increased development of a system of relations of production based on migrant labour, rather than full proletarianization of pre-capitalist societies. This was advantageous for industrial capital for continued maintenance of pre-capitalist relations of production meant that migrant workers could be paid as single workers. The cost of necessary labour was reduced to a minimum - the cost of reproduction of one worker. This meant that the cost of the domestic component of necessary labour was borne by the pre-capitalist economy. But a purely functionalist explanation of the development of the migrant labour system is inadequate. An adequate analysis will be more complex than this as the migrant labour system grew out of more than just the demands of capital.

Patrick Harries has questioned whether this system was so beneficial to capital since recruiting and travel costs, capitulation fees and constant retraining and theft of gold and diamonds may have made it an expensive system to maintain.⁷ Delius, on the other hand, points out that it may have been a system which was useful to the migrants themselves as it facilitated the accumulation of bridewealth:

...parties of migrants were in the main, composed of young men who travelled South shortly after initiation. This arose

partly because men who had not yet married and established households could most easily be abstracted from the society and also because part of the dynamic of the system lay in the need to accumulate bridal wealth goods.⁸ (my emphasis)

Furthermore, it was in the interests of the ruling classes in pre-capitalist societies to prevent full proletarianisation as this would have resulted in the erosion of the basis of their accumulation. In addition, this form of wage labour did allow for the increased accumulation of wealth and guns. Evidence of the alliances made between chiefs and capital to prevent women leaving the rural areas comes from Joanne Yawitch's study when she notes how:

This (moving away from the rural areas) was by no means an easy decision to implement. For it often meant openly defying the wishes of tribal elders, and of male relatives...It was in the interests of white officialdom that African women stayed in the reserves, in order to prevent the formation of a stable urban African proletariat which would have meant that the basis of cheap labour was undercut.⁹

Sol Plaaitjie supports this view by relating how "...drastic measures (were) adopted by chiefs and tribesmen to stop their women from migrating."¹⁰

Bozzoli has suggested that the ability of capital to develop a migrant labour system rested on the capacity of pre-capitalist societies to subordinate women's labour:

Indeed one might even suggest that the giving up of migrant labour by these societies partly rested upon their capacity of subordinate women's labour; and that it is in this capacity, that the resilience of these systems to 'full proletarianization' may have rested.¹¹

The development of a migrant labour system emerged from the demands of competing classes within the South African social formation. At times these demands were complimentary and at times contradictory. Members of these classes sought to forward their demands by acting on what they perceived their interests to be. The development of this system effected women in a number of ways.

Firstly, it increased their burden as they often had to undertake the labour of the absent migrants. As Nicky Robins points out:

There is, in a sense, a double exploitation; firstly, of women's reproductive labour (cooking, cleaning, caring for the children) and, secondly, of their direct labour to produce the goods to do this (growing food, building the hut, collecting thatch).¹²

Secondly, daily reproduction became spatially separated. With migrant labour, women did not have to perform aspects of the daily reproduction of the direct producers. This was performed by the men themselves, by the kitchen staff that cooked the food on the mines or by lovers from nearby townships or villages. Thirdly, by introducing wage labour into pre-capitalist society, the material basis of the family was beginning to alter. The process of the separation of productive and reproductive labour, of the destruction of the household as an integrated unit, had begun. Wage labour and the development of a trading store network also began the process of destroying women's productive activities. The decline in the value of women's labour was set in motion. Fourthly, the form of the family began to alter with the growth and strength of the migrant labour system and the development of an urban proletariat. Fifthly, increasing involvement in wage labour brought with it ideological re-organization. Money created new wants and demands for capitalist commodities. This was reinforced by missionaries and the growth of Christianity with its stress on Western values of monogamy and motherhood and the nuclear family. All of these forces acting together ushered in a new era of gender relations and identity. Each of these processes need to be documented more thoroughly so a clear picture emerges of their affect on the relations reproduction.

However, a system of migrant labour based on the alliance of capital, state and tribal elders to ensure the continued subordination of women's labour within pre-capitalist society could not last. While this alliance may have initially slowed down the tendency toward the separation of productive and reproductive labour, underlying forces of capitalist accumulation had been set in motion. Although the penetration of capitalist relations was a slow and uneven process, by the beginning of the twentieth century this process was greatly speeded up

by the advance of industrial capital. Increasing demands for land and labour speeded up the alienation of land through military conquest and juridicial decrees (Land Acts). The growth of commodity production helped to erode the economic basis of these societies. Mass factory production produced food, clothes and medicines which penetrated the countryside through the network of rural traders undercutting household production, but increasing the need for money. This was especially so in situations where women were unable to fulfill their productive and reproductive tasks because of the amount of labour necessary. It was easier to buy commodities from the trader especially where he was ready to extend credit. In one sense, proletarianization of women could not take place until mass factory production of commodities like food, clothes, utensils was established for this would have seriously endangered the reproduction of the developing working class and raised the cost of labour power. As Stone has pointed out:

As industrialisation proceeds, the household production of women is rendered increasingly obsolete. Goods which were produced in the home are now produced more cheaply in the factories...large numbers of women, displaced from their non-industrial occupations by technology became available for participation in the labour force.¹³

Colonial conquest and political domination meant a restructuring of customary law to meet the demands of capital. These changes in the legal structure compounded pressures on subsistence farming. Colonial domination led to a restructuring of African pre-capitalist legal forms which was disadvantageous to African women. Suttner has summarized this as:

The combined impact of the introduction of individualistic categories from the common law and the courts conservative approach to the formation of custom has been to strengthen the patriarchal domination over women. This has meant that the rights of women are often reduced below that which they enjoyed in pre-colonial tribal society.¹⁴

Yawitch has pointed out that one way the introduction of African customary law worked against women was related to land tenure. Colonial law resulted in women's land rights becoming

...subordinated to those of men, with particular groups of women being affected by the change more seriously than others...Widows, divorcees, single women and second wives all stood to suffer considerable economic

hardship because the revised laws undercut their access to the means of production, in this case land.¹⁵

The introduction of systems of one MAN-one plot compounded this and widows and single women had little chance of obtaining land. Under this system, married women could not own land either but could work their husbands' land until his death when it was transferred to a male heir. Furthermore, this system meant that women could not make any major decisions relating to productive activity without the consent of the head of the household - a man. But the head of the household was often away and this severely hampered the efficient running of the household. Women were unable to make decisions related to when and

what to plant until men returned and this was often too late. A contradictory effect of this was that the absence of the head of the household may have meant a reduction in patriarchal control resulting in the growing independence of women. However, this would need to be substantiated by more research.

The pre-capitalist sexual division of labour was not only eroded by ideological re-organization of the juridical level but ^{also} of the dominant concepts of gender identity as well. As capitalism penetrated pre-capitalist societies, an ideological as well as economic and political re-ordering of society took place. Women would have had a particular experience of this through shifting and changing concepts of sexuality and gender identity. Pre-capitalist conceptions of sexuality, motherhood and gender relations were different from capitalist concepts that developed in Western Europe. As Cock notes, in European culture:

Women are perceived as relatively less competent, less independent, less objective, less analytical, less logical and less resourceful than men. Such gender role definitions form the core of a sexist ideology which equates femininity with passivity and domesticity. This notion is incorporated in the European cultural tradition, the hegemonic tradition operating in South Africa today. The traditional African culture defines gender roles differently. There is not the same stress on dependence and passivity; women's role in

economic production calls for higher levels of competence; and qualities of activity, self-reliance, stoicism, courage, unsentimentality and emotional control are demanded from black women.¹⁶

The agents of change were the Christian missionaries and the traders who, with their ideologies and commodities, brought Western male sexuality to the rural areas. This process would have been aided by the male migrants contact with imperialist definitions of sexuality. (This will be discussed in more detail below.)

In addition to the growth of commodity production and unequal exchange, changes in the land tenure system and the ideological crises, the pre-capitalist economy began to collapse. Growing landlessness resulting from the growth of capitalist agriculture and land alienation, a decline in productivity due to over-farming and overcrowding meant that women could often not meet subsistence needs. These crises were heightened by a cycle of natural disasters and crop and cattle diseases. Women became increasingly dependent on the wages of migrant labourers and this increased the pressure to marry and devalued their contribution to social production and reproduction. The material basis of the family and its form of social organization was also altered. These crises, however, did not effect all sectors of the rural black population equally. Members of the ruling classes within pre-capitalist societies, the independent peasantry and particular geographical areas were not as severely affected. The crises hit the hardest at those who were landless or whose cultivatable land had been reduced through alienation or overcrowding. Mariotti notes that by the mid-1930s, the rural economy was in a state of collapse:

Although surplus to the direct labour requirements of the capitalist sector at this point in its development, African women were not superfluous to the total system of capitalist production in South Africa. In providing for their own needs and those who were of no use to employers (for example, the unemployed, disabled and elderly) and in reproducing a future generation of workers in such a way that the cost did not have to be figured into African wage rates, African women made an important contribution to the development of capitalism in South Africa. This role, however, diminished as agricultural production in the reserves deteriorated and

landlessness spread. These conditions forced a growing proportion of the African population into progressively greater dependence upon wages for their necessities. This in turn required wage employment for longer periods and on a more continuous basis. Prolonged wage employment in urban areas and worsening conditions in the reserves also accelerated the urban migration of African women.¹⁷

The resultant movement of African women to the cities was slow at first. By 1921 only 6,4% of African women were living in the cities.¹⁸ Between 1921 and 1936 there was an increase of 41% to 357,000 women. From 1936 to 1946, reflecting the growing rural crises, this increased to 592,000 or 15,4% of all African women. Thus there was an overall increase of 60% of African women who settled in the urban areas during this period.¹⁹ The proletarianization of African women was not only a result of the rural crises in all its forms but was also in part a form of resistance against pre-capitalist patriarchy. Women coming to the urban areas escaped the narrow confines of rural society and challenged a sexual division of labour which forced them to remain marginalized in terms of developing capitalist relations.

Under the weight of these economic, political and ideological forces the pre-capitalist social division of labour began to give way. This process was uneven and slow at first but by the 1930s had affected all pre-capitalist social formations. This process separated African women from their means of production and productive and reproductive labour. The pre-capitalist family-household as an integrated unit of production and reproduction was destroyed. Family forms changed, women's labour was devalued and gender relations altered. In its place rose the public and private dichotomy and bourgeois ideology that characterizes it. Further work is need to document these processes in more detail and with a gender sensitivity. The resulting proletarianization represents a shift in the balance of class forces in this period. Class and gender struggles over the subordination of women's labour shifted slowly to the urban areas and firmly within capitalist relations.

The emergence and growing hegemony of a capitalist division of labour meant a re-organization of the sexual division of labour, to correspond with the public and private dichotomy, and this raised the issue of where and how women were located within it. As Yawitch points out:

In the context of this influx, the three issues mentioned...in relation to the proletarianisation of African women became major questions to be confronted both by the African working class, as well as by the state and capital. To reiterate these questions: the first is that of the location of African women in the sexual division of labour, and specifically in wage labour. The second is that of who was to take responsibility for the social costs of reproduction of the urban proletariat - ie. how were they to afford accommodation and other social services. Linked to this is also the question of the basis upon which the value of labour power of the urban proletariat was to be determined. Lastly, in issues relating to the nature of family and household structures in urban areas, the question is raised of the nature of the relationships between African working class men and women. ²⁰

The developing female working class who had entered wage labour prior to the early twentieth century - for example, in the Cape - were incorporated into domestic work and agricultural labour. However by the time the rate of proletarianization increased, these women faced a labour market which was racially divided and hierarchically structured. This structure had emerged out of a continuous struggle between capital and the mostly male working class. In order to facilitate economic and political control over the emerging South African proletariat, capital had successfully exerted a racial division of the male working class. This policy had its roots in the earliest penetration of merchant capital and was formalized in the Master and Servants and Vagrancy Acts. With the development of industrial capitalism, this policy was formulated and refined through the use of the compound system, influx control and attempts to co-opt the white working class into the ruling class alliance through the policy of job reservation.²¹

It is beyond the scope of this work to examine in detail the structuring of the labour market.²² With the maturing of the capitalist

social division of labour, however, there have emerged a number of defining characteristics of black working class women's participation in wage labour.

Rural women have been drawn into wage labour as agricultural workers and domestic servants.

Urban women have been drawn into the service sector with domestic work being a crucial form of this wage labour.

Where urban working class women have been involved in productive labour, this has tended to be in the food and canning, clothing and textile sectors. Precisely those forms of pre-capitalist reproductive labour which have been commodified and socialized under capitalist relations.

Working class women have also been divided racially. For example, "coloured" and "Indian" (sic) women are more active in the productive, clerical and professional sectors than African women.

Increasingly there has been a tendency to equalize labour participation of women. African women are being drawn into productive labour in various sectors. In the "homelands", women are being drawn into factory labour and into building the social infrastructure. Wages are extremely low. This tendency runs concurrently with increasing unemployment and the growth of the reserve army of labour. Thus only a small section of the African female working class may experience this "equalization of labour participation". Cock et al have argued that this process may not indicate a shift in the sexual division of labour, but rather an extension and restructuring in ways that are equally disadvantageous:

The changes suggest that black working class women are among the central shock absorbers of the current crises. This is evident firstly in the inclusion of some African women into wage labour, at the lowest levels of remuneration at the same time as the majority of African women are excluded from employment with the progressive tightening of influx control mechanism. Secondly, working class women are the shock absorbers of the current crises as this surfaces in the household economy. In the urban context increasing numbers of working class women are subject to the "dual shift", a double load of work both inside and outside the home. Inflation increases the burden of domestic labour working

class women have to bear in order to stretch the wage further. Consequently, they suffer a continual drain of resources and energy, borne of tension, conflict and sheer overwork.²³

The situation of women in wage labour has been characterized by a recent study of women and work in the following way:

Many women workers have completely different jobs from men. For example, more than 1/3 of all black women workers are service workers. Only a very small proportion of male workers are in service work. In our society service work, or servicing other people, is seen as women's work. At home women are always expected to serve and care for their families. Few men help with this kind of work. At work women also find themselves in jobs that involve serving and caring for other people. These are jobs like domestic work, office cleaning and laundry...But there is another important feature of women's jobs. Not only are they "home like" but they are also badly paid and offer poor working conditions. It seems that society does not value "home line" jobs - even though serving and caring is important work. At home this work is unpaid and taken for granted. At work it is seen as unskilled and unimportant. Men do not want to do this kind of work because of its low value and poor working conditions. So it remains women's work.²⁴

The traditional explanation of the development of this sexual division of labour, of "women's work", has been in terms of the needs of capital. For example, it is argued that due to capital's demand for cheap black male labour, African women were proletarianized last and they entered a job market already racially and hierarchically structured. Their lack of formal education compounded the racial division and ensured they would remain in the very worst jobs.²⁵ However, such a functionalist explanation fails to account for the phenomena of "women's work" or the struggles within the working class over the sexual division of labour. Furthermore, while functionalist arguments may contain certain aspects of the truth, they ignore Vogel's crucial theoretical point of the relationship between the relations of production and reproduction and women's position in this process. As Yawitch noted, the proletarianization of women raised questions of who was to bear the cost of reproduction of labour power. Class and gender struggles around the sexual division of wage labour were related primarily to issues of social reproduction.

Evidence of the centrality of reproductive labour to the incorporation of working class women into wage labour is provided by Cock et al's study of the relationship between wage labour and childcare. They note:

Women are widely viewed by management as temporary and intermittent workers because of their child bearing and childrearing roles. This is widely used as a justification for not training and promoting women. Pregnancy and childcare create discontinuous work patterns, and contribute toward women workers being concentrated in the lowest paid and least skilled jobs.²⁶

This situation may be explained by an examination of the contradiction capital is caught in around generational reproduction. In Chapter Two it was noted that Vogel argued that capital needed generational reproduction to take place. This meant, however, that during the period of pregnancy and lactation, working class women would make a reduced contribution to the creation of surplus. The resolution of this contradiction has historically meant "men's greater responsibility for the provision of the material means of subsistence, women's greater responsibility for the ongoing tasks of necessary labour, and institutionalized forms of male dominance over women."²⁷

In the South African social formation, the peripheral and dependent form of capitalist development, has meant the resolution of this contradiction has taken somewhat different forms. The huge reserve army of female labour has meant that capital has simply been able to replace the pregnant woman worker with one who is not pregnant. To facilitate this process, women workers must be employed in semi- or unskilled jobs so that they can be easily replaced when pregnant. Alternatively, contraception - such as Depo-Provera - is administered at the workplace by health workers specially employed to ensure adequate - for capital - birth control. The absence of maternity rights and childcare centres are evidence of capital's disregard for generational replacement because of the large surplus population.

Cock et all comment:

The tension between women's role as mothers and as workers surface in a lacuna in management policy. The absence of explicit policy regarding maternity rights and maternity leave in the name of 'discretion and flexibility' increases the insecurity of women workers of childbearing age. The effect of the lack of maternity protection is that a women may be fired either as soon as the employer discovers she is pregnant or sometime during her pregnancy. What this has meant in practice is that many workers have been faced with a choice: to be a worker or a mother. Generally this leads to a haphazard situation in which a women loses her job, gives birth, and goes out in search of another soon after giving birth...While motherhood was central to management's conception of women, there is a widespread resistance to the practical implications of this, such as the provision of creches in the workplace. The general tendency was to see childcare as either the responsibility of individual parents or the State.²⁸

The lack of state aid tends to reinforce this situation. Industrial workers may receive some help from the state when pregnant. Eligible workers can receive 45% of their weekly pay, with one week's benefit for every six weeks employment, with a maximum of twenty-six weeks. Thus to obtain all twenty-six weeks, they may only claim - or have a child - once every four years!

As noted in this chapter, capital has consistently tried to make the dominated classes in general, and women in particular, bear the cost of reproduction. Despite fierce and continual resistance against this, the working class has managed to win few concessions in this regard. With a huge reserve army of labour, capital has no need for concern over whether or not daily and generational reproduction is taking place for there is always a ready supply of labour. However, this does not mean that women will stop having children. And since they bear the burden of childcarrying, birth and care their responsibilities may create a barrier to participation in the job market. Since they are left with the burden of performance of generational reproduction, it is not surprising that they are concentrated in the sectors of wage labour characterized by semi- or unskilled labour, shift or casual work or those types of jobs similar to domestic labour.

The fusion of the roles of mother and worker for many women may effect the health of them and their children. Being forced to work long hours in unhealthy conditions and constantly waiting on or serving other people, while her children are alone at home has severe consequences. As noted earlier, in nineteenth century Britain the bourgeoisie forced working class mothers back into the homes to ensure the reproduction of the working class. In South Africa with its huge reserve army of labour, this is of no concern to the ruling classes and instead the working class mother is forced into the worst jobs in the economy. As Cock et al conclude in their study:

We have argued that in South Africa among African working class women there is a fusion of the mother/worker roles; that having pre-school children propels many mothers into wage labour. The fact that they do so when their children are often so young has important implications for the physical and emotional health of both mother and child.²⁹

With a huge reserve army of female labour, the South African bourgeoisie can ignore their problems caused by childcare. The fact that those women do have children for their own reasons means that for the bourgeoisie unless special arrangements are made to cope with this, it would be more profitable to employ them in jobs where they are easily replaceable.

The apartheid state has intervened in support of capital's attempt to force the working class to bear the cost of reproduction and because a settled urban proletariat presents a long-term political threat to the continued existence of capitalism. This is especially so because women workers have often been in the forefront of resistance against capitalism.³⁰ This policy of intervention has taken a number of forms.

Firstly, it has used influx control to force the surplus African population out of the cities and back into the rural areas. Access to the urban areas and jobs has been tightly controlled. This has allowed the state to divide the working class into "legals" and "illegals" and control the size of the reserve army of labour in the urban areas. This was legalized in 1952 through two pieces of legislation: the Native Law Amendment Act and the Abolition of Passes (and

Co-ordination of Documents) Act. The effect of these Acts on the relations of reproduction are made clear by Hindson who argues:

The real basis of the amendments...lay in the war time restructuring of the industrial division of labour and in the growth of surplus population of the reserve army of African industrial labour. Section 10 was a means not only of politically emasculating the urban African proletariat but also of securing its conditions of reproduction. Cheap labour power was giving way to differentiated labour power and the reconstruction and extension of influx control barriers...was a means of securing the reproduction of differentiated forms of labour power and the reconstruction and extension of influx control barriers...was a means of securing the reproduction of differentiated forms of labour power in the cities in the face of the incoming tide of surplus population from the rural areas.³¹

Yawitch's study seems to support this view as she argues that:

The material shows clearly how the system of influx control has been used to divide the African female reserve army of labour. The increasing stringency with which influx control has been applied relates directly to the nature of the South African economy. As monopolisation of the economy has increased it has become difficult to absorb the relative surplus population generated by the process of capital accumulation. The division of the female reserve army of labour thus corresponds to the need to ensure a small urban labour reserve on the one hand, but on the other to ensure that the majority of unemployed people are kept in the bantustans and not allowed to be present in the urban areas. In the case of women this is not only to pre-empt the political threat of large masses of unemployed people in the urban areas, but also to prevent any increase in the size of the urban African proletariat. For this would mean that the value of power would have be increased not only to provide for the costs of reproduction of this population, but also social welfare services as well as housing, etc would have to be provided.³²

Thus the system of influx control tightly controlled African women's access to the labour market. For rural women the only access to the urban areas was through the labour bureaux as migrant workers. The net effect of this has been to increase dependency on the male wage. Where this is not forthcoming or inadequate to cover the cost of reproduction, women and children are left to quietly starve to death.

Where African women are allowed to enter or remain in the urban areas, the state has sought to use influx control to enforce a particular

form of the family. If a woman is not a migrant worker, access to the city is only possible if her husband or father has the necessary permission. As Yawitch notes:

Thus the legal status and position of African women is defined in terms of, and dependent on, their relationship to a man. This denies women the independent right to live where and how they want. It also means that women who come in from the rural areas cannot leave or divorce their husbands. For should they do so, they run the risk not only of losing their accommodation, but of losing their rights to be in an urban area altogether. The other important factor limiting the ability of women to live in an urban area is the issue of accommodation. Historically, state housing (apart from hostels) has only been available to women in their own right when they are divorced or deserted wives or widows with children.³³

By attempting to control African women's access to the urban areas and housing by linking it to her marital relationship, the state was seeking to reinforce male authority within the family. It also appears as if the state was attempting to enforce a particular form of the family, that is, the nuclear family. Owing to the housing shortage, and the resultant overcrowding, the spatial organization of workers into nuclear families has not occurred.

The result of the state use of influx control has been twofold. By restricting African women's access to the urban areas and thus to jobs, it has increased her dependency on the male wage. This has been reinforced by her access to the urban areas being through her husband. Working class male power within the family is increased by the state policy of influx control. This situation seems to support Vogel's contention that the historic resolution of the contradiction around generational reproduction has meant "men's greater responsibility for the provision of the...means of subsistence...and institutionalized forms of male dominance over women."³⁴ Secondly, the state has also managed to control African women's access to wage labour and this has resulted in a high level of control over where and in what sectors this should take place.

Further evidence of the state's policy of promoting the nuclear family, and controlling the surplus population, can be gained from a closer examination of the National Family Planning programme. The Department of Health and Welfare explain the purpose of the programme as:

...aimed at far more than merely modern methods of contraception. It includes making people aware of, and guiding them towards, planned parenthood with the object of promoting health and social welfare of the husband, wife and children.³⁵ (my emphasis)

The focal point of this programme is women. Under the programme the number of women users increased by 230,000 between 1978/1980 and 1982/1983. Furthermore, between 1960 and 1978 the birth rate of 46 per 1,000 for "coloured" women dropped to 26 per 1,000 and African women from 44 to 36 per 1,000. The sterilizations of women has increased from 11,600 in 1977 to 19,000 in 1982. The sexual bias of the programme is clear when the figures for sterilization of men are examined. In the period 1977 to 1982, they rose from 265 to 750.³⁶ Its racial bias is also clear in that no comparable figures are given for the white population! By intervening in the process of the fertility of women, and thus generational reproduction, the state is attempting to control the size of the black population, and of families within the confines of the nuclear family. For African women this is reinforced by their access to housing.

Finally, one more example of state interference in the process of reproduction should suffice to emphasize how it has attempted to place the cost of this onto the working class. Until very recently, the state ensured that women could be employed and fulfill the burden of the housewife. Overtime by women workers was limited to allow them to undertake domestic labour at home. Cock et al argue that the Factories, Machinery and Building Works Act was

...promulgated in recognition of the two jobs carried out by women. If women were kept late at work, or expected to work at night, they would be unable to carry out their household duties. The importance of this cannot be overstated. Since women take full responsibility for the household their days are tightly scheduled to ensure that household

chores are done before and after work hours. If these hours were altered, the tenuous balance between work and home would be threatened.³⁷

However, the promulgation of the Basic conditions of Employment Act (No. 3 of 1983) did precisely this by removing the minimal protection women had against overtime work. A possible explanation for this move lies in the state attempting to deal with the economic crises of the 1980s by attacking the living standards of the working class. The huge surplus population also makes it possible for the state not to concern itself with the nature of reproduction. Removal of these meagre protections has increased the level of exploitation of the working class while at the same time increasing the burden of reproduction borne by working class women. This also highlights the direct relationship between the relations of production and reproduction.

Throughout the history of capitalism in South Africa, the state and capital have consistently attempted to force women of the dominant classes to bear the burden of reproduction. Having to cope with this responsibility has been a determining factor of working class black women's incorporation into wage labour. The lack of creches and day care centres, maternity rights, adequate wages, high birth rate and poor access to shops all serve to increase this burden and force women into participating in wage labour in the lowest paid jobs, with a high turnover and low skills. Interference in the process of reproduction has served to divide the black female working class into urban and rural dwellers. The urban dwellers have been divided again into employed and unemployed. The size of the reserve army of labour in the urban areas is tightly controlled. This has increased the internal divisions within the working class, aiding control by capital.

Working class black women's responsibility for reproduction labour has not only been a determining factor in her access to wage labour, that is, her location within the relations of production. It has also affected other aspects of her life. While the resolution of the

contradiction around generational reproduction determines what basis women participate in wage labour, it also helps to determine the form that the relations of reproduction take. The relations of reproduction are crucial to women's experience of the world as they force women to see this through the eyes of a domestic slave.

It has determined her experience of the form of the family and gender relations within it. The material basis of the family changed with the dissolution of the pre-capitalist family-household as an integrated unit of production and reproduction. Increasingly, the material basis of the family was the wage earned in the factories, mines, industries and houses of the bourgeoisie. The changing material basis coupled with the migrant labour system has caused massive disorganization of African family life and has given rise to different family forms. It has also intensified gender struggles within working class families. Materially, the basis of the family is its dependency on wage labour. At times, this may be supplemented by vegetables grown on small plots in the rural areas or income from labour in the informal sector. However, this must not be confused with reliance on male wage labour, for the situation varies. Since male wages are low, it may be necessary ^{to} supplement this with women seeking work. Alternatively, the male wage worker may have deserted his family or contributions to household costs may be irregular and insufficient, forcing women to seek wage labour or informal sector involvement to support their families. As Ellen Kuzwayo has noted in her discussion of why women go out to work:

...the inadequate wage of the father; on the surface this appears to be the reason, yet there is one more remote and startling: the majority of fathers do not give a reasonable proportion of their earnings for the use of their families. This is the case even where the wages are adequate.³⁸

Despite this situation and given the high unemployment amongst women and the strict application of influx control measures which determines their access to jobs, many women may still be dependent on the male wage. Mamphela Ramphele in her 1986 study of gender relations amongst migrant workers in the Western Cape concludes: "With the few exceptions of those involved in informal sector activity during their stay in the

city or at their rural base, few of these women contribute any cash to family resources." However, she notes that there is another economic function they perform by "providing social security for old age or disability. This they do through their maintenance of a rural base in the form of a home, management of family property (livestock and fields) and...ensuring the provision of free nursing care for the infirm, disabled and/or elderly migrant workers at the end of their productive lives."³⁹ For many, however, locked into the rural areas and deserted by their men, the situation today is very serious:

Some women in the bantustans do have access to a little land. A very few can find paid jobs, with bantustan administration or even factories. But conditions are harsh for almost all women. Money is short, and it is often uncertain whether more is on the way. There are few shops and prices are often higher than in the town. Distances are long and transport costs very high...Housework in rural areas is a never ending task. 'To get wood we have to climb mountains. To get water we also have to walk a long distance. Most men...look for jobs in the cities. Those women left behind get a few letters and hopefully some money...' As Daisy Mhlope said, 'Unemployment brings three difficulties: sickness, starvation and staying without clothes'.⁴⁰

Historically, the working class family has been one means by which the reproduction of a system of vicious class control has been perpetuated by the bourgeoisie. This is achieved by dividing the family along gender and age differences and so focussing conflict inwards and away from capital and the state. Working class men enforce a form of control over working class women which they perceive to be in their own interests and which frees them from domestic labour. In South Africa by the 1980s, the material position of working class families had become very precarious and gender struggles over the division of the wage may have intensified. Much power resides in the husband's ability to leave the material and emotional responsibility of the family in the hands of the women. As noted, this situation is reinforced by capital and state intervention and the dominant sexist ideology all of which support the male's position. Yet it is difficult to be able to point to and assess the nature of gender struggles in

the family. Two examples will show clearly how divided along gender lines the working class is and may suggest an intensification of struggles over the material basis of the family.

The worst form of the distortion of gender relations are exercises of violent control by men over women such as rape, battery and incest. Mikki Van Zyl points out that:

Men are socialized into active, aggressive roles and encouraged to challenge and compete with any resistance they encounter.⁴¹

In her 1986 study, she notes that there are at least between 150,000 and 300,000 rapes per year.⁴² While Ingrid Viennings and Claudia Kleeberg, in a study on battery, report that 83% of their sample, who were all working class, "...experienced sexual abuse as the ultimate expression of their husband's control and power.⁴³ Ramphele, in her study on migrant workers, comments:

It is easy to understand how a migrant worker dehumanized by an exploitative work environment, exhausted by the long travelling...and humiliated by the scorn of his fellow workers living in the townships can be aggressive towards those close to him. At least this (the marriage/lover) is one relationship which he can and must be undisputed master. There is little scope for reasoning and discussion resulting in assaults and other abuses of women. To this migrant worker it is the only way to re-affirm his humanity and retain a sense of some measure of control over his environment. Most women suffer these abuses silently, thus acting consciously or unconsciously as unpaid psychotherapists to their men - keeping them sane in an insane brutal world.⁴⁴

Virginia Van der Vliet notes the relationship between money and violence by commenting on perceptions gained from her interviews that: "Worse still is the man who spends his money and then attempts to borrow from his wife, perhaps backing up his 'request' with physical violence."⁴⁵ Despite these studies and comments, the prevalence of violence within the working class family lies deeply hidden. There are few studies which attempt to examine this situation and its relationship to the families dependency on wage labour.

The second example relates to family form and its relationship to gender conflict. Although monogamy, mediated through marriage and the

marriage contract, is the dominant form of relations between men and women, increasingly, in the last decade, women are struggling to end this dependency by altering the family form. Many women are choosing not to marry and struggle on their own. As Van der Vliet's study highlights:

Nevertheless despite the economic and social disadvantages of single parenting it seems everywhere to be a growing phenomenon. Fifty years ago the majority of single parents were widowed; today the majority are divorced. They are also being joined by a growing band who have never married but opting to have children anyway...Their explanations are in terms of the negative aspects of marriage or the positive aspects of staying single...not wanting a man who will tell her what to do, wanting to know where she stands financially, not wanting her child by an earlier union to suffer at the hands of a man who is not its father...For these women, either the institution of marriage of the men they would have access to are seen as unacceptable.⁴⁶

Cock et al offers us other evidence of this growing dissolution of the institution of marriage:

It is possible that the marriage relationship is increasingly being questioned by African women...One source of resistance to marriage may be the sexual division of labour within the household...The picture that emerges from our research and other available literature is that African men participate very little in domestic labour in the urban working class household. However, there is some sharing of domestic tasks among the women inhabitants of the household.⁴⁷

Working class women are fighting back and attempting to transform the dependency of the marriage situation by not marrying at all. However, this strategy may serve to further divide the working class along gender lines by entrenching already existent divisions. This form of resistance is often individualized and based on the choices facing a particular woman in her life. Resistance needs to be organized and take an organizational form if the sexual division of labour is to be successfully challenged. But here, too, working class men often act as a brake on resistance to capitalism by often actively preventing women family members from participating in trade unions and community organization. This serves to entrench their oppression and demobilize the working class. As Cock et al note:

This double load of work inside and outside the home clearly inhibits women's participation in trade unions and community organizations. The source of this inhibition is not women's innate commitments to their roles of wife and mother but the physical and emotional demands their responsibilities in the domestic sphere generates.⁴⁸

The failure of working class men to share this responsibility and the willingness to enforce domestic labour with verbal and physical violence, make participation for women difficult. As Lydia Kompe, trade unionist, relates:

My husband expects me to be home between 5.30 and 6.00 pm...Often we would have day-long meetings on weekends in Alexandra. You know what husbands are like. He'd complain that I don't cook, make tea or do washing for him...Now he's got used to it and he doesn't worry so much. He's getting old. That's the problem with married women in the organization. You're in the middle and don't know what to do. If you think of the problems at home you don't concentrate at work and get depressed. What attitude will you get from your husband and even your children?⁴⁹

While it has been possible to make some remarks on the material basis of the family and gender conflicts between women and men, the shortage of information makes it very difficult to assess the nature of the public and private dichotomy and the ideology which characterizes it. The advent of capitalist relations transformed the pre-capitalist household by creating a separation of productive and reproductive labour and leading to the development of the nuclear family at the level of social organization and ruling class ideology. In assessing the experience of the South African working class, however, we need to be extremely careful not to conclude that the separation of public and private has resulted in all women being isolated and relegated to the private sphere. The experience of this may vary according to class position and racial category of the women concerned. The black working class have not developed along the path of one nuclear family/one household. As noted above, the material conditions under which the working class reproduces itself has made reality different.

Different forms of the family may have resulted in different arrangements as regards daily and generational reproduction. Overcrowding, shortage of housing and extended family networks may all act to alleviate the isolated and private nature of domestic labour. The labour may be shared amongst a number of women and children and this process may act to socialize female children and young women into their roles as household "slaves" and domestic workers. In a sense, they may be serving a long period of apprenticeship.

Similarly, we must be careful not to assume that the ideology of motherhood and housewifery, that characterize the public-private dichotomy in the first world, are the dominant forms in South Africa. Further research is necessary to establish the nature of the public and private dichotomy and the penetration of the ideology that characterizes it. It IS women, however, who have to undertake reproductive labour within the working class and they do perform it in the home. And despite the shortage of information, it is necessary to begin a characterization of this labour. It has already been noted that the women undertaking this labour may not labour in insolation, that it is often tied to marriage, that it carries with it the burden of childcare, that it is almost exclusively women who do it and it may be prefaced by a long period of apprenticeship. In addition, the following characteristics need to be noted:

Firstly, consumption is an important activity in the performance of this labour. The commodities necessary to perform reproductive labour must now be bought rather than produced by the woman herself. This may have developed to the extent that women are synonymous with consumption of household goods! Witness the message of Ellen Kuzwayo, President of the National Black Consumers Association, to consumers on the role of her organization:

(Is to) help HER have the determination to get value for money and the ability to bargain in the market so that SHE is always satisfied with HER purchases.⁵⁰

An additional burden caused by women's role as consumer is access to shops. Often shops in the townships are more expensive or do not carry the necessary commodities. Thus she may be forced to travel long distances to and from shops, increasing the number of hours spent on domestic labour. Given the low standard of living of the working class, access to money to buy the necessary commodities is also a problem. Finally, she will be subjected to a massive advertizing onslaught which seeks to determine patterns of consumption. Adverts also display an image of what the "good housewife" is and thus affects women's self-image. As Anne McClintock has argued in a review of South African women's magazines:

What is the significance of these pictures for women?...The pictures are arranged to signify an attitude towards women, more specifically an attitude women are to have toward themselves. They are not pictures of life. They are cultural products, signs, possessions, expressive of the attitudes and intentions of those that possess them. In the women's magazine the image is owned by the advertizer and express fully the function that the woman has for him.⁵¹

McClintock argues that this tends to produce a fragile and fragmentary self-image as women strive to live up to the image of perfection portrayed in these adverts. As Amanda Kwadi comments on the use of skin lightners:

People use it because they want to be white, because to be white is to be beautiful, wealthy, intelligent. On the packet, when it is advertized on radio or TV, and in the newspaper, there is a picture of a very attractive person but it is always a person with a light skin. And it is saying that with a light skin goes intelligence, wealth and beauty. If we use it we will be attractive and get married. But it does a lot of damage to people's skin. Women need to develop confidence in their appearance, in their blackness. The use of skin lightener symbolises the psychological insecurity of many African women.⁵²

However as the dominant form of sexuality alters over time, so will adverts which seek to reflect this. Research is needed to enable us to assess how this affects the social construction of gender identity and why and how it changes with shifts in the class struggle.

Secondly, the woman involved in domestic labour in her own family receives no wages or any other benefits associated with wage labour;

for example, sick or holiday pay, unemployment insurance or workman's compensation. She may not even receive maternity leave! In South Africa the conditions under which she labours may vary. The forces of reproduction, such as, sanitation (toilet facilities, running water, refuse removal), electricity and access to commodities such as refrigerators and stoves are determinants of the conditions under which unpaid domestic labour is performed.

These conditions seem to vary enormously between rural and urban areas; employed and unemployed; squatter camps, migrant hostels and houses. For example, while some sectors of the working class have access to electricity and thus to refrigerators and stoves, other women cook over fires which may cause severe eye and chest problems. Also, the search for wood and other fuel may take up many hours. The poor conditions under which domestic labour is performed reflect the poor living conditions of the black working class and the struggle to improve living conditions is also a struggle to improve the conditions under which reproductive labour is performed. These poor working conditions cause physical and emotional health problems which may be exacerbated by lack of access to health care facilities.

The size of the family, whether or not domestic labour is shared, the lack of access to adequate sanitation, electricity, labour-saving devices, health care and housing may all act as a form of control on resistance to the conditions of domestic labour. Since most of the time and energy of the majority of working class women may be spend on reproductive labour, there is little of it left for organizational resistance. Furthermore, poor mental and physical health and the constant burden of worry about the family are in themselves obstacles to resistance.

Thirdly, part of reproductive labour is generational reproduction. Childbearing and childcare add much to the burden of working class women. The integration of family responsibility with housework means

that emotional ties force women to fulfill their domestic duties. Failure may result in guilt, anxiety and tension within the family and severe psychological crises for South African working class women.⁵³ Given the lack of maternity rights and the failure of capital and the state to provide adequate childcare arrangements, the burden falls solely on working class women. For those women with children and involved in wage labour, this results in a tension in their roles as mother and worker. Their choices are minimal: to search for a creche; to take the children to a childminder or to leave the children alone at home. The employment of another female to take care of the working mothers' children may result in the reproduction of power relations characteristic of domestic work. This unintended consequence of the lack of childcare facilities may create a further division amongst working class women.

Furthermore, the lack of adequate childcare arrangements and the refusal of working class men to share domestic labour has meant that many working women are burdened with the double shift. On returning home from work, they are forced to undertake household labour. As the Vukani Makhosikazi Collective note:

Get up at 4.30 am. Breakfast quickly done. Run to catch the bus, then the train. Walk ten blocks to work. Work all day. The train, then the bus home again at 6.30. Fetch the baby from the childminder. Cook the supper. Some washing to do. Iron the schoolshirts. Clean up the mess of the day. To bed - it is 11.30 pm. This is an average day for many African women.⁵⁴

The physical and psychological burden of continuous labour are immense. The extra burden of domestic work often means little or no rest and relaxation for working women, thus wearing down their physical and emotional strength. For unemployed women, their lack of work may achieve the same ends.

Fourthly, as noted, the bourgeoisie and the state attempted to enforce the nuclear form of the family ideologically and juridicially. It is concretized in marriage, marriage contracts, motherhood, housewifery and religion. Willingly or unwillingly, the working class male assists in this process. The ideologies of motherhood and housewifery

have developed to give social content to this labour. Although few studies have been undertaken which record this process in the South African social formation, Gaitskell, in her study of housewifery and Christianity in the early part of this century, gives us some historical insight. She documents how religion served to introduce and enforce European notions of housewifery:

Because this domestic ideology was so enmeshed with women's spiritual role, domesticity was much more part of missionary instruction of African women converts than any corresponding stress on fatherhood and home responsibilities in priestly training of Christian males. For urban black females in early industrial South Africa, Christianity was as much about a specific family form, of which they were the lynchpin, as about a new faith in Christ.⁵⁵

The importance of the role of the early missionaries in transferring the ideology of motherhood from Europe to South Africa is partially supported by the work of Cock.⁵⁶ Christian women were not only active in popularizing this ideology amongst the developing working class but making it the dominant ethos in the social formation as a whole. By 1916, this appears to have been well spread amongst at least the ruling classes in South Africa as the Introduction to Belinda's Book for Colonial Housewives makes clear:

I must admit that, at one time, knowing the number and variety of cookery and housekeeping books obtainable, I did not think one more was wanted, but the many letters I received on the subject convinced me to the contrary. I found that there really was a want for a practical book devoted to the needs of the South African housewife....⁵⁷

At the political and ideological level, the apartheid state has sought to emphasize the role of mother and to equate femininity with passivity. Christian National Education seeks to impart these values through the separation of boys and girls schools, choices of subjects (domestic science and needlework for girls) and extra-mural activities. Cock points to the nature of this process with regard to black women:

The convergence of both racial and sexual systems of domination is evident in the educational experiences of black women. Historically schools institutionalized not only the dominant female gender role which equated femininity with domesticity, but the dominant racial roles which equated blackness with subordination. The effect was to locate black women in domestic roles - either in their own, or in the colonizers households.⁵⁸

The ideology of motherhood which developed with the capitalist sexual division of labour in Britain was transferred to South Africa through imperialism. It was fostered and developed by Christian missionaries, "society ladies", the capitalist media and educational system. Today it is celebrated and venerated annually on "mothers day" which originated in the United States of America in 1908 and reached South Africa in 1952, when the National Committee on the Observance of Mothers Day issued a brochure to "promote the dignified observance of the day":

The service rendered by the South African mother was the greatest source of the country's strength and inspiration. The South African mother is doing much for the home, the moral upliftment of children and religion.⁵⁹

Clearly there are a number of similarities between black working class women's position in South Africa and working class women in first world countries. Yet, to repeat the refrain of women's history, further studies are necessary before we can accurately assess, and historically document, the rise and strength of the public-private dichotomy, the sexual division of labour and bourgeois ideology which characterize it. We may yet find that these similarities are underlying laws which characterize the public and private dichotomy.

Thus far, little has been said about the resistance of working class women to their position in the sexual division of labour. This is not because women are passive or because of the reduced importance of their resistance. Rather, it is because their resistance has such a long and proud history that it would be impossible to record it within the space of a work such as this. Yet it is necessary to draw out a number of salient points which relate to reproductive labour.

Although organized resistance specifically around unpaid domestic labour has not developed, the struggle against class and national oppression creates the space for both the organization of women and the raising of the Woman Question. An example of this process is the Women's Charter which was drawn up at the launching of the Federation of South African Women in 1954. The Federation drew its membership from the organizations which made up the Congress Alliance of the

1950s (African National Congress, South African Indian Congress and Coloured People's Congress and the Congress of Democrats). By drawing up a Charter specifically stating women's problems and possible solutions, the so-called Woman Question emerged and the organization of women was taken a step further towards consolidation.⁶⁰ However, as this study highlights, the organization of working class women has still not managed to overcome the division of the working class along gender lines. Without the development of broad working class unity around the struggle to end the sexual division of labour, the subordination of women's labour for social reproduction will continue. In the conclusion of their study on childcare, Cock et al emphasize this division:

We would argue, however, that it is fundamentally in the interests of the working class as a whole, to combat sexism in the household. Without an understanding and acceptance of women's right to be treated equally with men, and an acceptance of joint responsibility for housekeeping and childcare, the working class will remain deeply divided...The critical factor lies here; that the sexual division of labour divides the working class in South Africa and thus contributes to maintaining its subordination as a whole.⁶¹

Volbrecht emphasizes the importance of this unity in building working class struggle in South Africa:

The revolutionary potential of the Woman Question is dependent on the building of working class leadership in the national liberation movement. This leadership function entails the building of working class unity. The specific struggles of working class women are important, not only because of the struggle against women's oppression, but also, and this is crucial, for strengthening the working class movement as a whole.⁶² (my emphasis)

The crucial task of uniting the working class has been placed on the agenda of working class organizations by women workers. A recent COSATU statement pointed out that:

In our movement, women workers have a special place because they carry the heaviest load of all. It is the duty of every COSATU worker to make sure that the demands, participation and struggle of women workers are strengthened a thousand times over. If our liberation does not succeed in creating free people, equal to each other in every way, then we would not be liberated. Our struggle for maternity rights, equal pay for work of equal value; childcare facilities that meet

workers' needs, against sexual harassment and harmful work must have the highest priority in all our struggles today. Our leading role in the struggle depends on the courage, determination and leadership of women workers.⁶³

While this statement represents a massive victory for women workers in the struggle to raise their demands and unify the working class, it does not directly address the sexual division of labour within the working class family. Nor does it raise the issue of the brutal methods of subordination of working class women's reproductive labour by men - namely rape and battery. Working class organizations must not allow the issue of domestic labour to remain hidden, for this will make unification of the working class impossible. The issue of domestic labour - paid and unpaid - must be placed firmly on the agenda of working class organizations. A crucial starting point is to correctly theorize the specificity of women's position, that is to theorize the relationship between the relations of production and reproduction. In addition, it is important to clearly note the relationship, in the South African social formation, between the unpaid and paid - domestic work - forms of reproductive labour. In turn, this requires an adequate theorization of domestic work itself. Without this, the working class will remain divided along gender lines.

There is nothing good about this work, but at least I have a job.
Johanna Mokone, Domestic Worker

This job, it just makes me too tired. I'm on my feet all the time and you can't just stop and do nothing and rest your feet. The madam might think that you are too lazy and she might tell you to go.

Rebecca Sepale, Domestic Worker

You can never get away. You can never have a bit of time to yourself. I can be eating my lunch and my madam will decide she wants something from the shops or a cup of tea. I must jump up and go then - I can't even finish eating...She's just lying on her bed or talking on the phone or her friends are visiting. I'm working - but she is doing nothing but I must always be there.

Flora Manyono, Domestic Worker

I am getting R65 a month. I can't save any money because I send most of it home, and my mother and children can't live on what I send them - they are starving. I have this husband but he is useless. I don't know what he is doing and I don't know what he does with his money but I never see it.

Eldah Mthuludi, Domestic Worker

CHAPTER VI : A WHITE MAN HAS TWO WIVES : THE DOUBLE OPPRESSION OF DOMESTIC WORK

Introduction

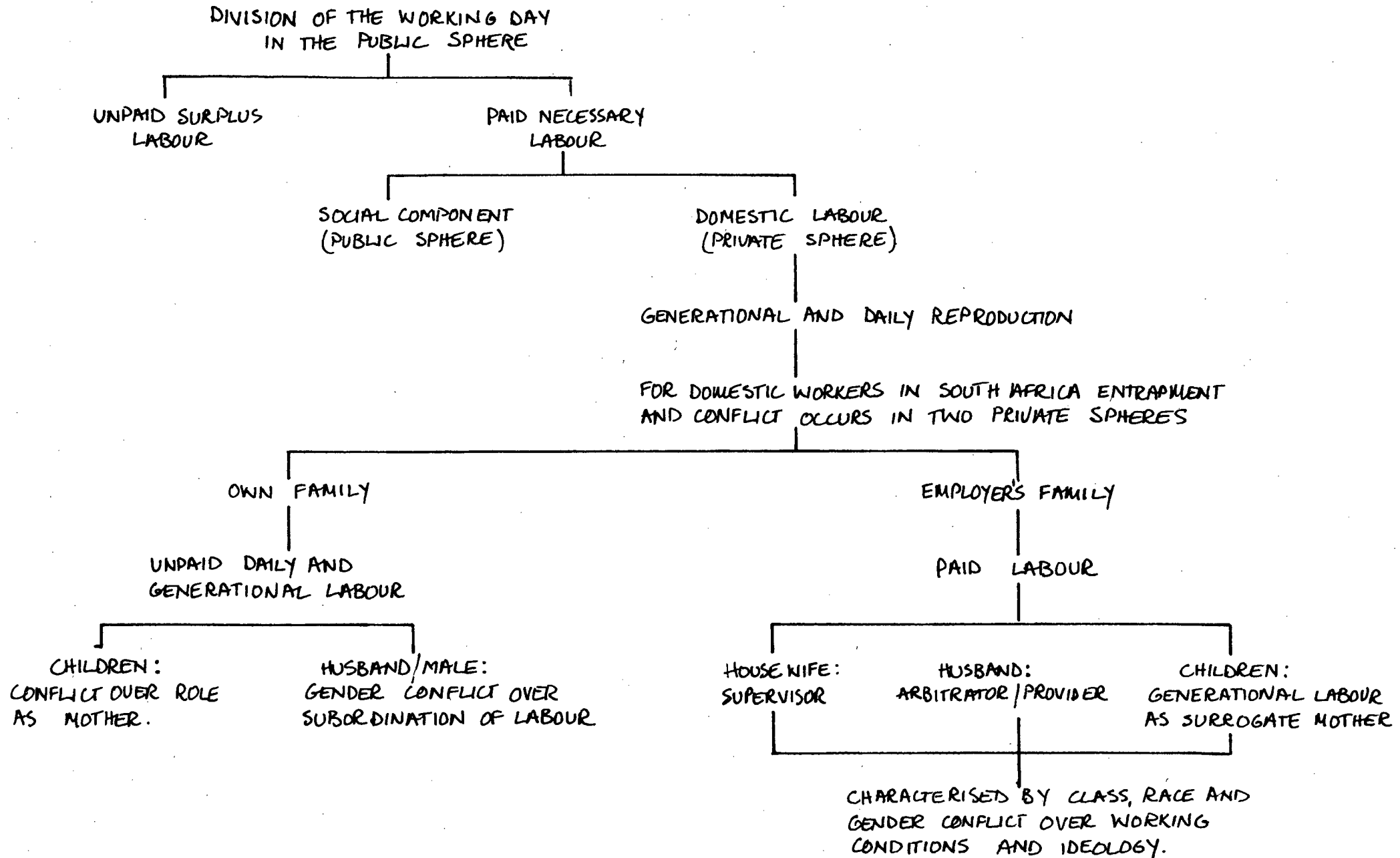
Class and gender struggles in the South African social formation have led to the relations of reproduction being characterized by paid domestic labour. Women of the dominant classes have been able to ensure that a part of the domestic component of necessary labour takes the form of a wage relation. The intersection of the sexual and racial divisions of labour has meant that daily and to an extent generational reproduction of the ruling class alliance is performed by members of the black working class.

For black women domestic workers this has had very severe consequences for they are forced to undertake domestic labour in two private spheres - their own home and that of their employers - thus intensifying their oppression. For these women paid and unpaid domestic labour is characterized by class, race and gender conflicts which are interwoven with complex and contradictory personal relationships. They are absorbed directly into the workers' self-image reinforcing such traits as dependency, lack of initiative and bourgeois notions of women as domestic slave (see Diagram 1). Since conflict over the conditions for the subordination of the domestic workers labour occur within the intimacy of the family-household struggle against this is more difficult and this binds workers more firmly to the roots of their oppression.

The clearest example of this double oppression is related to the domestic workers identity as "mother" and "nurturer". For it is on this basis that she is constantly involved in two sets of family relations. The burdens, expectations and demands engendered by bourgeois concepts of motherhood are increased as the domestic worker is mother to her own children and surrogate mother to those of her

FIGURE 1.

REPRODUCTION OF THE RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION



employer. Objectively, her employer's children are in a dominant position because of class and racial power relations and this serves to further erode her self-image and reinforce her servile status.

The concept of the double private sphere must not be seen in an ahistorical way. The nature of this burden will have changed over time as class relations have developed and intensified. Domestic labour has been affected by technological innovations, the socialization of former household tasks (for example, the growth of fast food outlets/dry cleaners), changes in family structures, and the social construction of gender identity and sexuality. This will have altered the nature and character of the double private sphere.

The aim of the case study is not to document these changes as much further research is still needed before this can take place. Rather it is an attempt to highlight the intensity of this burden by way of compiling the stories of organized domestic workers. Very often the experiences related cover incidents in different times of their life yet it was difficult to develop a sense of historical progression due to memory lapses and because they were often so similar that there is almost a sense of timelessness regarding the nature of domestic workers' experience.

While the material centres mainly around the life experiences of 13 organized workers in Cape Town, many additional insights were gleamed over a period of six months spent in the offices of the Domestic Workers Association. Listening to domestic workers in the Union Advice Office, reading publications, attending workshops as well as innumerable discussion with officials and shops stewards all add to the overall picture. While at the present moment much of this may be difficult to substantiate academically, they are included in the hope that they will help build our understanding and form the basis of future research projects. Thus what follows must be seen as evidence

and understanding gained over the last 10 years as workers have struggled to organise themselves into women's organisations and trade unions.

Methodology

The research programme had two aims:

To collect stories of domestic workers' double oppression as wage labourers and as unpaid workers in their own families. This emerged as a research focus because none of the domestic workers saw these two experiences as separate. The one was seen as an extension of the other.

An attempt was made to develop an understanding of participatory research by involving workers directly in the drawing-up and implementation of the research programme. Here it was hoped to democratize research by challenging the unequal power relations inherent in the relationship between the researcher and researched. Underlying this approach was an attempt to come to terms with what seemed fundamental questions facing the gender-sensitive progressive historian: What is progressive research? What is class and gender-sensitive research? Other questions confronted were related to attempts to build a concept of research which builds worker organisations and ensures their control over the research.

In attempting to answer these questions, this study worked through the United Women's Congress (UWCO) and the Domestic Workers Association (DWA). These organizations were chosen because UWCO is the largest women's organization in the Western Cape and many of its members are domestic workers; and secondly, DWA is one of the two domestic workers' unions organizing in the Western Cape and I had undertaken research with the Union previously, thus a certain amount of contact already existed.

By approaching these two organizations, it was hoped that it would be possible to interview workers who had been organized both as workers (DWA) and women workers (UWCO). This was seen as being important

because it would enable documentation of their experience both as workers and as women and deepen understanding of the class and gender dimension of domestic work.

Organized workers were chosen as this study was seen as a pilot project with the objective of giving the workers a voice in the recording of their history and for the historian to be able to work through the problems of developing a participatory research programme. For example, unequal power relations and autonomy and accountability of the researcher are important problems that need to be addressed. Thus, it was felt that it would be easier to work with organized workers who are already consciously involved in creating their own history.

Both organizations responded favourably. The United Women's Congress put forward a list of names of workers who agreed to be interviewed. They formed a group which met a number of times and discussed intensively the issue of domestic work. This helped the researcher to clarify the issues and gain analytical and theoretical insights into the nature of paid domestic labour. The Domestic Workers' Association responded similarly and requested the researcher to aid the union in the production of a popular version of this chapter for internal education and distribution. Such a project was seen as giving workers direct access to and some control over their stories. The union suggested that I approach each branch separately and discuss the project with the local members. Each branch then discussed the issue and decided whether or not members should volunteer to be interviewed. Interviews were undertaken with workers from Sea Point, Claremont, Nyanga, Pinelands and Worcester branches of the Union as well as with Union organizers. Having access to a wide range of Union members and organizers ensured that I was not receiving an "authorized" Union version of the situation. The chances of this were reduced since the interviews with UWCO members produced similar results while both groups worked independently of each other.

In the process of discussion with union officials and workers over how the research project could best strengthen the Union and extend worker control over the project, it was decided to use drama as one means of collecting information. Over the period of research, workers produced several plays about their experiences as women domestic workers. This had a number of positive results: (1) it allowed workers to shape the form and content of the research; (2) it helped strengthen the cultural activities of the Union; (3) it moved away from the collection of data via taped interviews which workers felt was intimidating and which reinforced the unequal power relationship between researcher and workers. Finally, the Union also granted access to branch meetings as well as to shop steward workshops and training programmes. A period of six months was spent collecting oral testimonies, meeting workers, holding discussions, rehearsing plays and listening to life stories and problems of workers.

During the course of research, a number of problems emerged. The research programme started in April 1986, the beginning of a period which coincided with intense social and political conflict leading up to the declaration of the second state of emergency two months later. Union offices were raided; officials were harassed and had to go into hiding. The United Women's Congress was similarly affected by repression and the events surrounding the destruction of the squatter communities of Crossroads and KTC. This made it extremely difficult for organizations to give the necessary support to the project and communications often broke down. It was also exceedingly difficult to organize an interview programme. Yet, despite the intense repression of the those months, much data was collected, plays were produced and workshops, group discussions and branch meetings were held. That the research went ahead amidst the most severe repression the workers movement has faced is testimony to the workers' strength, intent and dedication to recording their own history.

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A major problem faced in the research was the power relationship between domestic workers and the researcher. At the centre of this problem was the objective power relationship between a petty-bourgeois white male intellectual and groups of women workers who often had little formal education. Class, gender and racial power inequalities needed to be broken down. This was crucial if workers were to exercise some control over their histories and if they were to feel confident enough to share details of their personal class and gender struggles. More concretely, if these objective power relations were not confronted at the outset, then it would have proved impossible to collect information on workers' struggles in their own families and within the employers' families, for example, sexual abuse, husband-wife relationships.

I decided to undertake most of the interviews myself despite the objective power inequalities. I felt that in attempting to break down power relations, workers would deepen my understanding of their struggles. Over the period of research, these objective power relations were diminished by a number of concrete actions:

- Workers challenged and discussed the aims and intent of the whole research project. The relationship between progressive organizations and intellectuals was discussed and assessed.
- Interviews often developed into discussions as workers probed my intentions, history and household situation. That is, who did the domestic work in my own household. This was a key question that all those interviewed asked!
- Workers questioned and discussed my own involvement in the democratic movement. Was I a member of an organization? Why?
- Showing consistent support emerged as crucial to breaking down these barriers. Helping with transport to meetings; washing up after tea; visiting workers in their rooms and homes; organizing interviews/discussions at times convenient to workers.

A final difficulty faced was that of coming to terms with the questions: What is gender-sensitive research? How do we ask

gender-sensitive questions? There seemed to be two aspects to answering these questions:

Form: The form in which research was conducted. Here the ideas was to attempt to challenge the gender hierarchies implicit in the relation of historian and worker. It was hoped that this process was sensitive to the gender oppression experienced by the workers and, in a small way, it helped in the process of reconstructing new gender identities.

Content: The content of questions asked was crucial to the form in which the research was undertaken. It was difficult to ascertain what gender-sensitive questions are. Consequently, attempts were made to highlight the oppression of the domestic worker as working class women within their own families and within their work environments.

As a historian, the attempt to introduce and integrate gender into my analysis has had two beneficial results: (1) it has conscientized me to the myriad of problems that domestic workers have and which flow from their position as working class women in a racially divided, capitalist social formation; (2) it has forced me into developing "new" methods of gender-sensitive research which allow women workers to assert their control over their own history. The lack of control over and their lack of belief in the importance of their history derive directly from their position as women domestic workers in a capitalist social formation. Hence the use of drama, a medium which is acceptable to all, young and old, literate and illiterate, was crucial. It validated the experiences of domestic workers while building their confidence in their ability to produce alternative culture to that of the state controlled mass media and ruling class newspapers and magazines.

In the Kitchens : The daily class struggle

Who are domestic workers?1

Thirteen interviews were conducted with the help of the Domestic Workers Association and the United Women's Congress. Twelve out of the 13 workers are members of progressive organisations. All were black working class women with low levels of formal education. Many of those interviewed had mothers who were also domestic workers. Eleven out of the 13 had been born outside of Cape Town and had come to Cape Town in search of work or to join their families.

ST: Former domestic worker and presently employed as a union organiser. Lives in a township on the Cape Flats. As well as her work as an organiser she has a family to care for. Her need to attend meetings at night often means she travels home alone and is constantly at risk of harassment.

Mrs B: Born in the Eastern Cape, one of a family of eight children. She came to Cape Town in 1972 in search of work to support her children after her husband died. She stayed in a number of squatter camps before obtaining a house in one of the African townships. She is the breadwinner in her household. She has four dependants.

Mama Z: Born in Parys in 1921, she has been in Cape Town since the early 1940's. She came to Cape Town to attend school but since this was not possible, she began to work as a domestic worker. She is now retired and is part of a large household that has only one breadwinner.

Mama M: Born in the Transkei in 1933. She came to Cape Town when she was 21 in search of work to support her child after her husband had deserted her. She suffers from arthritis contracted from her work. She lives with her family.

Mrs R: Born in 1924 in the Eastern Cape on a farm. She is still working and lives with her son in Khayelitsha. She is the breadwinner. She came to Cape Town to look after a sick brother whose wife had died. Her house in Khayelitsha is the first home she has had.

Mrs S is in her mid twenties with two children. She is from Piketberg and came to Cape Town when she was 17 in search of work. She has recently married and maintains links with her family in Piketberg. She spends more than half of her salary each month paying a childminder to care for her children.

Aunty K was born in Namibia, but her family now live in Springbok. She is in her late 50's, early 60's (she is not certain when she was born). Her children live in Springbok and she only sees them a few times a year when she goes home. Although she has many friends in the area where she works she has kept close contact with her family. She is a breadwinner and is unmarried.

N was born in Paarl, she went to school till Std 9 and is working as a domestic since she can find no other job. She is 24 years old. She travels home regularly and helps to support her family. She is unmarried.

Mrs C is 36 years old and from the Transkei. She came to Cape Town in search of work and is supporting a sick and elderly mother in the Transkei. She works six days a week and receives R90 a month. She has a vicious employer but is unable to find other work. She is not married.

F is 42 years old and grew up in Ceres. She came to Cape Town in search of work at the age of 14. She maintains very close ties with her family and helps to support them. She is unmarried.

Mrs D was born in the Ciskei. She came to Cape Town when she was 15 years old in search of work. Her family is in the Ciskei. Her first employers managed to fix up her pass. She spends time in the townships in Cape Town and maintains links with her family in the Ciskei who she helps to support. She is unmarried.

Mrs Ny was born in Tiervlei in Cape Town and has worked since she was 14 years old. Her father deserted the family and she helped support her extended family for many years. She lives in Nyanga and is the sole supporter of her children. She is unmarried.

Emily was born in Clanwilliam in 1958. She came to Cape Town in 1979 in search of work. She had completed Std 9 but was unable to find alternative work. She has had a number of miscarriages, has no children but helps support her family. She is unmarried.

The South African economy is structured according to class, race and sex. The domestic service sector is dominated by working class black and mainly African women.

Table 1 : Domestic work by race and sex (%) . 2

YEAR	WHITE		AFRICAN		COLOURED		ASIAN	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1921	0.2	2.3	27.2	49.9	2.7	15.4	1.8	0.4
1936	0.04	1.8	25.3	57.5	1.8	13.1	0.3	0.2
1946	0.04	0.7	21.4	67.0	1.3	9.3	0.2	0.1
1950	0.05	0.6	20.6	66.7	1.3	10.5	0.1	0.2
1960	0.005	0.04	18.5	68.1	0.7	12.4	0.02	0.3
1970	(0.04)	0.21	8.8	80.5	0.4	9.8	0.01	0.2
1980	0.01	0.4	7.9	79.6	0.4	11.4	0.01	0.2

Table 2 : TOTAL number of domestic workers in 1980. 3

	M	F	TOTAL
WHITE	710	4 039	4 749
COLOURED	8 670	85 795	94 465
ASIAN	442	1 641	2 083
AFRICAN	127 747	596 176	723 923
TOTAL	137 569	687 651	825 220

Attempting to establish the racial composition of domestic work in the Cape Peninsula has proven difficult. In addition, it has been impossible to determine accurately how many workers sleep in on the employer's property, sleep out at their homes or char (piece work). The DWA works according to rough estimates.

Q How many sleep-out branches (of the union) do you have and how many sleep in branches?

ST Well the sleep out branches are Guguletu, Langa, Nyanga... Then the sleep in we have about 10 branches. You have Hout Bay, Camps Bay, Sea Point, greater Cape Town, Oranjezicht, Welgemoed, Claremont, Rondebosch, Pinelands, Wynberg, Bellville and Parrow North...In each of these areas there is about 5000 sleep in workers.

Q Do you find that the majority of sleep out workers are African and not Coloured workers?

ST Not so much Coloured because the Coloured person is working in the factory and the sleep in Coloured comes from the rural up country areas, this is where, you find the sleep in Coloured domestic workers.

Q So would you say the majority of domestic workers in Cape Town at the moment are African or is it not so easy to estimate?

ST: No its not easy, the statistics are a bit of a vague thing still. We sort of worked out that in three areas (Langa, Nyanga, Guguletu) there is about 16,000 domestic workers. But overall with other (African) domestic workers in the Western Cape there's about 35-36000 workers and now there could be more.4

Table 3 : Percentage distribution of full time domestic workers according to race and Sex (as at October 1983).5

	AFRICAN		COLOURED		ASIAN		WHITE	
Cape Town	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
	4,1	35,6	2,4	57,5	0,0	0,03	0,0	0,1 = 100%

The majority of workers appear to be so called coloured women 'sleep ins' who are migrant workers from the areas surrounding Cape Town. A high percentage of African women 'live out'. However this may not be an accurate picture as it is difficult to collect information on African women who are unregistered (working without a permit). Thus the number of African women maybe much higher. Either way many of the domestic workers appear to be migrant workers and thus accommodation will be a crucial factor forcing workers into poor working conditions. Since it is extremely difficult to obtain accommodation in Cape Town's overcrowded townships, workers interviewed told of being forced to accept employment with bad conditions in order to have a place to sleep. Almost all the 'live outs' interviewed were African women while the 'live ins' were so called coloured migrant women (except for two African women, 1 from Paarl, 1 from Transkei) from the rural areas in the Cape Province.

Domestic workers interviewed tended to be working class women with very low formal education levels who have been forced to leave school for a number of reasons. Firstly, working class parents cannot afford the high cost of schooling. Often girls are taken out of school before boys who are perceived to have a better chance of surviving in the economy. In addition, young girls are removed from school to care for a sick member of the family or to do the housework at home. After a while in addition to the housework, they are forced to seek jobs. Sometimes young girls fall pregnant and are forced to leave school especially where the 'father' does not provide financial support.

Q What did your father do?

Z My father used to plough and when it was hard times he always used to go to work somewhere else like Cradock.

Q And your mother?

Z My mother used to be making part time jobs... like washing or just day time jobs... a housemaid.

Q Why did you leave school?

Z It became because the time goes round about and then my father became sick and then there was nobody to do the things that my father used to do (so) I did try to look after our cattle and to look after our sheep and at the same time try and help my mother at home until she said I must come here in Cape Town for a job.6

Q And why did you leave school in Std 4?

NY I think it was my parent's problem man, money wise you know? Yes it was my parent's, and then I thought no I'd better go and work and they ask me what I want to do and I work all these years. Yes you see I couldn't get a better job because education you see? I was not educate for to go and get a nice good job for me. I was just right for a domestic worker to go and do ironings and clean people houses and, you know?7

Mrs R Ja, my brother was learned in Johannesburg, my two brother, I didn't learn too much because then I have to work and help my mother.8

M I was born in the Transkei. When I grew up we were happy although we were poor. It was much better at that time and now when I was old then my father died I got pregnant and married and then I have to go out of school and after that my husband run away.9

Domestic workers are often the least educated sector of the working class. Young women are forced on to the job market due to their gender and their families class position. Young uneducated workers enter the job market with their only skills being their knowledge of

'housework', learned from their mothers and practised within their families. This knowledge forces women to sell their labour as domestic workers or in other unskilled jobs.¹⁰

Eleven of the workers interviewed were from rural areas such as the Transkei, Ciskei, Boland, Karoo and Namaqualand. They are drawn to Cape Town in search of jobs or better paid jobs than they could find in their home areas. Many maintain ties with their home areas, return home once a year and intend to retire there. Many send/leave their children with families in the rural areas.

F So when I came to the age of 14 we had problems debt accumulating, money was little so I had to go and work. I was in Std 4 so I went and worked in a factory and from there I came to town. Well that's another thing. The canning factory for the fruit season and the rest of the year there's no work. So I came to Cape Town, got my first job oh yes the people strike, I can't remember the time, its a long time ago so the people strike. I was still young man I don't know if its about money or the time or overtime I don't know, I was little, walking around there with white socks and shoe you know. So I just joined the party, so afterwards when the police came I took myself away and most of the people went to jail, they locked them up in some warehouse. So from there I came to town.¹¹

E She was just in a temper, she just asked me how can I get sick in her job and I said to her I can't help it. You usually get sick and I said to her but if I get more sicker than that then I can go straight home because I got parents¹² (said indignantly. Parents in Clanwilliam).

This constant flow of workers to the city helps to maintain a reserve of labour and force wages down.

ST I often asked them "Why do you come to town?" and someone would say "Look, I earned R50 more here than on the farm! You go to Cape Town and you'll get at least R50 more." And

so in one way these places (urban areas) are benefitting from a constant source of cheap labour flowing into the city so that it keeps the wage of the domestic worker down. And that is why we also see the need for moving into those areas and demanding the same throughout South Africa so that at least they are both with their families, they can stay there because the demand will be the same in the cities as it is in the platterland you know, and that the person will stay there and will be given the opportunity to see to her own needs and her own family. We looked into the rural areas how people are paid there. In these areas you still find people getting as low as R20 per month!13

However all those coming to the cities in search of work do not always find employment even with low wages and poor working conditions.

In discussion with union officials and domestic workers it became clear that the availability of jobs is determined by a number of factors. In times of economic crises it appears as if the number of women seeking jobs grows apace with unemployment, while the actual number of jobs decreases as employers find themselves unable to employ domestic workers. This is especially true of the petty bourgeoisie and the white working class whose wages rise more slowly than the rate of inflation. However two further points must be taken into account. On the one hand growing unemployment will force wages down and so reduce the cost of employing a domestic worker. On the other hand the rise of the black petty bourgeoisie may increase the absolute number of jobs as they to will employ domestic workers. Union officials pointed to the need to research and understand the relation between the business cycle and domestic work.

Secondly, technological development seems to have two separate effects on domestic work. Firstly, the development of labour-saving devices like washing machines, dishwashers, polishers and carpet cleaners as well as edge to edge carpeting, reduces the need for domestic workers. Very often chars (piece work) are employed instead of full time live in domestic workers. However this assumes that the employers have no

young children in need of daily care. Secondly, the socialisation of household tasks further reduces the need for full time domestic workers.¹⁴ The development of fast food outlets, laundrettes, service companies who clean carpets/upholstery, maintain the garden or even the whole house all act in this way. But again this does not eliminate the need for childcare.

In addition, if the worker has no alternative housing to that offered by the employer she may be forced to accept work with low pay and long working hours in order to ensure a roof over her head. Obviously if the worker has no alternative accommodation she can only accept 'live in' work.¹⁵ Her choice of job may also be influenced by her domestic responsibilities in her own family. The need to care for her own children, husband, family and house may determine where and how she can work, for example, part-time nearby her place of residence.

One of the workers interviewed was sent to Cape Town, from Johannesburg, by her family to care for a sick elder brother. The brother's wife had died in childbirth and he was asthmatic and frequently ill. He worked in a blanket factory in Maitland which exacerbated his asthma.

Q Where did you stay when you came to Cape Town?

Mrs R In Elsie's with my brother, in Elsie's River... and I have to do everything. I have to come because he had asthma and I think I only stay with him for 3 years and then he go home again... he can't work here anymore, so I come from Johannesburg to look after him because he was sick. He was not married because he was marrying first and his first wife was dead, She have a baby and then she died, and then he was sick with the chest and then I came to Cape Town to look after him and then he got another wife and then I didn't mind anymore.¹⁶

For an African woman influx control, until its abolition in 1986, determined her employer, area and conditions of work. Many African

women are forced to accept any work as they do not have the correct papers to work 'legally' in Cape Town.

ST You see what caused it was the influx control and the fact that domestic workers (African) need permits to go from one work to another... if you worked in Sea Point you have to get a permit to go and work in Rondebosch and that curbed the movement of the African domestic worker but the Coloured domestic worker can come and go at all times.17

Jobs are found through the newspapers, by going door to door asking for jobs and through friends

ST Ja, in some cases they do come to the office (union office) to ask us to get a job for them. Employers will phone in to ask for somebody. We will recommend that person. In other cases their friends will sort of introduce them to the next door neighbour or to the person down the street and in other cases, you know they just come in by themselves for a job especially when they are living on a farm and there's no jobs say in the off season or in little town where they are earning very little. They just get off the trains and busses and come to town to look for a job.18

Mrs B Then at the time when my husband was died, I asked my mother-in-law I want to come to Cape Town and so I asked her to look after my baby, my children and I will come and look for work.

Q Weren't you scared to go there?

Mrs B I wasn't scared because it was hard for me. I couldn't ever buy a pair of shoes for me because I must look after my children, I must pay my house rent everything!

Q But that was brave of you to go on your own?

Mrs B It was (laughter)...19

Material conditions: the daily struggle.

ST If she complains to her employer the employer would say to her what are we paying you, we are paying you, we

are giving you a room of your own' you know in certain cases the person has got a T.V. When she's got a T.V. she's constantly reminded that other girls don't have a T.V., you at least have a T.V. If she's got a nice room, she's constantly reminded about this nice room that she has which other girls don't have and for that she babysits three times a week which means what she's working for, what she gets she has to double her amount of hours of work for what she is receiving from the

employer and this paid in kind thing effects the domestic workers who sleep in heavily. The worker will get R10 a month - the employer will tell her that you are eating here, you are washing yourself, you are using electricity, water, my room and now you demand more money. It restricts the worker from asking for an increase.²⁰

S Vandag R135 00! Om vandag vir R135 te werk is baie min. My grootste vrees is my salaris. Ek het twee kinders en vir hulle betaal ek R75. Die ander wat uitkom is my uitgaan, kos en klere.²¹

Ny The main problem, number one is the money, you see that is very very hard up till today because I don't know what's going on, they don't seem to give people the right amount of money still even today. You shock when you hear somebody talking about their wages you see. That is number one. And even the treatments as well is very scarce to hear that people get the right treatment, specially the living-in, they still got wrong rooms you know where they live in, they still got wrong rooms, not right rooms and food there still people who don't even eat when they come in in the morning, they last eat food last night at their own homes.

Q And then you must work in your own homes?

Ny Its very very very wrong. Your mother or your wife must do everything, you see, see to the kids, see to the house, see to the cooking and at the sametime that person (the woman) must go to work as well and see to that very husband as well you see?

Q So the domestic worker is just like a machine?

Ny Ja straight away just like a machine, just fix up something quick, quick, quick, and finish and klaar and go to the next thing you know ummmm kill yourself!22

As already noted, in attempting to understand the nature of the wage relationship in capitalist society Marx argued:

If the owner of the labour power works today, tomorrow he must again be able to repeat the same process in the same conditions as regards health and strength. This means of subsistence must therefore be sufficient to maintain him in his normal state as a labouring individual. His natural wants, such as food, clothing, fuel, and housing, vary according to the climatic and other physical conditions of his country. On the other hand, the number and extent of his so called necessary wants, as also the modes of satisfying them, are themselves the producers of historical development, and depend therefore to a great extent on the degree of civilisation of a country, more particularly the conditions under which, and consequently on the habits and degree of comfort in which, the class of free labourers has been formed. In contradistinction therefore to the case of other commodities there enters into the determination of the value of labour power a historical and moral element.²³

Thus the price - the wage - of daily maintenance of the worker is the outcome of a long process of class and gender struggles. However the content of 'historical and moral element' has to be reconstituted each and everyday as the worker tries to increase her/his 'necessary wants' and the capitalist reduces them. The ruling class in South Africa has managed to force the price of these necessary wants to the very lowest limit. Workers are paid a wage which is often just enough to cover the cost of their own subsistence and not that of their dependents. The struggle for a living wage continues to be a hard fought battle for the South African working class.

For domestic workers this struggle has been particularly intense. The cost of reproduction of her labour power is included in the wage of her employer.²⁴ Or put another way, whatever the class of her employer, the domestic worker's wage is part of the overall cost

of maintenance of the family-household and consequently will be subjected to attempts to reduce it to its absolute minimum. The state has consistently supported the ruling class in this regard by denying domestic workers even the most basic forms of legal protection extended to the industrial working class. Extending unemployment benefits, state and compulsory leave pay, and overtime would all raise the wage of domestic workers and thus of their employers. Consequently this has been one of the main demands of domestic workers unions.

Although frequently in conflict with their employers, domestic workers are one of those classes of employees who enjoy the least, if any legal, protection. There is not a single law which protects or serves their interests in any way. Instead one finds that nearly all industrial legislation specifically excludes domestic workers from its ambit.²⁵

The lack of protective legislation means that the determination of wages and working conditions is based solely on the relation between employer and worker and supply and demand of labour. [Given the material conditions facing the working class this must favour the employer who very often has a free reign to set these conditions. Workers are then left to confront their employer in an isolated manner on their employers property and knowing full well that the state will support the employer.] In this situation trade union organisation becomes critical as it provides the only opportunity for domestic workers to confront the power of the ruling class and the state in a unified and disciplined manner. As previously noted, Marx further argued that the wage relation obscured the nature of paid and unpaid labour:

In wage labour, on the contrary, even surplus labour appears as paid... here the money relation conceals the unrequited labour of the wage labourer. Hence, we may understand the decisive importance of the transformation of value and price of labour-power into the form of wages, or into the value and price of labour itself. This phenomenal form, which makes the actual relation invisible, and, indeed, shows the direct opposite of that relation, forms the basis of all the juridical notions of both labourer, and capitalist...²⁶

For the domestic worker the appearance of paid and unpaid labour as paid labour - the wage - masks a particularly intense form of exploitation. For the paid wage covers only part of her labour

in the bosses household. In addition, her labour in her own household, in the daily reproduction of the working class, goes unpaid and unnoticed. Yet it is a necessary precondition for the reproduction of capitalist relations of production. For the domestic worker the double day has a particular meaning: being chained to the kitchen and domestic drudgery in two households.

ST Yes it does (oppress working in two households) and at the end, you know, what is so pathetic is that after working for 20 to 29 years you find yourself, you have got nothing. There's no pension, there's no banking account, you have no social life.²⁷

Wages

In the study, wages in 1986 - in cash - varied from R50 per month to R150 per month with the average wage being around R100 per month. However it is important to note that women interviewed in the union offices had been receiving the same wages for many years. Some had had no increase for at least ten years! Employers pay workers on the basis that the worker is an individual and not a bread winner. Wages varied enormously from employer to employer. Workers often argued that ethnic origin of the employer was important, however, all agreed that the richer the employer the less they paid.

ST You know funny enough, the richer the person will pay the least and the poorest person are prepared to pay what he can pay the best. That's what you discover with salaries.²⁸

The variation in wages may be accounted for by arguing that wages are based on employer estimates of what the domestic worker needs and what they (the employers) can afford.²⁹ The cash wage of domestic workers needs to be seen against the high cost of living. With an inflation rate around 18% per year and the high rise in the cost of basic foodstuffs (bread, milk, flour, mielie meal) a wage of R90-R100 per month was insufficient to enable the workers interviewed to support their families. Since all domestic workers interviewed are supporting either their own children or members of their family the wage must be seen as having to stretch further than one person. In so

doing the bourgeoisie have forced down the cost of reproduction of labour power as they are paying a wage for the reproduction of a single worker while the worker may have to stretch it for the whole family.

Domestic workers interviewed did not receive regular wage increases. It appears as if increases are only granted when asked/fought for and then are often very small. The study highlighted that domestic workers work many hours overtime babysitting, cooking for guests/parties and caring for the sick. None of the women interviewed were paid overtime by the hour and those that did receive overtime were paid between R2,R5 for an evening's work which may be an extra four hours.

Leave pay varied greatly. Some domestic workers received a full three weeks leave plus pay, some two weeks leave plus pay and some workers were given holidays without pay. In a number of cases domestic workers received no holiday at all.

Ny I never got holidays, I never remember getting holidays, I just worked right through the year every year just working, working working ja.30

In the course of the study struggles around sick leave emerged as crucial. Sick leave was only given under severe pressure from the domestic worker. It was never paid leave and the employer sought to reduce it to a minimum.

E Sometimes she gets very upset when I'm sick. The first time I came there I start menstruating it comes off very heavily and I told her and she asked me if I'm not pregnant and I told her I'm not pregnant but she tells me I got a boyfriend. She was just in a temper, she just ask me how can I get sick in her job and I said to her I can't help it. You usually get sick.31

ST When she is sick she's afraid to get sick because she doesn't want to lose her job.32

Ny Ja I did have times off for sick because sometimes I used to get sick when I was at home you see it was my off-day and then they used to get mad and cross. They used to phone to hear if it

was true because I left there for my off you see and I didn't come back and we phone from the tickie boxes that I'm sick and that I didn't want to leave and then when I arrive at work then they phone the clinic to see of its true (shaking her head in disbelief)!33

(The employer often bought tablets from the chemist and gave it to the worker expecting her to continue while sick.) In other cases the employer either called a doctor or allowed the worker time off to go to the clinic.

Finally payment of transport costs was also an area of intense struggle especially for the live out domestic worker:

ST In many cases the employer will just pay her straight wages and the worker have to see to paying her own travelling costs and of course they do not come and tell us but the majority will try and borrow from so and so and pay it back at the end of the month....34

Q So it's difficult to manage?

ST It's quite a burden on the domestic worker who lives out because sometimes when the trains are late you have to catch a bus or a taxi. Now you have your monthly ticket which means you have to cut into your living amount and you have to take off say, R2 and travel by bus or taxi in order to be on time and workers were saying to us actually it can take you about R30 per month out of your pocket. And the employer will say to you "But so and so doesn't give travelling money, why should I?" in some cases.35

None of the workers interviewed had a pension scheme and no one received an annual bonus. Maternity benefits amounted to being offered ones job back after having the baby and often workers were expected to find a replacement for the period of their absence. Not being covered by the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, no domestic worker receives unemployment benefits (UIF).

Employers often supplement domestic workers' wages with "payments in kind." These include board and lodging (food, water, electricity and rent for room), old clothes and financial help from time to time. These additions to the worker's salary often make it possible for her to cope better with her monthly expenses! These are also necessary since the employer pays the worker below her cost of reproduction. Again, payments in kind vary enormously from employer to employer and have a number of advantages for the employer. Payment below the cost of reproduction introduces payment in kind which is a supplement to cash wages and an attempt to help the worker to meet their cost of reproduction. Payment in kind often costs the employer very little, for example, old clothes, left over food and are a kind of cheap way of supplementing cash wages. However, as noted above, the employer uses this to justify paying low wages. For example, the worker is reminded that she is using the employer's electricity, food, etc. Furthermore it makes the domestic worker feel indebted for these payments. Thus payment below the cost of reproduction allows further manipulation and control of the worker through payments in kind. It was very difficult to ascertain from workers if this has changed over time or varied regionally or according to the class of the employer. Workers interviewed pointed out that "payments in kind" were irregular and these seemed to be no overall pattern.

ST I think it is very difficult because unlike a factory worker where she gets R50 a week, the domestic worker doesn't get that type of money. It's most difficult for a sleep out worker because cost of living cuts into her salary. And at least the sleep in worker gets a plate of food. The sleep out worker have to go and make her own food and in some cases the worker would come into the employers house and not even find a slice of bread in that house, she's got to work for that whole day or go and buy her own food at the cafe. It's more expensive. Sometimes there's just coffee and there's no milk, there's tea and there's no sugar...

Q Otherwise they lock all the food away?

ST They lock everything up. If they don't then I would say that's a good employer. In certain cases, I wouldn't say all employers are bad. But it seems to me that employers don't think always that this is a human being. "We need this object, its got to come and clean, its got to come and clean our house and therefore there's a piece of bread." Or if the employer will have the audacity to phone and say "Margaret I've left you sandwiches out there." Now Margaret is an adult...but the type of sandwiches that are made for master is different from the sandwiches that's left to Margaret, and Master, if he feels like it, he can break for lunch to go to a cafe and if he feels like having a cooked meal but there's no alternative for Margaret.

Alone I sit in my cell
Thinking of my poor children and
Husband.
No one to talk to
Nor listen to

My poor feet are aching
My shoulders are drooping from tiredness.

I am given names
some call me maid
Some call me Mary

Is it so hard to be called "Lehutso"
I am a nurse, doctor, cook you name it
I do.

My reward come's when they want
Oh! Land of my forefather
How can you forget one who sacrificed
Her children to be with yours
Oh! Rules of our country
How can you forget me in your house
How can you forget the lonely worker.36

As already noted, access to housing is crucial for the domestic worker. Yet even so, domestic workers interviewed complained of being subjected to poor living conditions for most of their working lives. It was pointed out that rooms are poorly lit, very small, cold,

leaking, and have poor washing and cooking facilities. Workers complained that the poor condition of rooms often caused sickness especially if the room is damp. However, as union officials noted, this small room in the backyard, the domestic workers cell, is the only area where she is free from the constant watching eyes of her employer. In a sense it is her private retreat. But even here her need for accommodation is manipulated because allowing the domestic worker to live on the employer's property means that she is on constant call. In this way her working hours can be extended. Furthermore control over the domestic worker's visitors and after hours activities is increased and this makes the worker generally more vulnerable. Domestic workers' rooms are generally located 'in the backyard' and this helps to facilitate such control. In blocks of flats the caretakers are often used to control visitors and in this way replace the direct control of the bosses. Thus this form of 'payment' in kind is merely a mechanism of control and exploitation of the workers. Further research needs to be undertaken to examine the physical/spatial form that women's oppression takes within the house and how this affects domestic workers. For in the nuclear family household domestic workers are confined to the kitchen - and her room if she lives in - venturing out only on the express orders/directions of her employer to serve.

Domestic workers still have to win the minimum legal protection from employers. This process has begun by the organisation of workers into trade unions.

ST The organising part isn't difficult but when there's a dispute involved. I mean we are allowed to organise workers and run the association but when there's grievances involved, that part curbs it, having no legislation it stops us from going all the way! You go to the employer, you state your case, tell the employer that what she has done was wrong and unjust and you lay out the case and say look 1,2,3,4 and why you not come to some kind of agreement. In some cases you will come to an agreement and in other cases you lose the case because there's no legislation

involved, but the organising part isn't difficult. What is difficult is the negotiation part with the employer.

Q So you are really appealing to the 'fairness' of the employer when you go there because there is no legislation?

ST And for the employer to see that this is a work force, that there should be a right for the worker to sell her labour and for the employer to pay the worker for her labour and not this type of 'paid in kind' thing, to treat her as other workers in other industries, five days a week, you know, the normal hours whatever.37

The length of the working day.

Q And about the hours that people work?

Ny Oh jaasa! The hours, the hours and you must get there exactly at 8 o'clock or exactly at 7 o'clock till maybe 7 o'clock or 8 to 6 you know 8 to 7. People work very very strong hours!

Q And they don't have time to see friends or do other things?

Ny No niks niks niks, you can't even come and do some work at home, because it's so late man, you so late! Sometimes then if Saturdays you don't work then you can do a bit of something at home or Sundays. Because these days you even hang up washing on Sundays at home and we used never like to do some washing and things like that on Sundays. But we do it now, we do it now! We work harder now and some people think they've got this little money they try to go to work and do special jobs on Saturdays you know to make their wages more and they go and work Saturdays as well.37

M First of all you are going to get up, you are the clock to wake them up, then you are going to do everything then they go to work but you still going to work. When they come home they will not know that you have been working, you must still work. When they go to bed, now you go to bed. You can't do whatever you like, you are in prison, really in prison. And this is worse than the others!38

Z You know as you wake up and work the whole day you must keep on going up and down to do this or that! You must try to put up your mind on that every corner of this house is dusted, really every corner of this house! I must try to put up me eyes very clear because you know she is going to come home and say that you didn't dust there. You also feel with the finger that you didn't dust there but you did feel tired! But as long as the sun is on they believe you are not working the whole day while they are not there. So I mean that really sometimes you can sit to jail, it's much better, sometimes, I don't know...but really it's like jail the domestic work. Until your day off, you feel that today is your day off you feel just a little bit heavy. But those hours you out to get your day off they run quickly. You feel tears when you see that the time is over. You feel that really I don't know where to go but you must go because you go to that jail because if you not go to that jail you get no money!³⁹

E And so she said to me "But E listen hear," every time when she comes she just wipe off "this is dirty, look you didn't dust there." I said but "I dust there" I said "but it's a very big house, I can't manage to do all the work in one day." And she said to me "but look here Emily, all the other girls work like that." I didn't do anything, I just went across the road to my friend Ann and I told her "Annie listen here, I just tell her today I can't finish the house in one day." Anne asked "Is that woman crazy? You can't do all the work, the brasso, the silver, the windows and some of the walls you must clean, you can't do all that in one day. Ok E just leave them, just leave them! I know of a job."⁴⁰

Mrs D I leave there because that people, that man was divorced, now the new wife is full of nonsense so I leave the job. She say to her husband she didn't like me because I was work for that woman (the first wife) she wants her own girl! She didn't give me enough off and I was working on Sundays. I start at 9 o clock on Sundays until 7 or 8 o clock. I get a weekend on end of month, once a month. I finish Friday maybe 9 o

clock at night I finish work and come in at 7 o'clock on Monday. Which means coming Sunday night.

Q And when you get off what do you do with the time off?

Mrs D When I get off I feel like to rest because the time we get off I feel like my body's bad tired.⁴¹

M She was working (the employer) but when she comes home from work you would think that she was here the whole day. She makes up for that time she was not there. And she even do the phone. I answer the phone and ask for the other one (other domestic worker) to make sure that you are there doing your work. One day I got so fed up and I said "I'm sure your grandfather was a slave driver and you have taken after him!" and she got so cross. I was fed up already then. Phew! Getting in the kitchen 6 o'clock and then leave at 8 o'clock but she's going to keep on phoning to see that you are there.⁴²

In discussing the length of the working day of productive workers Marx argued:

The capitalist maintains his rights as a purchaser when he tries to make the working day as long as possible, and to make, whenever possible, two working days out of one. On the other hand, the peculiar nature of the commodity sold implies a limit to its consumption by the purchaser, and the labourer maintains his right as a seller when he wishes to reduce the working day to one of a definite normal duration. There is here, therefore, an antinomy right against right.... Between equal rights force decides. Hence it is that in the history of capitalist production, the determination of what is a working-day, presents itself as the result of a struggle, a struggle between collective capital ie the class of the capitalists, and collective labour, ie the working class.⁴³

Despite domestic workers not being productive workers the length of the working day appears also to result from an intense struggle between the worker and the employer. The outcome of which is often decided by force. In two instances mentioned in the interviews, the force extended from control over the movements of the live in domestic worker and actual physical/sexual abuse to the force of the state - the police - called in to support the employer. For the worker the struggle to

shorten the working day is difficult since she is alone and isolated in the household of her employer. [The constant threat of losing her job] exacerbates the situation.

Discussions and union workshops focussing on the length of the working day and the struggle for a five day week, arrived at the conclusion that employers attempt to extend the limits of the working day in two ways:

(a) The employer attempts to extend the absolute limit of the working day, ie: the number of hours worked each day. The employer may do this by forcing the worker to work in her 'off time' and by refusing sick or holiday/off days. Furthermore it was noted that if the worker lives on the employer's property control is greater and it is more likely that the length of the working day may be extended. For example, a worker may be forced to babysit or make tea for guests late at night. Extending the absolute limit of the working day has had the effect of wearing down the workers' capacity to labour. However workers complained that for the employer this is of no consequence as they can easily be replaced by another from the reserve army of labour.

Mrs D's employer highlights this situation very clearly.

Mrs D Sometimes I am sick. They give me tablets and I must carry on working. I'm scared to lose the job because I know that the time I talk they going to say that there's a lot of people looking for a job and you can leave. They don't care if you can complain. You can't complain because if you complain they say we are paying you.⁴⁴

Furthermore workers complained of having to work on Sundays or in their 'off time'.

ST Jewish employers don't care about a Sunday or I wouldn't say that exactly but because of it's not their culture of their religion they couldn't care less, so it doesn't dawn on them that this person working there is a Christian and wishes to go to church on Sundays. On Sundays the Jewish people will invite people and that worker will stand on her feet from 7

in the morning to 7 at night even 8 to 9 o'clock on Sundays which means she's working harder on a Sunday than any other day when she worked for a certain Jewish people. People who invite people to play bridge, they normally use Sunday as their bridge day and having bridge parties because other days are working days.⁴⁵

E is attempting to gain a diploma in maternal and childcare. The classes are on a Tuesday night, however, and often she can't attend because she has too much washing and ironing to do. Similarly, her employer attempts to prevent her from attending Union meetings by extending her working day into her time off. This is done by increasing the number of tasks she must complete before being allowed to leave. The Union also reported that this was a common occurrence.

ST There's very little freedom, very little scope for freedom of thinking and doing, of education because when a domestic worker finds out that say, that some literacy classes are being held, she would go to her employer and say 'Look, Madam, could you eat a bit earlier tonight, I want to attend these literacy classes because I can't read and write.' You'll find the employer not saying an outright "No" but will say "Yes, tonight" and next Tuesday she will say, "But Margaret, I have invited people for supper so you can't go out." Um blocking the way of education.⁴⁶

The telephone appeared as another instrument of control (see also M above.)

ST The worker might work from 7 in the morning until 10 o'clock. Now she thinks she can go off for lunch or for her rest in some cases. Then the employer would phone her from work if she's a working somebody and say, "Look, Um, I'm waiting for a phone call, don't go out. That phone call never turns up but that employer wanted her to remain there to know that she is on the premises. And when it gets to four o'clock, and she

has got to start cooking, the result is that in some of these cases, the worker never has any rest during the day.⁴⁷

(b) The second way of extending the length of the working day is through the intensification of the working day, that is, increasing the productivity of the worker. The introduction of technology - "labour saving" (sic) devices - has had the effect of intensifying the working day because the domestic worker is able to complete more work in a limited period of time. Workers noted that intensification of the working day is achieved by demanding that the worker complete a set number of tasks within a given period of time. It was noted that this seems to be the method used by employers, of live-out workers/chars, to increase the length of the working day. Chars and live out workers complained in workshops that very often they have to complete two days work in one day or fear losing their jobs. Consequently they work faster and take fewer breaks or none at all as they rush to complete their tasks. The development of piece work, or char system, is particularly onerous in this regard. It allows the employer the benefit of employing a domestic worker but not having to pay her a monthly wage in cash or kind. This results in the worker working harder for less money.

These methods of extending the length of the working day must be seen as being part of the combined experience of a group of organized workers in Cape Town in 1986. Regionally or nationally the experience of domestic workers may not be the same. However, union officials argued that it was the same countrywide. The whole issue of the length of the working day needs to be researched in order to ascertain regional and national patterns and differences, how this is different over time and what methods employers and workers use in their conflict over the working day.

Since there is no Basic Conditions of Employment legislation covering domestic workers, it was difficult to obtain an accurate general picture of what a working day constitutes. What follows is a general picture pieced together from answers to this question in the inter-

views. Again this pattern may vary enormously or change over time. Workers noted that their routine varied from employer to employer but it seemed as if employers require similar things to be done: clothes washed and ironed, house cleaned and tidied, meals cooked, pets cared for, gardens attended to, and if there are children, child care as well. The wage labouring day starts between 6-30am and 8-00am when the domestic worker must serve breakfast and prepare school and work lunches. She works until 2-00. Rests for several hours and then returns to work and may work till 7-30pm or 8-00pm. She will work overtime if there are guests or she has to babysit. The live-out domestic worker works from approx. 8-00am to 5-00pm with very few breaks in between.

Many live-in domestic workers are given Thursday afternoon off. On the weekends, arrangements vary from no time off to the whole weekend off. However, as noted, the domestic worker is never certain whether or not she will receive her single "time-off," and this appears to be a constant daily struggle.

Additional factors influencing the length of the working day included the lack of a clear job description, or agreement between worker/employer as to the jobs to be done/ hours to be worked. Union officials noted that this is left deliberately vague by the employers when employing workers in order to increase exploitation. Often the size of the family varied from one or two persons to as many of eight, each with their own demands made on the worker and in a position of control over the worker. The number of children is an important determination of how much and how long the domestic worker labours. In addition, individual family routines, for example, how often guests are entertained, whether or not children must be babysat will extend working hours. Furthermore, the emotional attachment of domestic workers to employer's children is an important factor as well since this often means domestic workers take the prime responsibility for children, and for example, the afternoon rest period may consist of the worker taking the baby/young children to the park. This is exacerbated by the loneliness of the domestic worker. This may mean she

will work long hours rather than return to the loneliness and isolation of her room, and the worry of her family. A similar syndrome as noted among prisoners/detainees who often prefer contact with their warders than no contact at all.⁴⁸

Mrs D's story highlights some of these points:

Mrs D I can see they are good but I work very hard. There's five people, three children and a father and mother but the way they make a mess, they don't care if they use this bag, they leave the bag on the floor, I must take it. If they change, they throw the clothes on the floor, and the washing...

Q How old are the children?

Mrs D The first one is say, nineteen, the other one is sixteen, the third is eleven. I start at 7-00am and finish 8-00pm or past 8. The rest is only sometimes 2-30pm to 4-00pm. Sometimes 3-00pm to 4-00pm.

Q There's no regular rest for you?

Mrs D No, only that. I'm off this Sunday, next Sunday I must be in. No Saturday off. And on Sunday I must work in the morning until 8 o'clock in the night. I clean the house, the house is too big, eleven rooms. Eleven rooms plus the toilets and the bathroom. I must do the washing and I must cook.

Q And have you tried to look for another job?

Mrs D I tried to look for another job, but I don't get another job.

Q Have you spoken to your boss?

Mrs D I never talk to her. She sees everything. She knows that it is too heavy for me. I talk one day with her and her husband. I told them the work is too much for me. She just take a char for one day and even the char, she says she can't manage. Sometimes she don't come. Sometimes she come once only. I feel like to go back and speak to them.

Q And the children?

Mrs D Ooooooh. The children are so bad, because sometimes if they asked you to do something for them you mus' do it. They can't say to you, "Please, you must do this for me." If she wants something now, she wants something now. Sometimes you are very busy. Sometimes the other one wants this and the other one at one time. I tried to speak to them, they don't care, they talk what they like.49

Domestic workers interviewed in this study worked up to 90 hours a week. Consequently, workers had very little free time. Such free time as their was, was often spent undertaking domestic duties in their own families. This is true for those doing char/ piecework, and those living out. All the workers interviewed complained of the double shift, yet this seems to be particularly intense for the 'live-outs'/chars who have two working days each day. This must be seen against the background of intensification of the length of the working day for 'live-outs.' Returning home from work in the dark, the domestic worker has to start all over again by doing the domestic work in her own family. She must also rise very early the next morning to prepare her family for the coming day. Thus many domestic workers work long and extended double shifts. Where domestic workers do have leisure time, it seems mostly to be spent visiting family, friends and going to church, or alone in the isolation of her room. The double shift is made worse by the lack of childcare facilities in the townships. Children are often left with a member of the family, a childminder (who has to be paid) or alone. This is a source of constant anxiety for the mother.

Q You come home from work and you are very tired and then you have to worry about your children?

Z Yes and you must do it and you must try to start from the beginning and you have somebody which you don't want and feed the children so you must wash up and do their feeding and things... it's not to mean that as you come from work you going to get a rest or just to sit. You must start your housework, you must look after your husband again, to do

some things for him. Clothes and something for the morning. Some of them what you have been hanging in the morning try to iron them before you slip off each day.

Q So you work twice each day?

Z Twice, that is your job, the husband doesn't know nothing really you must look after the children and your husband and that woman's house (employer) and that woman has never been satisfied that you've done something good for her.50

M No I never stayed with my husband for long but I know as we are women we are oppressed more because we are oppressed by the husbands, by the bosses, because when you come home, coming from work, he's coming home from work, he's going to sit down, you must do the cooking you must do the cleaning while he at least sit down and wait for his plate of food! But some understands now that's not on.51

Finally, in the course of the field work, one further trend emerged. Owing to the small wage received many domestic workers are forced to take char/piecework jobs in their 'off time' so as to increase their income. This is a further method of increasing the length of the working day. The story of Z is an example of this:

Q And so you used to work 2 hours in the morning and 2 hours in the afternoon as a tea girl. Did you used to come home in between?

Z Anyway I couldn't pay because there was no money in that.... After 8 o'clock I used to go to get char work for these people which are working there in the office. Then I know that I am just going to collect all this moneys and then it was just such an amount that it was enough to feed my children. So I could be able to pay the school fees and everything out of that.52

N concurs.

N I used to get off Saturdays there, we also live in and I used to get off Saturdays and I got a job where I work for 10 years only Saturday mornings.53

Working women's compensation/health care.

- M And it's only one thing that makes you sick...I feel I just break my health because there was no chance to rest. I couldn't feel that I must rest because I don't know whose going to support me because I was the only one who was a breadwinner.54
- E was taken to hospital when pregnant and miscarried and her employer then made enquiries as to her health.
- E She phoned first and she asked the people how am I something like that because she said she don't got time to come and visit me The people said I'm fine and she just come into the hospital and she asked me "Am I ready to sweep a broom?" and I got so shy in front of the people because I was not like, I wasn't strong yet, I feel a bit weak...it sound as if she just want me for the work. The doctor came in and the doctor asked "Why you ask her that question? She can't work now because here's the certificate" and she said "But doctor it's just a joke" and she just put her arm around my neck and she just said "No no no I'm just making a joke, that's my daughter!55(my emphasis)
- ST Stress! We have many instances where the person needs treatment. She would say to you that her nerves is finished because throughout the year this fear has built up within herself and you find a very intelligent somebody whose going completely off balance because of the threat that is always hanging over her head, the restrictions involved and the fact that she's got no freedom you know, whatsoever and it's a horrible life I would say.56

The long years of washing, cleaning and serving in two households take their toll on domestic workers. The loneliness, separation from family and isolation of the live in domestic worker affect her psyche. The cost of being coerced into reproductive labour

is high. (The physical and mental health of domestic workers is uncounted and unnoticed not only by the bosses but often by the male members of the working class who do not share the burden of domestic labour.)

How many domestic workers have died as a result of their paid and unpaid labour? How many have been injured by a work accident or crippled by arthritis from bending scrubbing and washing? How many have psychological problems from the long hours of isolation and loneliness? To date the cost has only been counted by the working class women themselves for the life and health of the domestic worker is seen by others to be of little value. Whether "housewife" or domestic worker, no rules govern the safety of the work environment and no compensation exists for those injured in work accidents or if lungs are damaged by inhalation of chemicals in household cleaners. The whole issue of health and safety of domestic workers has been ignored by researchers, worker and service organizations. Further regional and national research is necessary to ascertain how this has changed over time and space before generalisations can be made from the experience of the workers interviewed or the questions posed can be answered.

Workers complained that employers often do not care about the physical well being of workers when pregnant. The Health Information Centre argues:

Some things are especially important for pregnant working women. They need good food to eat, enough money to afford this, safe working conditions, time off to go to an ante natal clinic.... Hard work, long hours, low wages and bad working conditions all make work very difficult. They make women feel unhappy and tired. This is called stress. Stress is unhealthy for all people. It is especially bad for pregnant women. When pregnant women have to stand for a long time they sometimes feel sick. They can get dizzy and faint.⁵⁷

For domestic workers interviewed, the very severe conditions of their work continued while they were pregnant. The physical and emotional cost is uncounted. Paid maternity leave is mostly not given. For the ruling class the large reserve army of labour rules out any need for consistent generational reproduction of the working class. The cost?

Women are forced to work well into pregnancy, resulting in miscarriages and unhealthy babies and mothers. Women workers have struggled consistently against this control and manipulation of their bodies.

The Private Struggle : Worker and Employer Relationships.

- NY You know, we hard up you know, you can't do nothing for yourself, you must go and obey for the rich people maybe I can say because you got nothing, you see?58
- MrsD And the dogs inside they leave dirty. In the morning you can come in, I come in the kitchen and the dogs make a mess because they sleep inside. I must clean the mess for the dogs 7 o'clock in the morning.
- Q And how many dogs do they have?
- MrsD Two. And they spend a lot of money because they buy food for the dogs and wash the dogs. And I feel bad because they keep the dogs nice but they must keep me nice, because they don't pay me enough money.59
- N First I hate it there I don't know what to do about their children. They didn't have manners to talk nice to me. So I didn't like that job either. The problem with that people there I was feeling that I was a slave you know the way they treat me.60
- Ny You see they accuse the worker been stealing, now there money lost and clothes or dishes or even a cup or a plate or a spoon and then they want that person to tell the truth "did you take it or not? I'm going to call the police now, I'm going to call the police now!" You see and then the police do come or they lock you up you see and you get locked up for little things like that.61
- NY And you see they don't even want people to come and visit you, they want you just to be there and see them and you can't get visitors and don't even want to get phone calls, the phone get locked and you can't get phone calls or they just say no telling lies over the phone call for that somebody say 'there not such a person here' you see yes

it's really lonely, really lonely, you sit there in the room and you must go work in the house. And worries when you sit by yourself. You know it's so lonely in the evenings you do get so sad it's just that time, separate time you know then you think that evening you can't even sleep you know and the cold oooh no heater no...maybe little bit of blankets you can't warm yourself up. It's very cold and draughty and you think and you think what are your kids do what are your parents do you know, are they all all right, you feel bored ja bored yes. People don't like to work sleep-ins anymore er because I left jobs like that. It's only the people from the homelands who work sleep-ins you know.62

Domestic work as a form of wage labour differs from other forms of wage labour in that it is integrated into a complex network of familial interpersonal relationships. The worker, isolated and alone is subjected to the emotional strains of 'everyday family life' as well as having many bosses as there are members of the family. This is a trap for the domestic worker. Personal family strains and subjection to control by all the family members intensifies the oppression experienced by domestic workers which cause severe anxiety and stress.

ST We had cases where there was a family argument, and finding the worker in their midst, they discovered that she now heard things that she shouldn't have heard and just tell her there's the door, get out. But it was a family argument. So she became, just being there, present, it became a threat, and she was told to leave, and we took up the case. They will take it out on her!63

The introduction of a domestic worker - an outsider of a different race and often class - into the employer's family may affect the nature of relationships within it. However, the precise nature of

this is a subject for much further research. The interviews and the period spent in the union office talking to workers suggested some possible areas of exploration. Thus what follows is merely speculative.

Many of the plays produced by the workers constantly highlighted their being caught in power struggles internal to the employer's family. The worker, attempting to safeguard her job, is often unsure of how to react so that the fight does not rebound on her.

The unequal nature of the worker/employer relationship is reinforced daily through the consistent degradation of the worker. This may take many forms: from constant accusations of theft and laziness to having to care for and serve household pets who are treated better than the worker. In this way the employer's family is the site of class, racial and gender struggle within the private sphere. In other words, the employment of a domestic worker introduces into the ruling class family class racial and gender struggles. In a sense it brings the public sphere into the private sphere. Since the family is already a site of power struggles, along and within gender and generational divisions, the introduction of further class and race struggles must alter the nature of relations within the family. The family is a site of socialisation in that its members learn the nature of the power relations existing in the wider social formation. Values are transferred through the family. For the domestic worker this is equally true as the family socialises her into the dominant ruling class values and power relations. At the very least, with the employment of a domestic worker, the family role as an agent of socialisation into capitalist social relations, and as a site of struggle is broadened and strengthened in a number of ways: the 'housewife' becomes a supervisor and learns to control working class labour, the children learn the complex network of class, race and gender power relations characterising social formation, the worker is forced into accepting

unequal power relations existing in the family and the male employer's perception of the dominant class and gender hierarchies is constantly reinforced by his ability to continually exercise power over two women, one of his class and one of the dominated class.

This has number of serious political consequences. In the first place, wage labour in the private sphere - in the family/household - helps to contain the militancy of a large section of the female working class. The tight control over domestic workers acts as a brake on the militancy of workers. Her access to other people, let alone organisations, is tightly controlled and the overwhelming power of the employer confronts her as being unsurmountable. The constant degradation and

oppression is internalised as are the values of the ruling class absorbed from the family she works for. Bourgeois life styles and bourgeois ideology, as reflected in the boss's family, appears as the necessary goal to strive for in one's own life. Thus wage labour in the private sphere may be one way to facilitate the acceptance of bourgeois ideology by the working class. In the course of the field-work, it became clear that the live-in domestic workers were politically more conservative and less militant than the live-outs. This was especially true of those live-in workers who had few or no contacts into the surrounding townships of Cape Town. How far we can generalise from this is uncertain. However, this is borne out by the experience of union organisers. At the very least, the tight control of the employer and her double work day are serious work barriers to her involvement in working class struggle and thus the development of a political consciousness. This is a crucial area needing further investigation which will aid effective worker organisation.

Secondly, for the family, domestic service could similarly foster conservatism, as it places all members of the family on the side of the powerful, the controllers, the rulers. Class struggle becomes the direct experience within the family, forcing family members to constantly exert power and control over the worker. This may reinforce conservative perceptions of the class struggle.

For each member of the family the relationship may differ and it may be useful to examine each separately. What follows is tentative and exploratory. The transformation of the ruling class family into a site of class and race struggles and its effect is in need of further investigation and historical documentation.

The Housewife-Supervisor.

The member of the family most directly charged with supervision and control over the worker is the woman, mother, wife, housewife. The relationship between these two women is a complex network of relationships. These are two women, both experiencing gender oppression yet occupying different places within the gender hierarchy and with the supervisors class position appearing most naked in her function as controller of the worker's labour. Very seldom did workers talk of an alliance against male dominance born out of their gender oppression. Rather the impression gained was one of naked brutal class struggle as the supervisor sought to subordinate the worker's labour. 64

M She used to say I can't tell her anything because I'm just a maid here. I said "Yes I know I'm a maid but I've got the power to work and you've got the power for money so if you are not satisfied with me tell me sack me off!" Ja, OK although it's like she was taught to know that you are black and you must work because she used to say "you must look at your hair." She said you must look at your hair and know you are black! Hm! She didn't want me to bring my baby she just want you and your strength.... After 7 1/2 years it's enough being a slave or whatever in prison.

Q In general how did you find working for a ruling class woman?

M Well what I used to feel is I'm working because I've got no choice even if I'm not satisfied but because I must work for my living. Anyway it's better if you work for somebody who understands, who knows that you are a human being, you are another woman whose got children like that but a lot of them they don't understand. They only know that you are a slave and you must look after their children and they don't care about you. You're a tool to work there and they don't care what happens to you as long as you are working.... When you sick, the first thing they ask you, have you got anybody who can look after you? Because she can't be able to.65

ST The employer would not allow that person to meet other workers or to get involved with other people and she would

isolate the person (the worker) so you don't even communicate because the employer is afraid that this domestic worker will speak out of her house to somebody else. And if she pays this worker less, than the next door neighbour she tells this worker, don't speak to the maid next door! Divide and rule! This person could be about 45 years old! Because the worker is in need she would say "Yes madam!" But what one realises here is that she is ruling and ruining this person's life because this person needs to become fearful, you know, she so afraid...

Q And if she complained?

ST Ja, right if she's complains she'll not be able to sit down and discuss the problem because the employer feels threatened immediately. If she say "Madam I want to speak to you" "Now" you know, "What do you want? What is it that I've done wrong?" Now the employer would rather run away from that. "Madam I would like to speak to you." She doesn't know what this woman wants to speak to her about, you know, she runs away "Oh Margaret, I don't have time now, can we talk when I come back? I've got an appointment." The result is that there is this growth of an unhealthy relationship between the employer and the worker and, you know, the gap gets so wide that eventually you can't close it. Why wasn't she given the opportunity to express herself? And they could have solved a simple problem but they didn't see the need for that as she's not seen as a human being and I would stress and I will continue to say so until employers realise that this person is a person like herself. Who perhaps if she had an opportunity could have done something else besides cleaning the house.66

M tells the story of one particular violent confrontation:

M With the woman used to be two girls.... When I'm off I come back the next morning, this girl (the other domestic) is going to tell me that this woman was hitting her giving her a

smack saying that she's not doing her work but when I'm there they never do anything. On this Sunday this woman (employer) said to me, I was working upstairs and she calls me and she said 'Please come here and help us' and when I come down in the kitchen I ask 'What is wrong, why the two of you want me to help?' and she (employer) said 'This rubbish here can't do anything can't cook!' And as this girl open the oven this woman give her a pah a good smack and this girl just run outside and cry and I ask her what are you crying for. She said because she hit me. I said it's because you didn't hit her back and she's going to hit you again.⁶⁷

E She was watching over me all the time and all of a sudden I told my friends "Oh no, I know the job was like that I would never take that job!" And when I say she says "But E you musn't leave me, my husband is sick and I'm the only one at work" and I said to her "But I can't stay here because I'm feeling very unhappy. It's like I eat all day long in your kitchen because every time when you come from school or something you ask, why's the bread like that?, Why's the cheese so little?"⁶⁸

(Note: In this case E stayed and managed to force her employer to stop hounding her over the food and guarantee free access to food)

Q Do you think that employers are treating you better now then when you started?

Ny I don't think so because you goes around and still hear people grumbling, you see you still hear grumbles because of not getting the right treatments and then you feel shew what is that person saying now? Then I start shouting because I get mad at funny things! I don't like it then and I wish even I could see these people who doing these things just to go and shout at them. You see they don't eat and they still keep old food for that particular person (worker) to come and the person must sit one side there right outside the door and not the dishes they use you see.⁶⁹

UNION SONGS

UMADAM UPETHE IZEMBE

UGAWULA AMANDLA ETHU

ASOZE SIWULAHLE U SADWU WETHU

(The madam is holding an axe and breaking our strength with it. We will never give up the South African Domestic Workers Union [this is our protection].)

IMALI, MALI, MALI, MALI

MAYINYUKE, SIFUNA AMAKULU

AMATHATHU NGENYANGA

SIFUNA AMAKULU AMATHATHU MGAMANDLA ETHU

Money, money, money! They (the bosses) must increase our wages. We want R300 a month. For our strength we need three hundred.

LO SADWU UYAZAMAZAMA

U SADWU UYAZAMAZAMA

South African Domestic Workers are struggling (against the bosses).

Workers interviewed often seemed to be caught in the gender struggles between husband/wife. From anecdotes and plays this seems to work in two ways. Firstly, the worker becomes the focus for the release of the tension the wife is feeling as a result of her oppression by her husband. Two plays were produced by the workers in Sea Point and Claremont around this theme. The plays highlighted how difficult it was for the worker to cope with being caught in the crossfire of marital struggles. Secondly, the wife will tell the domestic worker of her problems, confide in her. Workers pointed out that this was not reciprocal and they were not free to confide in their employers. This was just another example of being used as a tool - an emotional crutch. In this situation the worker may take action and go and speak to the husband. ST comments:

ST Yes it often happens (that the wife will confide in the worker) and the domestic worker in return will go and speak to the husband and tell him not to treat his wife like that

and in certain cases he would say it's none of your business and in other cases he would listen to her. And if she does go and confront the husband she could also lose her job. In other cases it's the man who will confide in the domestic worker when the wife walks out and he would say to her 'Please nanny, stay on, I've got my kids, I'm not giving my kids to that woman!' So he depends on the domestic worker then to assist him raising his kids and he becomes dependent on this person because the kids are familiar to her more than to anybody else. In certain cases, the kids would rather accept her than his new companion or wife that he brings home.⁷⁰

As St points out, the relationship between the two women is blurred and confined by the domestic worker taking the role of surrogate mother. She comments further:

ST And within that relationship (worker-mother) if it's a working type of parent there becomes a jealousy because now the child keeps on running to the domestic worker for whatever she needs when the mother is not around. The mother in return don't say to the domestic worker 'you are getting all the attention from the child' she starts making excuses and says 'Look, why didn't you do this today, why didn't you do that today' and then the worker will say to her, 'But I have the child to see to' but what she doesn't tell her is 'you are getting too much attention from my child as an employee' and this is the type of relationship in most cases. As the child grows up, the mother would later on say to the child 'You are now grown-up, you don't treat nanny like you did before' but now there has been a relationship the type of communication that is built up between two human beings.⁷¹

The attempt to divide domestic worker and child was particularly intense in the case of K who had worked for one employer for 27 years and raised her children. The employer tried to separate K and the children. When the children moved out of home the employer began

to severely abuse K. Her role as surrogate mother was over and she was now an unnecessary burden to the employer. And one that constantly reminded her that the worker had been a 'mother' to her children. When the conflict experienced by women in their roles as mother and surrogate mother are compounded by class and racial struggles, they become extremely intense, making rejection a very painful and psychologically unbalancing experience.

The Children

ST Because the domestic worker feels and finds herself in prison she's got no way out so naturally the love that she should give to her child falls onto the employer's child. As a human being you love people and automatically you must spend that love on somebody...if she's got kids you will pour all your love on the child and you wouldn't like that child to be harmed by flea or fly. Even if she's a domestic worker and black, she's a human being, this white child is a human being. Feelings develop in human beings which nobody can stop. It runs like water and automatically that child becomes your child as a domestic worker. You would put in his lunch in the morning, you would clean his shoes, you would put on his tie, you would see that he is neat and tidy when he goes to school. So you build a lovable relationship between the two of you.⁷²

Z No they treat me just like a puppet 'hey nanny' so this all is how they teach their children. They can't even say mama, they can't even say Maggy, they can't even say something like that but they just say "Hey!! do that for me, if you don't do it I'm going to tell my mother, my mother will give you the sack!" You don't get any rights to try and discipline this child because you know you are going to be in trouble as soon as you just want to discipline this child.... I mean it is very difficult it's only children, the problem is children to the houses. You can't feel yourself that you

happy as soon as the lady wants to take you to work for her then she's going to tell you that she has got 2 or 3 children. You're going to crack! You don't know what you must do although you want a job. The children is also really a problem I think to the houses were you work.73

M About the children, the first one was as rude as her mother. The only thing I make up my mind for, I was giving her a good smack in front of her mother because she used to come up from school and she'll come to the kitchen with the uniform and make that uniform dirty and in the morning she's not going to say anything. When it's time for her to go to school she will call "Mummy I haven't got a clean uniform" then her mother will come jumping to you, why hasn't the child got a clean uniform.74

E The children, they are still very playful, I love them. They not rude to me! They was never rude!

Ny And they fight and fight and you see sometimes the fighting came through the naughty kids too you see and then the father want to hit them, give the little child a hiding and the mother doesn't want to and then it come like this now that they fight each other and you see we feel ashamed of things like that and you go to them and say "no please don't do this, it's wrong" you see ja then we get in to it as the worker.

Q So you are forced in a way to become involved with the family?

NY Straight away straight away away, you are like somebody like that already because you get there at these people they got a month or two month old baby and maybe the baby is not even born and by today that baby is big man or woman through your hands you know. You been seeing to that baby all these years like my mother now.

Q And do the children ever visit when they are older?

NY Whew! That will be very scarce! You don't just hear about things like that. It's very very scarce.75

Clearly the worker is caught in a web of emotional relationships surrounding her role as surrogate mother. The Sea Point workers produced a play which highlighted the difficulties the workers have in their role as surrogate mothers since workers are forced into taking orders from children while being charged with their care and often upbringing. Yet the children are objectively in a situation of control over the worker as they are employers too. The children perceive this power and use it against the domestic worker. The situation is very ambiguous for the worker. The nature of the relationship seems to change as the child grows older and assumes the roles society has cut out for her/him.

ST We had one case here (the Union office) it's a Bellville case. When the child reached the age of 18, I think the child had to leave home and go and sign up (for SADF) so when the child was about 20 or so he came back and he became demanding. She couldn't understand because they had a good relationship before he left and all of a sudden this has changed and when she questioned him on it, he told her "You are black and you are stupid and you are this and that and the other" and he started beating her. And she said to me "I have raised this child, I couldn't understand it why he became aggressive towards me." We took the case to the lawyers. You know what she did after the assault? She pulled the case back, she said "No, she raised the child, how can she now go and lay a charge against this child." That is how a domestic worker builds up a relationship between her and the child.76

The Bourgeois in the Family : The Husband.

Workers argued that the husband was the final authority within the family. This would seem to support the idea of the housewife as a supervisor of labour, with the power in the family household in the

hands of the husband. The husband therefore has a supervisor and worker to ensure the daily reproduction of his family. In this, class differences between the housewife./supervisor and the worker become crucial and destroy any notion of sisterhood in the face of male subordination of labour. However, this assertion needs further research before it can be applied as a general occurrence. In times of open conflict between worker and supervisor, the husband was turned to as arbitrator and final authority. This of course reinforced his sense of gender dominance for the whole family as well as for the domestic worker. Yet workers spoke more often of conflict with the housewife-supervisor than with the husband suggesting that ruling class male power can be effectively exercised by a supervisor seeking, in turn, to defend her own class and gender interests. However, if divide and rule is the strategy, then the husband with his two wives divides and rules very well!

Ny You see I can even say sometimes the husband was worse because if you got an argument with the women they usually call the men to come and sort the problem you see. They know "Oh she going to be shy now and shake and say yes yes yes master" you see and then the trouble and the problem is solved because they call the man because most of the time the man is not there, the man knows nothing that is going on but when the struggle is hot they like to call the man, who is going to come out and then you are going to get scared you see. Then you're going to say 'yes yes yes' and the problem is solved finished and klaar!⁷⁷

M I used to give her plenty of notices but because her husband was somebody who was good and he used to talk to me and said "No, don't worry please" and then I stayed but in the long run I said no I'm going out of this house.⁷⁸

E The second year she was so full of nonsense, she told me, we just moved to Constantia and I asked for more money because I can't afford to send money home. She said they lived in Constantia now things were more expensive I said you live in Constantia you live in a luxury home now, but I am poor I

need money! She said she would speak to her husband and her husband says yes she must, she needs money, she's working for us so we must be good to her and so they pay me R85 in Constantia and she got two children and I babysit also!79

The role of arbitrator obscures to some extent the most direct and threatening form of control, that of sexual harassment and physical violence. Underlying the gender and class conflict between worker and husband is the constant threat of harassment and physical violence.

NM tells the following story:

NM: She (the worker) was living in a garage with a leaking roof. There was no bedding, she had to buy her own food, and she had to work from 7-00am to 9-00pm. One day, the woman swore at her and assaulted her. She tried to defend herself by grabbing the woman and when the husband came home, he threatened to kill her if she touched his wife again.80

ST In many cases the employers still think that by beating a worker, you will solve the problem. What they don't realise is it's only making it worse.

Q Have you found a lot of sexual harassment?

ST Yes! Quite often employers demand that from the domestic worker because she lives on the premises and we have cases that because she didn't want to sleep with this guy, he just sacked her immediately. And we had a case in Pinelands, this was given to me by a minister. This young woman worked for the father and the son and er, and when she was pregnant, she went to the minister. She then said to him that she's pregnant and the minister wants to know who is the father so that he can contact the father. So she started crying and said to the minister, "I don't have boyfriend, it is the people that I work with. Now who is it? I don't know whether it is the father or the son." So both went to bed with her. They used her because she is trapped, otherwise she would have lost her job.81

The domestic worker is often also the focus of male anger and aggression resulting from marital struggles as the following case suggests:

ST At this stage, we had a case where the worker was busy ironing and it was after four, and she didn't bring the tea-cups out in time and the employer said to her, "Why didn't you bring the cups?" And she told her that she is busy ironing and she forgot. So the woman told her husband. She couldn't explain herself (to the husband) why she left the cups because he told her to shut up and then he told her to get out of his house. So as she was walking out to her room, he started beating her up and giving her two blue eyes and he carried on till she had to go and see a doctor.... When the organiser phoned the employer and asked him why he assaulted the worker, the employer said that it wasn't him that assaulted the woman, it was the gate that she walked into!82

It is of little value reporting rape and assault to the police unless there are witnesses and doctors' certificates. The Union organisers commented:

NM What makes it worse is that the police won't accept charges of sexual harassment unless the woman was actually raped.... There was a 46 year-old woman working in Tokai who was threatened with rape by her employer's sons. She came to the office crying and in shock. She said she had tried to report it to the police, but they just said, "Why didn't you just do it?"83

ST In general, a domestic worker's outlook is that the law is there to protect her so before coming to the union, she goes to the police and the police tells her that there's nothing she can do.84

The family is a site of class, racial and gender struggles. The domestic worker is often caught in the middle of power struggles within the family as well as between the family and the worker. At the base of this struggle is the attempt to subordinate the labour of the domestic workers. She is subject to class, race and gender control from all members of the family, each in a different way and with a different result. Further investigation of how black domestic workers are controlled in these ways is necessary.⁸⁵

Policing the System : Support From Outside the Private Sphere.

Employers exercise control through restricting access to: visitors, the use of telephone, food, by sexual, physical and verbal harassment and abuse, and by constant threats of firing the worker. It has been noted that this control is reinforced by the system of racial capitalism and apartheid and the state's policy of refusing to extend basic conditions of employment to domestic workers, and the police's reluctance to prosecute employers for physical and/or sexual assaults. However, the system of direct employer control receives support from other areas as well.

In terms of the state, it is necessary to examine the role of the Department of Manpower. (Note: Manpower offices are only located in the cities.

ST The Manpower office sort of plays a difficult part e.g. workers would go to them and ask them to give them a job. Manpower would give this worker a job. But when that person has got a problem, the worker is under the impression that she can go back to Manpower because Manpower has given her the job. Manpower will say to her, "I cannot help you." Now then, she becomes confused because he has given her the job.... And when she's sent to us by some individual... we will tell her that because there's no legislation, there's no provision that Manpower could assist you. The employer would

phone Manpower, ask whether it is necessary to pay notice money. Manpower would say, "No" without investigating the case. He would just answer the employer and say, "No, you don't need to pay her." But once the case comes to us, and we have investigated the case, we realise there is scope for agreements and then we would contact Manpower and say, "Did you tell Mrs So-and-so not to pay So-and-so's money because there was reasons given why So-and-so did what she did, and then you realise that Manpower's doing wrong interfering in something he knows nothing about. I have written a letter to Manpower to say that they must stop doing this type of thing and they told me they can do what they like.86

Union officials argued that the Department of Manpower was often serving to confuse the worker, giving information to employers which was not correct and generally ignoring the rights of workers. This is evidence of the state acting in support of ruling class interests and facilitating the subordination of women's labour.

The Role of Ruling Class Ideology.

Ideological control is exercised through South Africa's dominant ideological forms. Bourgeois notions of "women", mother and class relations are inculcated into all us via the mass media, education and religion. Working in the households of the ruling class, the domestic worker may have access to the bourgeois media in all its forms and this will effect her world view. However, workers also spoke of how this access could be strictly controlled. This may be done through what books and/or newspapers and magazines she is allowed to read. Some employers seem to allow their workers access to the television, especially when babysitting, or in rare cases gave their workers a secondhand television set. The mass media presents a false picture of South African society and is an important source of indoctrination of ruling class values. This becomes crucial when the worker's time and possibilities for attending social or organisational gatherings or studying is severely limited or controlled by employers. Thus, their only access to knowledge is through ruling class controlled mass media.

The black working class woman is constantly surrounded by images which affirm ruling class values. Positive value is attached to ruling class white male concepts of woman, motherhood and sexuality. These values are internalized by workers often severing the link between them and the history of African women. This makes it difficult for a black working class woman's culture to emerge and develop. The use of skin lightening creams as a beauty aid (see above) is but one small example of this process.

A further example of this is a "Did you Know" series printed on the back of Kelloggs breakfast cereals and run jointly by Kelloggs and Siyafunda. This "Did you Know" series aims to teach employers the customs and language of domestic workers. The visual and textual presentation is both classist and racist, portraying workers as subservient blacks with many problems and employers as controlling and powerful. The series is billed as: "A light-hearted, but hopefully helpful bridge of communication and understanding." Constant visual displays of this nature beamed at the worker and her employers from TVs and breakfast cereals must surely reinforce existing power relations and contribute to workers adopting a negative and conservative image of themselves. Furthermore, these workers are constantly subjected to the state propaganda onslaught against democratic organizations. Union officials and shop stewards noted that this scared workers away from their organization as it is seen as being "political" and thus dangerous. In the case of live in domestic workers being isolated in white areas and out of contact with events in the townships, this propaganda is very effective and prevents the organisation of many workers.

The Church

NY Yes, I've been to church with my mother and then there're some things I don't like at the church. I didn't trust them. Yes, I thought, hayi suka, man, church people, I don't trust them. Then I just left church and most of the time, I spend it now on my organisations. You never hear

- them (the church), even preach or pray about the struggle.⁸⁷
- Q Did you feel the church helped you get through the hard things in life?
- M Well, it's all according to what you believe in. If you believe that you are praying, and your prayers will be answered, they will be answered, ja, but sometimes they are not answered quickly. To go into church and pray even helps you because you take out your sadness.⁸⁸
- Z I can't say that it helped me. There are some things that are different to churches that you know that if I fight my demands, I am going to fight for my demands, I will come right, but there's nothing that you can fight to the church, except that you can pray that's all finished.... The woman's manyana don't help, they can't fight your demands... to go to see why madam did this or that. What you do in the woman's manyana, you take your Bible and your hymnbook, you just go for that time, nothing else, because they are not going to go and say, "Look, my madam hit me today."⁸⁹
- N My father put us to church, and my children too. It helps us love and learn respect.⁹⁰
- B Church ... (laughter, no comment.)⁹¹
- E On my off time, I go to church, NG Sendingkerk, and I belong to a club where you go on Thursday, you get Bible lessons and we pray and we do flowering, and sometimes we go to the Pastor's house, and we do recipes and sing choirs, I sang in the choir, it was very, very nice.⁹²
- ST No, the Churches would never say bad things about the Union, and it's just unfortunate that most of the time the churches have got their own activities, but some of them would accommodate us (for meetings) on the off chance and others would say we have to pay a fee. In some cases we pay R10, in other cases R25 for two hours. Some have already asked us in the townships for R75 for two hours.... The church itself cannot handle all the problems the workers are facing and I think therefore they welcome our type of organisation (union). Some ministers have come forward now to say they

are willing to assist us.

Q Do you find certain churches more sympathetic than others?

ST Yes, definitely. I wouldn't mention names ... right from the beginning it was most difficult to get accommodation at various churches because of the outlook of different ministers. To them, we were political, they never questioned it.93

Religion plays a central role in the lives of all the workers interviewed. Whether their feelings are positive or negative all have had sustained contact with the church at some time in their lives. The most politicised and militant workers were the most sceptical of the church's role in the struggle. Some workers were angry at the church's refusal to accommodate the union, and to charge rates the workers find difficult to pay. Yet the church and praying was seen as an area of social contact and a way to release the frustration and tension resulting from their position as domestic workers. Some of the workers interviewed saw it as a place to go to for a "friendly chat and tea" on an afternoon off. This helped to break the monotony of their isolation in the backyard. Others spoke of how their faith helped them to cope with the constant degradation of being a domestic worker. In this regard many churches in white areas run special - and separate - bible classes for domestic workers.

Church attendance is encouraged by husbands and employers alike. This is because orthodox Christianity encourages passivity by preaching a "love your neighbour" philosophy even if your neighbour is a vicious employer! Furthermore it reinforces woman's subordinate role in our society as mothers and reproducers of labour power. This may result from the church hierarchy tending to be white male dominated and patriarchal in outlook and function. While the majority of church membership is made up of women, very few are in positions of authority and few are priests. These remarks may well be true for all denomina-

tions of Christianity as the workers experiences which inform these arguments came from a wide range of churches, Protestant, Roman Catholic and independent.

The church is a powerful ruling class ideological weapon. Its role in the organisation of the working class is ambiguous. The more militant sections of the church have encouraged organisation and social action. However the main body of Christianity controls by creating passivity and preaching a patriarchal ideology. These tend to reinforce ruling class white male concepts of motherhood, housewifery and sexuality while equating femininity with passivity. Struggle against conservative ruling class church hierarchy has, in the last 10 years, emerged in many mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic churches resulting in the church becoming a site of struggle.

The Double Prison : Domestic Workers and Their Families.

Z The domestic work it's jail, now we are trying to put this woman into jail, as we said we fed up of sitting on that domestic worker, we just work like somebody who is in jail as we are here in our houses, your husband also trying to put you in another jail here in our houses. You get a nice time or you can feel that you can relax in your house. It's only this husband who's going to sit there in the sitting room. He must stand up and do something for the family and mother can do a little bit of a rest. The mother is somebody that carry everything to brings the children to be here and she must have to be pregnant for nine months with the children. Man doesn't. It's only this woman so I mean that this woman is doing such a lot lot lot of things that the husband must try and help the woman and the children must also be taught, they must also work here in the house must do something not just to keep on the books.... There was a lot of problems as a woman. The rent, if I didn't pay the rent that was a problem, you can't go and say, "No, look, that's

why I didn't pay the rent, it's because I was not working." Now the children want to go to school, they can't go to school, there's no fees, books, something like that, that is all problems that comes to the woman in the house. Children that looking for this uniform for the school, that woman must also struggle for the children, to put the children into school and you must get and see that if the children did attend their schools, all right, that also come to you as a woman.94

M Well, I think everything is a problem to the woman because you come at home, everything, it's children it's the woman, it's the husband it's the woman, everything in the household you must look after, it's more problems are coming to you as a woman.95

The Husband : The Household Jailor?

MrsB I was very young because at that time our fathers did marry you. A husband wants you and you must go to him. Lobola business, you know? When they get lobola they don't mind if you are young or too small - if they get lobola they want you to go to the husband. So I was very young at that time. I didn't meet him. He was older than me. So I married him.

Q And how did you feel?

MrsB I think that time you don't mind. So if your father said you must go to that husband, so you must go, you don't mind. You don't question anything, so, my father gave lobola and then you have to stay there. I think I was very young. Sometimes you are running home because a lot of time I'm going home and I told my father I don't want to stay there and then my father said I've got lobola already so you have to go back again and then, otherwise he must pay lobola back again. So I have to go again. And then, after that I'm stay and stay and get the children and stay there and getting used to him and so I have to stay there with them. So I was alright all the time.

Q So you weren't too unhappy?

MrsB No I was getting used to him.

(Mrs B's husband subsequently died and she moved to Cape Town.)

Q Were you lonely in Cape Town?

MrsB I was lonely but you get friends and then you come to be not so lonely.

Q And lovers?

MrsB Boyfriends ja! I started to have a boyfriend to help me. If a boyfriend can help you then you can have one that can help.

Q How does he help?

MrsB Sometimes with busfares and so on and keeps you not so lonely.

Q So you didn't want to marry again?

MrsB Oh I didn't want to marry again because I still have my children and if I can marry then maybe my husband was good

and maybe I'm married this boyfriend can be good with me now but sometimes when I'm married him then he will be never good with my children.

Q And when you stay with boyfriends who does the cooking?

MrsB Ja we do the cooking. But if you are working and he is early he can come and cook. They do that because he is not your husband.

Q And if he doesn't?

MrsB Dan moet hy maar gaan! He must go if he doesn't want to help you (laughter). You told him I'm not married now you didn't lobola me so you come early then me then you have to make some food for us.

Q So you give the orders?

MrsB Ja (laughter).

Q But do you find it hard sometimes without a husband?

MrsB Ja it's very hard to be alone sometimes without a husband. Maybe sometime if it's your own husband (you chose him) it OK. But now I decide to sit without a husband because these days I saw people who've got husbands try to struggle like me. So I mean it's better you don't have one and then you know. So if you get that little money you know how to share it. And I know I must pay my rent and with my money I must buy groceries and next month I'll buy shoes for me. Each month you can work it out.96

D Yes when I'm going there to the location (in off time) because I'm a woman I just help my friends to clean the house and cook...if you are a woman you must do that, you must clean the house, you must do everything in the house.

Q You don't think the men should help?

D The men? (astonishment)

Q Umm! You don't think the men should also clean the house.

D He can clean. (laughs)97

Q And what happened to your husband?

R Louis father they take him away they take him to Matatiel back to the Transkei.

Q Why?

R Because they say he got a wife there too. Why he got a lot of wife?

Q Did you know he had another wife?

R I did not know, he didn't say he had another wife and they say I am not married! He got a wife and two children in Matatiel.

Q So who sent him away?

R I think his wife was writing to the board so they came and catch him and send him back to his wife and I have to go back to work to send Louis away.

Q Did he send you money?

R No! but when I see that letter then I just say oh well! and I just go on and I send Louis to another wife to look after him in the day and then in the afternoon I come and fetch him.⁹⁸

Ny It's very very very wrong. Your mother or your wife must do everything, you see, see to the kids, see to the house, see to the cooking and at the same time that person must go to work as well and see to that very husband as well you see? It's very hard to us, our people now you see because it's like our custom man and now as we changing things now we coming on slowly you know coming on so and even if your mother must see to. Even if there's a sick person he's gone out to his friends or to his shebeen you see.⁹⁹

From all discussions, interviews and plays the role of the husband in subordinating the labour of working class women was clear. This built up intense antagonisms within the family as the woman struggled to cope with rent, food, schooling, children, sick relatives. While the man sought from time to time to exert his authority he spent his leisure time apart from these problems, often with his friends or outside the family. The woman on the other hand was trapped inside the

family. The man's failure to help ease the burden made him appear as the jailor. ST comments

ST From her own family there is no rest. And, of course, the situation at home is bad with a structure of cheap labour where father brings in R50 per week and her R60 per month. Now it's horrible. Now there is a relationship that breaks down because she cannot meet the needs with R50 for the family and a fight develops because what the woman doesn't realise is cheap labour is the order of the day and how the husband push his employer to give him increase in salary if he does he's liable for unemployment so here this relationship can become very dicey and the result is that it can break down totally in some cases where the wife has to struggle, working under stress, pressure and then she goes to her husband for an answer. He can't give her an answer. He in return might find another woman who don't moan and groan.... There's a breakdown between both parents and children.100

However remaining unmarried is not the only solution:101

Ny For instance my people we stay all together in Tjervlei we grow up there. They say when I was born they didn't know where was my father. My mother was at Somerset Hospital. The other grown up people had to go and search for him and tell him my mother was still there (laughs). My mother and me go and get him to go and see us at the hospital you know. You must worry about your people not just ignore men. We must really try to fix it up get the people to come together man.102

Z The men, the sons, the oldest daughters, must help, must do the cooking. Men must do the cooking while you still busy with something else. Men and husband must just help, shoulder to shoulder to help their family.103

Gender relations in working class families may be similar to those in the homes of the employers. Physical violence experienced by women workers is an example of this (see Chapter Five). Women workers are often subjected to rape and batter within their own families as well reflecting the internalization of bourgeois gender relations by the working class. Workers also pointed out that husbands, lovers and friends sought to restrict their movement in ways similar to that of the employers. A series of plays was produced depicting the domestic worker trapped between her "madam and master" on the one hand and her husband on the other. This clearly reflected the double burden labouring in two private spheres. Further research is necessary to ascertain how wide spread this experience is.

Domestic workers have not left this resolution of gender struggles to the future. Mrs B (above) is forcing her lovers to help on the threat of being thrown out. Other workers were teaching their children - sons and daughters alike - to take part in the unpaid domestic labour within the household.

Ny Yes I teach them very well to see to their clothes, to be clean and clean the house, wash. I never wash dishes you know, at home and clean the house they know everything, um my kids.104

Oh What About My Children?

ST The relationship between the domestic worker and her child becomes very limited and even the child, at times, don't know the mother and when the mother goes home it's not very easy for the mother and child to have a healthy communication because they don't understand one another since they've been away for 11 months. At times in certain cases there are total breakdowns between parents and children and you can imagine what this leads to when the child grows up. Say in the future, the child would say "You never cared about me, why do you lecture me now, you were all the time in those

white peoples' houses and when we needed you, you were never there, what is this lecturing all about? It's painful for the mother, tell us these stories, you know, and it's tough but then the mother will say but I had to go out and work for you, you don't have a father. "Well why don't I have a father?" You know such questions come from a child. "Why couldn't you stay here and live here with us?" You know this type of question. When the child was sick, the child wanted his mother not his grandmother, he demands to see his mother. And when she can't make it he'll have to be satisfied with the grandmother's attention. This creates problems because there is just that emotional human feeling that "I want my mother, not my grandmother," and that child never understands.... I would say that it needs a total change of structure because a domestic worker should not be seen as an object that you can use to clean your house but to be seen as a woman who has got family responsibilities, whose got feelings, who cares...105

Z When you see your children jumping up to the mother just like, the children who ask. You will see they feel very glad when they see you and you were not with them the whole day and they are very very happy..."Mama where have you been, where are you coming from, why don't you take me with you when you are going to your work?" You can't take your child because they musn't mess up.... The first thing with children keeping on asking when you come from your work as to say we feel to sit here on top of you making everything and if you not happy for that because you tired. You must get rest but you won't because you are also glad to see your children are still alive. You feel that before you sleep you must try to see if what can you give to the children because you feel that if you can feed them yourself at this one hour you have got you must feed them because tomorrow you going to have to leave them the whole day.106

Ny Oooh that part of leaving your children hurts. Yes it's very very very bad because you don't see your children and you

must look after somebody else's children, you see um that was very bad.107

K (almost in tears) My son? He doesn't even recognise me, my sister is his mother. He calls her 'ma' me I'm a visitor. What's one month? (a year at home).108

The separation of a domestic worker from her children for one day, a week, a month or a year depending on her work situation, is the source of much pain, worry and stress. Workers spoke of the constant worry about their children. The constant presence of army and police in townships increased workers' anxiety for the safety of their children. Workers also spoke of thinking and fantasising, while caring for their bosses' children, of how it would be to spend such time with their own families. Their thoughts are continually with their children.

The failure of the state and the ruling class to provide adequate childcare is a further burden for the working mother. While this failure may reduce the cost of reproduction of labour for the ruling class for the workers it is a constant battle to find alternatives. The alternatives seem to be: leaving children with a member of the family, employing a child minder to come to your home or leaving the children at a child minder's house, leaving them in the care of older children. Often the cost of providing their own child care is very high and absorbs a large part of workers' salaries, for example, R75 out of S's salary of R135 for her two children.

Z It was right to me if we could take the children and send them to a creche... You can close your door but you can't lock your child outside the house. You need to see if you can get a safe place to keep these children of yours and to pay another woman makes a problem like this. Some times I got many things to pay and I haven't got money to pay them. It's problems like that because she herself is looking forward to getting this... It's not fair to pay her this month and next month and next month to say no I haven't got because she's looking forward to it.109

Many of the workers spoke of a sense of loss, of not having enough time to spend with their extended families because of the burdens of the double day. This adds to their feeling of isolation from their social networks.

Z Working! We haven't even got time to go to the church and meetings that is going to be held on Sunday because we are busy. It's really difficult to the workers. Never there was not even a chance to see your family. As much as even my daughter that is here in KTC. I can't count the days since she come. She is a domestic. I mean, it's very very very hard to domestic for their families.110

Finally some workers also spoke of being looked down on in their communities for being domestic workers.

Z Really it myself, I'm think that I'm just looking down to the people working in the kitchen even now because I don't take them just like people which have got enough education... The one who has never been in school, she will go there to the kitchen. Some they know really perfect to do their cooking, they never been at school.111

E Sometimes when I go home, people ask me why are you doing domestic? You are educated, you passed Std 9, you are better. They just ask me questions about it and I feel I can do another work. But where?112

Owing to the fragmentation of working class families, the particular family situation of workers interviewed varied. However out of the interviews and discussions, a general picture emerged. This is sketched out below. Further oral histories are needed to ascertain how general an experience this is.

The situation of the domestic worker within her own family adds to the burden of domestic work. Responsible for all areas of her family life, she is constantly struggling with material and emotional problems. Separation from her children, care for their well-being, and material and emotional struggles with her husband dominate her life. Further she isolated from her family and often looked down on in the community for working "in the kitchen." Working class women have sole

responsibility for the daily and generational reproduction of the working class. The site for this reproduction is the family. She is at the centre of struggles to keep the family alive, clothed and educated. She often provides the material and always the labour to achieve this. She is trapped in this responsibility and bears the further burden of seeking aid from often unwilling husbands and lovers. The domestic worker sets out to work carrying the weight of gender struggles with husband/father/lover, the worry and care for her children, the isolation from her family and the knowledge of her low status in the community - only to be met by the burden of the second private sphere; her boss's family and its all-encompassing networks of control.

The Class Struggle : Domestic Workers Fight Back.

E I feel like a real housewife, it is lonely it's like you make breakfast or you cook for your family, it's just like that, you make food or something.... Yes I feel lonely do the whole job over and over again, everyday the same, don't you feel that?113

M I would never want to be a domestic worker. Never, not in my life! We are forced into it because we got no choice. You must work and provide for the kids.

Q What are the things that you think forced you into being a domestic worker?

M Being a woman and no money and no other jobs.114

Z I am feeling very sad that I spent my time on domestic, if it was me, it could be better if the people could get better jobs, not that domestic work... If they can get an education and get better jobs and leave this domestic thing. I don't feel it's good enough.115

Resistance to being trapped in two private spheres seem to take two forms in the lives of the women interviewed. Firstly, informal -

strategies for survival under the system of racial capitalism and employer control. Secondly, formal - organising against the ruling class and attempting to push back the frontiers of employer control.

Informal resistance is born out of the domestic workers' isolation in the kitchen and her need to survive on a daily basis. Workers had developed a large number of different strategies of survival within the system. Below are some of the examples which emerged in the course of the case study:

Workers supplemented their incomes by charing, selling second hand clothes which they collected on a door to door basis, or had received from employers, some workers either crocheted or sewed clothes and then sold them, saving societies (like Khoi-Khoi), shebeening and prostitution. Some workers were attempting to study at night either to pass Std 8 or 10, or for a diploma in First Aid, Social Worker Aid, in the hope that they would then be able to find a better job.

Live-in domestic workers attempted to relieve the isolation and loneliness by establishing social networks in the area they worked in, going to Bible/prayer groups, attending various activities - such as flower arranging, cooking classes, organised by churches in the area of their employment, attending union meetings, sewing, knitting or crocheting in their rooms, reading newspapers, comics or magazines, often given by employer, writing letters to their family and watching television if possible.

Faced with labouring amidst a complex network of personal relationships, workers interviewed felt they were faced with the choice of either speaking to their employers or manipulating the. Many chose to speak to their employers about a wide range of problems from their daily lives in the townships and their problems as a domestic worker, to discussion of employer's family problems. Some of these discussions were a result of employer requests for knowledge about the daily situation in the townships. Otherwise most 'talks' were initiated by workers in the hope of achieving better working conditions. This was in the form of a request for more money or a heater for a cold room or more food or a day off. Workers generally felt that employers were not

sympathetic to their requests. Where demands and not requests were made, when workers confronted rather than talked, they were more likely to achieve their aims. However, this depends on the individual situation of the worker and their character as well. Some workers dealt with the problems of physical violence by threatening to retaliate or by actually hitting back at an employers. Workers also pointed out that at times, an employer would not listen to requests and the domestic was left with no choice but to leave without informing her employer. Employers were manipulated in the sense that workers used to request time off to go to church or visit a sick relative and then when granted, the worker would use the time off to go elsewhere. This was because employers were generally unsympathetic to requests for time off except to go to church/ church activity, and sometimes to take care of sick relative. Employers often refused workers time off to attend to personal problems. Visitors were also 'smuggled' into workers' rooms, and telephones - if not locked - were used while the employer was not there. For live-in domestic workers with families in the rural areas, access to a telephone was often a crucial way of keeping in contact with her family.

Housing: a number of workers interviewed had resolved the problem of separation from their families by either renting a room in a township house, or building shack and squatting, and then bringing their families to Cape Town. Mrs B had lived in Unibel and Old Crossroads before managing to obtain a house in New Crossroads. Workers were engaged in a struggle to alter the division of labour within their own households by teaching their children to do the domestic labour or by trying to get husbands and lovers to take household responsibilities. A number of domestic workers were either deserted by husbands or lovers, or had thrown them out because of their failure to take responsibility.

Our lives

Our lives are filled with fear of harassment
banings, detention and death

Work together Domestic Workers

to mobilise and organise all the workers

to be honest and brave
 And strike for our right
 to represent our views and
 aspirations
 We must demand better conditions
 and better wages.
 Job security for all workers
 Unity is the most important thing in
 the struggle
 It is never too late to start.116

M I joined the struggle because there are things that I can't
 voice if I'm on my own but if we are together we can.117

Z I did feel that if we can join the struggle we can fight our
 demands by coming together and joining the struggle. We can
 have a voice to say as a woman because if we don't join we
 know we'll be like our mothers just like donkeys and all. We
 can do something with the unity of women fighting for our
 demands. I did feel to do something as a woman. More
 especially we women are some people which these boers
 oppress us so if we can come together we can fight.118

Domestic Workers Association Education Programme : Why workers need a
 union - a permanent democratic organisation of workers:

- to protect workers
- to improve the conditions of their work through collective bargaining
- to better the conditions of their lives
- to provide a means of expression for the workers views on the problems of society.119

Twelve of the 13 domestic workers interviewed belonged to one or more of the United Womens' Congress (UWCO), Domestic Workers' Association (DWA), Detainee's Parents Support Committee (DPSC). Workers were organised on the basis of their being women workers (UWCO), workers (DWA) or parents who had a member of their family arrested or detained (DPSC). Workers were organised on a workplace and community basis.

One common problem faced by all three organisations seemed to be the problem of organising women.

Z No there is no time for domestic workers to come to meetings especially those who live in and even when they go to meetings they are tired. Yes it's really heavy to organise the women more especially those working women because they must be using this time while we are holding our meeting. It's very difficult. Although they are inside our organisations, they like it, they very fond of it but they can't do otherwise because they must wake up early in the morning to work they must come back at 5 o'clock, no chance must start again to do work in their home. When you are a domestic, when you have time off it's not a day for meeting because the meeting was last night.120

All three organisations took up issue of class, gender and racial oppression and exploitation facing their members but tended to concentrate their efforts in different areas: DWA organised in the workplace around work related issues; UWCO organised in the community around community issues affecting women (including the household division of labour) while DPSC organised in the community specifically around the problems of repression. The resistance of domestic workers covers a wide spectrum from being involved in the struggle for national liberation to organising for better working conditions. It is important not to conceive of domestic workers' resistance simply in terms of their workplace organisations. Workers are resisting the system of capitalism on a number of different fronts and domestic workers are no exception. Only one of these is union organisation. Others include struggles in their communities and over state power. The brief history of the Domestic Workers Association is presented as an initial case study of attempts to organise on the shopfloor, that is, in the kitchens.

The Domestic Workers' Association (DWA) was formed in Cape Town in 1978 and organises domestic workers, cleaners and caretakers. Today it has 5000 members who are domestic workers. The Union has restricted itself

to organising in the Western Cape. There were many problems in attempting to establish DWA.

ST You know we didn't have a venue to begin with and we didn't have the money to start the organisation and most of the time when you approached people they would say to you "Will this thing come off the ground?" because there is no legislation for the workers and "How do you see yourself working for a group that is in such a difficult situation?" And all we did was to go ahead and we found it most difficult really because when you do have a case and especially a difficult case you realise that you can only go so far and that is definitely a problem until there is legislation. Also employers won't consider the Union as a trade union. They don't see it as such and they have lots of negative outlooks on the situation of the domestic worker because they don't see it as workers giving their labour. We met some people who assisted us with getting a place in Church Street. And from there onwards it got better and better. But at that time we had to pay R50 per month and we did not know where it was going to come from! What we did was selling old clothes, having rummage sales and I think back now, buying apples and selling them, making popcorn and baking cakes and selling them. And that's how we started off and then getting bits and pieces of paper to write on and so forth. But that's in the past now although it's a good memory.121

Since those early days the Union has grown. Owing to provisions of the Labour Relations Act, cleaners and caretakers are organised separately from domestic workers but are combined in one Union executive. The Union has organised domestic workers by organising 'live-in' (i.e. at the place of work) branches in Sea Point, Greater Cape Town, Constantia, Pinelands, Simonstown, Bellville, Camps Bay, Hout Bay, Claremont and Milnerton. For 'live-outs,' there are branches covering Langa, Nyanga and Guguletu. The Union has also organised workers in the Strand area, and recently opened a branch in Worcester. However, organising in areas outside of Cape Town has its own problems:

ST You see, organising in the cities has become known to the employer and we are fortunate to have legal assistance. Whereas in the case of the rural areas, you may not find one lawyer who is interested in the welfare of the worker because they're accommodating the employers and they are working for them. He cannot think in terms of assisting the worker. You also find that the police there are more aggressive towards the worker. Even church ministers are not prepared to assist and accommodate the Unions to have meetings in the rural areas.122

Branches meet regularly, between two and four times a month, elect a branch executive and discuss worker problems and Union business. The branch executive members are the equivalent of shop stewards and representatives attend executive meetings. The executive consists of fourteen workers: thirteen domestic workers and one caretaker. There are paid officials of the Union appointed by the executive. They are not members of the executive. The Union has a chairperson and vice-chairperson, who are workers and a general secretary who is a paid official.

Branch duties are:

- keeping contact with all Union members in that area
- fund raising
- signing up new members
- collection of subscriptions

- discussing problems in the area
- organising educational workshops and classes
- cultural activities
- building unity and confidence of workers
- building links with other organised workers.

Since the Union is run on lines of strict worker control, the branches are seen as the vital centre of the Union. Consequently much attention is paid to teaching workers about the Union and its activities, how to run a branch, and most importantly, building effective worker control of the Union. Much care and effort is undertaken by older members in teaching new members the confidence and skills necessary to build worker control.

At the end of November 1986, DWA became one of seven domestic workers' unions, which united to form a single national union - the South African Domestic Workers Union (SADWU). The other unions are South African Domestic Workers Association (SADWA), with branches in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban, Natal Domestic Workers Union, Port Elizabeth Domestic Workers Association and East London Domestic Workers Union. The new national union represents approximately 50,000 workers and their collective demands are:

- a living wage
- unemployment benefits
- workman's compensation
- six months paid maternity leave
- 14 days sick leave
- decent accommodation
- pension fund
- R2,50 per hour overtime
- five day week (eight hours a day)
- twenty-one days leave a year with optional overtime
- an identifiable pay slip must be compulsory.

In 1982, DWA sent a memorandum to the Minister of Manpower requesting an investigation into the conditions of domestic workers. The memorandum listed the demands mentioned above. To date, no

report has been issued despite the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry by the Minister. However, with a National Union, the workers will be able for the first time, to take up the struggle for protective legislation on a national level.

That the DWA has organised over 5 000 workers in the Western Cape and helped launch a national union is evidence of the determination of the most advanced sector of domestic workers to organise and participate in the struggles of the working class and end their particular form of oppression. Yet this victory must not be overestimated as the union still faces many obstacles. There is a constant problem of finance for the running of union offices and paying the high cost of church venues. It was pointed out by members that the progressive sections of the church had done little to ease this situation. Even if finance is found to enable the union to function, organizers and shop stewards have a problem of getting access to workers' living in the backyards of employers' homes. In addition, employers constantly prevent workers from attending union activities by forcing them to work late. This is compounded by the problem of domestic workers who have their own families to care for having little or no time for union activities. The trap of the double private sphere makes time and energy for organization very limited. The lack of Basic Conditions of Employment for domestic workers makes it difficult for the union to win gains for its members which is a necessary organising tool. This problem is exacerbated by the lack of an employers' organisation with whom the union could negotiate.

Employer hostility towards the Union emerged as a serious problem. ST relates the story of one attempt that has been made to overcome this:

ST Employers are not so willing to have meetings with you, for example, we on the feasibility committee (of the proposed new Union) decided last year to call on employers throughout South Africa on a particular day which was 24 November, and in these meetings, you would find three employers turn up in Cape Town, six in Durban, say ten or twelve in Johannesburg.

It gives you the impression that employers are not interested in the welfare of the domestic worker. It seems it hasn't dawned on them yet that we are serious in building this type of Union and it's a rather long fight to get employers to see that we mean business.... Some of them will discourage the workers coming to the meeting once they know, others would say it's a terrorist organisation and others would say Russians are involved, you know. Some will make excuses and say no, you know, you either work for me or you join the Union, others would make statements like "You know, those people are just making trouble for you, they are just taking your money and eat it and they can't do anything for you." This type of argument.123

Martha's story highlights this problem.

M I was very upset (after being fired for not feeding the animals) to think that I had reared her child, done all the housework and looked after the animals for twenty years and this is how I was being treated. So I phoned the Union. Then two organisers came to see me at Madam's house. Madam tried to stop me speaking to them. She then tried to phone the police and set the dog loose. The organisers said they will wait. We spoke.124

Some workers choose to tell their employers that they were involved in the Union.

NY Phew. No, I mean, I even went to go and tell them straight, they know, they know, that's why I'm saying people must tell their bosses about it, put it on the table, everything because I do it myself, all my things from the Union like forms I took it there to sit down and we must fill in these forms.... When I show another old lady in Sea Point, her husband is Doctor Roux, he was mad when he see that pension fund. He say it's politics, man, it's politics. It's politics, you know. He was mad, and then his wife don't know what to say (Laughs), and she say, "Shame, man, go and save your money in the Post Office,"125

However, not all domestic workers are able to confront their employers openly and consistently on their organisational activities, and employer resistance remains a huge obstacle to organising. Over the last eight years, workers have built DWA into an effective worker controlled trade union. Effective in the sense that despite the obstacles to organising, they have succeeded in building a Union which has improved the condition of many workers through collective bargaining with employers. This has happened despite the lack of protective legislation regarding basic conditions of employment. The Union has also helped many workers to improve their skills and begin the process of insuring worker control of our society, through exerting control in the work place and in their organisations. DWA has certainly succeeded in beginning to push back the frontiers of control over domestic workers.

Finally, all the domestic workers interviewed wanted to see an end to the institution of domestic work. However, the dominant feeling was that unless domestic workers receive alternative training this will not be possible as they will not be skilled to undertake other jobs. DWA has already started with alternative skills training and hopes that the launch of the National Union will strengthen this process, As with the problem of unpaid domestic labour, workers are seizing the initiative and organising retraining programmes for the time when paid domestic work will be illegal and domestic workers will be fully absorbed into a just and democratic society.¹²⁶ It is hoped that this skills retraining will also help fight unemployment by giving workers the chance of obtaining alternative employment.

Our desire is to shut up our kitchen doores from eight in the morning till eight at night every second tuesday in the month unless some extraordinary business happen to keep them open; if so to enjoy an equivalent and conscientious liberty another day, but our City Dames are so nice they will put in anything for an exception, and in case of rainy weather they may detain us...therefore let it raine, haile, snow or blow never so fast; we would have leave, at our discretion, to take up our coats and steere our course as we please.

Maid's Petition, 1647, against the "uncontrollable imposition of our surly madams"

CONCLUSION

In the last three decades, the intensification of class contradictions and struggle on an international scale has raised new possibilities for the resolution of the Woman Question. Anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggles, combined with attempts to build socialism in China, North Korea, Vietnam, Yemen, Cuba, Nicaragua, Granada, Chile, Guinea-Biussau, Angola and Mozambique have clearly highlighted the problems with socialist theory and practice in this regard. In the imperialist countries, the rise of the feminist movement has challenged the reformism, chauvnism and inadequate theorization of the Woman Question by first-world Marxism. Together women of different classes have raised the banner of people's liberation and challenged the hegemony of bourgeois ideology as never before. This resistance has been met by ruling class attempts at a moral counter revolution. The rise of the "New Right", the anti-abortion movement and the resurgence of religion in the imperialist countries have all sought to thwart the struggle of working women. However the counter revolution must not allow us to overlook the victories which have destroyed the hegemony of bourgeois ideology forever. Alternatives have been built and the experience of struggle cannot be lost.

Out of this resistance has flowed renewed theoretical and organizational attempts to resolve the problem of gender oppression. One such tendency, in reaction to economism and the eclecticism of Socialist-feminism, has sought to return to classical socialist traditions firmly rooted in historical materialism. It has argued for an uncovering and critical development of the tradition of struggle forged by women workers in Germany and the USSR in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. These advances were theorized and recorded in the works of Lenin, Zetkin, Kollantai and others. The major advance achieved in the 1960s and 1970s has been to note the relationship between the relations of production and reproduction, the public and private and the ideology which characterizes it. This dissertation has drawn heavily on the work of Lise Vogel who sought to consolidate these advances and place them in their historical

perspective. However, her work itself grew out of the organizational struggle of thousands of working people across the world. Her argument for a return to historical materialism flows out of the strategy and tactics of working class women's organizations who have sought not a feminist resolution - the organization of women across classes - to the Woman Question, but a socialist one. Evidence of this is provided by the clear understanding of these women that their liberation can only be achieved as part of the overall liberation of the working class. They have sought programmatic links to National Liberation Movements in order to advance the interests of women workers and peasants as workers and peasants. This has also served to emphasize the theoretical importance of the link between the relations of production and reproduction and the public-private dichotomy. Thus the renewed vigour of the class struggle in the present epoch of capitalism has allowed socialists to develop a clearer understanding of the relationship between class and gender and the forms of oppression which flow from it.

In the South African social formation, the renewed mass resistance of the last decade has had similar results. The development of a strong factory-based national trade union movement coupled with the rise and consolidation of community organizations has resulted in the Woman Question being placed more firmly on the political agenda. Women workers have organized themselves into trade unions and community organizations on an unprecedented scale. Like their working class sisters in other parts of the world, their struggle has been clearly and firmly linked to the struggle to end class oppression. Concomitant with this development have been attempts to challenge old theories and practices in regard to the Woman Question. However, the development of a theoretical resolution of this problem, within the context of the South African social formation, is still in its infancy. As the class struggle develops and unfolds, so will the necessary theory and practice.

At the present phase of class struggle, this can best be achieved by consolidating the advances made by working class women and the return

to historical materialism will allow us to begin to develop a theory adequate for the resolution of the Woman Question. It is at this level that this dissertation seeks to make an intervention. I have sought to uncover areas of historiography which have been ignored by radical South African scholars. The history of the working class family, the public and private dichotomy, the nature of bourgeois ideology and the character of the relations of reproduction all need to be documented so as to expand and deepen understanding of the class struggle. With regard to domestic work, such a development has a number of advantages. It allows us to locate domestic work within capitalist relations of production and reproduction. On an organizational level, this has already been achieved with the establishment of a national union of domestic workers affiliated to the Congress of South African Trade Unions. Secondly, it allows us to note the relationship between unpaid and paid forms of reproductive labour. It also clearly highlights the fact that for a sector of working class women who are employed in domestic work, this form of wage labour produces an intensification of gender domination. This has direct political implications for the resolution of the Woman Question in South Africa. For it implies that such a resolution is premised on the abolition of domestic work and a sharing of domestic labour amongst women, men and children.

Such a resolution requires, however, a clear and intimate understanding of how domestic work intensifies the gender domination of a sector of the working class. It is necessary to understand how the domestic worker's sense of self is broken down by the conditions of wage labour. Low wages, long working hours, limited access to food, exposure to dangerous chemicals, poor accommodation, surrogate motherhood, class, racial and gender struggles in her employer's family and financial worries of maintaining her own home, especially for breadwinners, all aid in this process. This situation will be exacerbated by the double shift with similarly poor working and living conditions. It is not only the material conditions which grind away at the worker's sense of

self. It is also the type of work undertaken. Never ending cycles of washing, sewing, cleaning, cooking, childcare and nursing all serve to deaden the spirit and tire the body. Paid and unpaid petty housework stultifies the development of working class women.

This burden is made heavier by the form of social organization within which the labour takes place - namely, the family. The family is characterized by a complex network of intense physical and emotional relationships hidden from public view in the private sphere. The domestic worker is usually trapped in a double set of these relations. Within her employer's family she is subjected to the constant control of the housewife-supervisor and her husband. The employer's children add to the burden. As a surrogate mother, the domestic worker is simultaneously coping with a sense of failure with respect to her own children. The ideology of motherhood puts forward an expected pattern of behaviour. If she is unable to meet the demands of this role in both families, she may experience intense feelings of failure. She is also subjected to the control that employer's children can have over her because of wage the relation. Employers control of her every movement will be reinforced by her husband/father/brothers control in her own family. In addition, she may be subjected to verbal/physical/sexual abuse from male members of both families. She will also be forced to meet the demands of other members of her family. The failure of the state and capital to provide adequate childcare and maternity rights has increased this burden.

When the domestic worker looks beyond the family, she finds the whole society structured to reinforce this situation. Within her own community, as a mother and domestic worker, she is "looked down upon". Magazines, films, books, the church and the state support forms of bourgeois ideology aimed at entrenching bourgeois class interests. The ideology of motherhood and male sexuality are propounded through the mass media, religion and state organs and are aimed at encouraging women to be passive and not to resist the performance of their roles as domestic drudges. Even with the National Liberation Movement,

sexism is dominant. And at universities, intellectuals fail to notice the domestic worker's contribution to history.

It would be a fundamental mistake, however, to see the domestic worker as "trapped", "dependent" and "powerless" within this situation. The intersection of class, racial and gender oppression and exploitation has meant that working class women suffer a triple oppression - class, national and gender. Domestic workers have struggled, formally and informally, to alter class and national domination and change the sexual division of labour. Organizationally, from the Federation of South African Women and the South African Domestic Workers Union, to youth, student and civic organizations, as well as political movements, domestic workers have taken forward their struggle to change the relations of production and reproduction. Individually, they have confronted employers in the isolation of the kitchen while building single parent families and teaching male and female children to share domestic labour and shape a different future. Yet it is necessary to be clear that for working class women in general, and domestic workers doubly so, their involvement in reproductive labour has served as an effective barrier to organizational work. They often have no time to attend meetings, lack the confidence that they have anything to offer the struggle, or are prevented from doing so by a husband, father or brother. When the working class woman has sought an ally in her male counterpart to take forward their joint struggle, she has often found an enemy. The problems of women's organizations and struggle flows from the objective barriers that capitalism has created to subordinate their labour and subjective obstacles of chauvinism.

In all these different ways, domestic work intensifies the gender oppression of a sector of the working class. An historical materialist analysis will allow us to begin to unravel the nature of this process and develop the necessary theoretical understanding so that we may correctly charter a course to end it. If we do not place this gender oppression within the primary social division of class relations, then the course we have chartered will lead us onto the rocks before we

have reached the shore. Our theory must develop out of the concrete conditions and synthesis of class struggle.

The return to historical materialism and the concrete conditions of the present phase of class struggle also pose a new set of questions for South African historians. Until recently, the history of the brutal repression of enforced domestic labour, paid and unpaid, has been hidden in a conspiracy of silence. This conspiracy of silence has been shrouded in the myth of the value of women's labour being determined by the nature of motherhood, domestic and sexual slavery.

It has been upheld by capital, the state, religion, bourgeois and radical male intellectuals alike - all of whom have material interests in the continued subordination of working class women's labour under the present sexual division of labour. Working class women have, however, smashed this wall of silence, forcing intellectuals to face up to questions such as: What are they doing to end this silence? How will they record history so that it reflects the struggles of men and women? How will they undertake gender-sensitive research and how will they face up to its political implications?

These are questions related to the form and content of progressive research. While radical scholars have paid much attention to altering the content of history, less emphasis has been placed on changing the form. This must not simply be confused with popularizing history but rather democratizing it. These are vastly different ideas since popular history may retain intact the unequal power relations between historian and worker while making research available in an accessible form. Democratic history must challenge this unequal power relation and seek to change the form of research, while teaching workers the necessary skills and control over their history. An attempt to build democratic forms of historiography lay behind my decision to undertake the interviews myself. I believed that this would confront the dominant power relations, facilitate worker control and teach me about many of the problems of domestic workers. The form of research also

challenged my concepts of sexuality, motherhood, domestic labour and gender identities. The democratization of historiography through the altering of form and content and the empowering of workers to take control, once again, of their own history is a crucial political task facing radical scholars. With regard to women's history this process has been started and we need to ensure that it is strengthened and permeates all aspects of workers' stories. The road has been opened. We need to go forward.

PHAMABILE Umsabalazo WAMAKHOSIKAZI!!

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5. Rich, A Of Women Born : Motherhood as an Experience and Institution, London 1984, 13.
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7. Pynchon, T V, London 1975, 90.

8. For a more indepth discussion on the issue, see:

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9. This is not to suggest that the oppression of women related to reproductive tasks is a feature of capitalist societies only. On the contrary, the sexual division of labour that developed after the Factory Acts was based on the sexual division of labour in pre-capitalist social formations. However, the spatial separation of productive and unproductive labour and the schism between public and private spheres is a feature of capitalist societies. Furthermore, this process was a slow and uneven one only reaching maturity when capitalist relations became dominant. It forms, however, were mediated by the nature and strength of women's resistance.

10. For a fascinating account of the institution of motherhood, see Rich 1984.

11. Davin, A "Imperialism and Motherhood", History Workshop 5, 1978, 13.

12. The most pure form of this is the Nazi slogan above the extermination camps - "Arbeid Mach Frei" (work makes free). That is, productive labour frees the human spirit despite her/his forced internment in such a camp.

13. This is not to suggest that there is no violence in this relationship. Once divorced from the means of production - which is a violent process - the worker must sell their labour power to exist.

14. Rich 1984, 128.

15. Fox-Genovese 1982, 23.

16. See, for example, H Bradford The Industrial Union of Africa in the South African Countryside, 1924 - 1930.

17. Fox-Genovese 1982, 14.

18. Lerner 1975, 13.

Chapter Two

1. See for example Molyneux, M "Socialist Societies Old and New : Progress Toward Women's Emancipation" in Feminist Review 8, 1981.
2. Lenin, V I quoted in Organization of Angolan women : Angolan Women - Building the Future from National Liberation to Women's Emancipation, London 1984, 61.
3. Molyneux, 1981 Original unobtainable; photostat pages not numbered.
4. Yawitch 1984, 10.
5. Molyneux 1981.
6. Rowbotham, S Women's Consciousness, Man's World England 1983, XV.
7. Vogel, L Marxism and the Oppression of Women : Toward a Unitary Theory, United States of America, 1983.
8. Hartman, H "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism : Towards a More Progressive Union" in L Sargeant Women and Revolution : The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism, London 1981, 4.
9. Vogel 1983, 102.
10. For a more extensive discussion, see L Vogel 1983.
11. Vogel 1983, 121.
12. Quoted in Vogel 1983, 121.
13. From C Zetkin "My Recollection of Lenin".
14. Rowbotham 1983, xi.
15. Volbrecht 1985, 8.
16. Volbrecht 1985, 8.
17. See for instance: Benston, M "The Political Economy of Women's Liberation" in Monthly Review, 1969, 21, 4.
Della Costa, M "Women and the Subversion of the Community" in Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community, Bristol 1973.
Morton, P "A woman's work is never done" in From Feminism to Liberation, E Albach (ed), Cambridge, Mass 1971.
18. See Barrett, 1980; Brenner J & M Ramas "Rethinking Women's Oppression" in New Left Review, 1984, 144; Hartmann, 1980; Kuhn, A & H Wolpe (eds) Feminism and Materialism. Women and Modes of Production, London 1978; Sargeant, 1 1981; Weir, A & E Wilson "The British Women's Movement" in New Left Review, 1984, 148.
19. Vogel 1983, 29.
20. Barrett 1980, 8, 9.
21. It must be noted that Kollantai's views are disputed by other socialist tendencies. For a recent formulation of this, see E Laclau Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory, London: 1979.
22. Kollontai, A Selected Writings, London 1977.
23. Vogel 1983, 129.
24. Vogel 1983, 138.

25. Vogel 1983, 139.
26. Vogel 1983, 152.
27. Vogel 1983, 144.
28. Vogel 1983, 149. For a fuller discussion, see Chapters 10 and 11.
29. Vogel 1983, 144.
30. Oakley, A 1977, 3. For discussion on how this role developed historically, consult chapters 2, 3. It is worth noting that Oakley's research took place nine years before Vogel's work. This has made it difficult to clearly highlight the relation between class and gender. The concept of housewife should be placed within a class context. However, with Oakley's work this is not always the case. This does not reduce the importance of her contribution in attempting to document the nature of housewifery, however. A more clearly class conscious characterization still needs to be developed.
31. Oakley 1977, 3.
32. Rosenberg, H G "The Home is the Workplace : Hazards, Stress and Pollutants in the Household" in W Chankin Women's Health Hazards on the Job and at Home, 1984.
33. Women's Occupational Health and Resource Centre Fact Sheet for Women Who Work in the Home, New York 1979, 3.
34. Rosenberg 1984, 219.
35. Oakley 1977, 4,5.
36. Oakley 1977, 6,7.
37. Oakley 1977, 9.
38. Marx K & F Engels Collected Works, New York 1975, 487.
39. Oakley 1977, (1).
40. Davin 1978, 13.
41. Oakley 1977, 95. Maya Angelou, writer and former domestic worker, comments on her childhood in her Bibliography noting that: "We were required to embroider and I had trunkfuls of colourful dishtowels, pillow cases, runners and handkerchiefs to my credit. I mastered the art of crocheting and tatting and there was a life time supply of dainty doilies that would never be used...It went without saying that all girls could iron and wash..." I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, USA, 1984.
42. Oakley 1977, 10.
43. Vogel 1983, 170.

Chapter Three

1. For examples of Marxist analyses of an earlier period see: B Bunting The Rise of the South African Reich, Harmandsworth: 1964 and E Roux Time Longer Than The Rope : A History of Black Man's Struggle for Freedom in South Africa, Wisconsin: 1964.

2. Leggassick, M (1) The Frontier Tradition in S A Historiography in S Marks and A Atmore Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa, London: 1980. (2) Legislation , Ideology and Economy in Post-1948 South Africa in Journal of Southern African Studies 1, 1, 1974.

Wolpe, H Capitalism and Cheap Labour - Power in South Africa from Segregation to Apartheid in Economy and Society 1, 4, 1972.

3. For an excellent gender-sensitive critique of these works, see G Volbrecht "Marxism or Feminism?".

4. B Bozzoli "Marxism, Feminism and South African Studies" in Journal of Southern African Studies, 9, 12, 1983, 139.

5. See Vogel 1983, Chapters 10 and 11.

6. See, for example, A M Marriotti "The Incorporation of African Women into Wage Employment in South Africa, 1920 - 1970", PhD, University of Connecticut, 1980. Evidence of the organization of working class women can be seen in trade unions such as the Commercial Catering Allied Workers Union of South Africa and the South African Domestic Workers Union. Within the community, the development of women's organizations such as the United Women's Organization and the Federation of Transvaal Women provide further evidence of the growing organization of women in South Africa.

7. Bureau of Statistics, 1921 Census Report, Part VIII, (iii).

8. Bureau of Statistics, 1911 Census Report, UG 32-1912 XVII.

9. Despite the angry disclaimers that I can hear from my friends and colleagues, this remark is based on observations made over the last three years. Most attempts to introduce Women's History into progressive courses at the University of Cape Town have been blocked; interaction between male and female academics remains sexist and the real nature of "private lives" lies hidden in a wall of silence.

10. Bozzoli 1983, 141. An example of this approach is the work of C Walker Women and Resistance in South Africa, London 1982. For a fuller discussion and partial bibliography of the works in each of these categories, see 140 - 145. It is necessary to point out that for the body of this chapter, I have chosen the works of Bozzoli and Volbrecht as they are the only two articles which specifically review approaches to women's history in South Africa. They also serve to clarify the debate between Marxism and feminism while attempting to overcome the problems encountered in theorizing the Woman Question. They are seen to be representative of particular tendencies within this debate. This does not exclude the crucial contributions made by a host of other women on these issues. One feels strengthened by being able to state that the number of contributions has grown so large that it is necessary to chose Bozzoli and Volbrecht to highlight by argument.

11. Bozzoli 1983, 141.

12. Bozzoli 1983,

13. Bozzoli 1983,

14. Volbrecht 1986, 21.

15. Volbrecht 1986, 13.

16. Volbrecht 1986, 6.

17. Volbrecht 1986, 6.

18. Volbrecht 1986. The guidelines she offers are too long to reproduce here in actual form or summary. Readers are thus referred to page 22 of her paper.

Chapter Four

1. See Presten-Whyte, E M "Between Two Worlds", Doctoral Thesis, University of Natal 1969; Whisson, M Q and W Weil Domestic Servants. A Microcosm of the Race Problem, Johannesburg 1971; Gordon, S Domestic Workers. A Handbook for Housewives. Johannesburg 1974; Streek, F E Domestic Servants: East London, 1974. For a critical review of the liberal perspective, see Callinicos, L "Domesticating Workers", South African Labour Bulletin, Vol 2, No. 4, 1975. A more recent edition within the liberal perspective is an interdenominational church publication entitled Maids and Madams and Being Disciples, Cape Town 1982.
2. McNeil, C "Here to Win. Here to Stay. A Study of Domestic Workers in Durban" Unpublished Honours Dissertation, University of Natal, Durban 1986, 20. For a full discussion on the history of DWEP, see Chapter Three.
3. Clearly the rise of new Marxist historiography and gender-sensitive approach to history were also affected by events beyond South Africa's borders. For example, the rise of feminism in Western Europe and the emergence of women's struggles in the third world were crucial to organizational and intellectual examination of the nature of domestic labour in capitalist social formations.
4. See Behardren, G, K Lehulere & A Shaw Domestic Workers in Poverty, Carnegie Conference Paper No. 114, Cape Town 1984. The authors devote one page out of seventy-five to examining this relationship! But they still do examine it, and this indicates, within Marxism, the broad acceptability of this relationship. In part they argue: "Domestic work must be seen within the context of the submissive role of women in society. Aspects of importance are the sexual division of labour, reproduction, changes and variations in the value of male and female labour and the process of maintaining women's independent positions within households. Within the household domestic work needs to be performed to enable all members of the household to engage in day to day living. Due to the sexual division of labour, these functions are classed as women's work and left aside for female members of the household to do...Women have to stay at home, bear children and do domestic duties. Even though many women engage in wage employment today, their real place is still seen as being in the home...Wives are often left with the mammoth task of doing all housework themselves with the help of daughters. Those who can afford it, employ domestic workers to do it for them...In South Africa, the wages paid to domestic workers are so low that it is possible for every middle class family, white and black, to employ at least one domestic worker. The institution of domestic work is thus more than a microcosm of race relations, it is also a microcosm of class relations."
5. Van Onselen, C "Witches of Suburbia : Domestic Service on the Witwatersrand 1890 - 1914" in Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand 1886 - 1914, Vol 2, New Nineveh, Johannesburg 1982.

6. If we accept the idea that the personal is political, then the gender socialisation of the researcher is a crucial determinant of content. Is it by chance that of all the works under review, Van Onselen's is the only one written by a male?

7. Boddington, E Domestic Service : Changing Relations of Class Domination 1841 - 1948. A Focus on Cape Town Unpublished Master of Arts Thesis, University of Cape Town 1983.

8. Boddington 1983 (i).

9. Boddington 1983, 15,16.

10. Boddington 1983, 10.

11. Boddington 1983, 13.

12. Boddington 1983, 13.

13. For a more detailed discussion of this, see M Friedman "The Social Construction of Gender : Historically Changing Meanings of Femininity and Masculinity 1910 - 1980" Unpublished paper, University of Natal 1986, 20. She also notes the following definitions: Biological Sex refers to the anatomical characteristics that define males and females. This is constant. Gender refers to socially constructed (or socialised) women and men, that are associated with historically specific meanings of masculinity, femininity and gender role behaviour. (See Footnotes, 21)n

14. See Dworkin, A Pornography : Men Possessing Women, London 1983.

15. Vukani Makhosikazi Collective Vukani Makhosikazi : South African Women Speak, London 1985, 104.

16. Cock, J Maids and Madams : A Study in the Politics of Exploitation, Johannesburg 1980 and "Deference and Dependence : A Note on the Self-Imagery of Domestic Workers", South African Labour Bulletin 1980, 6, 1 and "Disposable Nannies, Domestic Servants in the Political-Economy of South Africa", Review of African Political Economy 1981, 21.

17. Cock 1980, 314. I have no intention of re-opening the debate around whether or not domestic work is productive or unproductive labour. My position runs clearly throughout the dissertation. In this Chapter different position or understandings are merely noted.

18. Cock 1980, 319.

19. Cock 1981, 64.

20. Cock 1981, 67,68.

21. Cock 1980, 7.

22. Cock 1980, 58 - 60 and 101.
23. Cock 1980, 100.
24. Cock 1981, 69.
25. Cock 1981, 75.
26. Cock 1981, 76.
27. Cock 1981, 64.
28. Cock 1980, 4.
29. Cock 1980, 19.
30. Quoted in Cock 1980, 20.
31. Gatskell, D, J Kimble, M McConachie & E Unterhalter "Class, Race and Gender : Domestic Workers in South Africa", Review of African Political Economy, 1984 27, 28.
32. Gaitskell et al 1984, 91.
33. Gaitskell et al 1984, 87.
34. Gaitskell et al 1984, 87.
35. Gaitskell et al 1984, 88.
36. Gaitskell et al 1984, 91.
37. Gaitskell et al 1984, 89.
38. In addition, the following works support these generalizations. For example: McNeil, C "Here to Win. Here to Stay : A Study of Organization Among Domestic Workers in Durban" Unpublished Honours Dissertation, University of Natal, 1986; Turner, J "How Do Black and White Women Interact Within the Context of Domestic Service in South Africa" Unpublished Honours Dissertation, Nottingham University, 1986. This is largely a review of already published literature; Shindler, J "The Effects of Recession, Influx Control and Labour-Saving Appliances on Domestic Service in South Africa" Unpublished Honours Dissertation, University of Witwatersrand, 1982.
39. It must be noted that I am not arguing for a purely conceptual-theoretical level. The problems and shortcomings of present conceptualizations were highlighted for me when I was unable to explain and account for some of the histories emerging in my interviews. For example, the relationship between motherhood/surrogate motherhood; domestic labour as unproductive labour; the devaluation of domestic labour and the nature of labouring in the double private sphere. My case study threw up questions which were in part answered by trying to refine/re-define my concepts.

22. Cock 1980, 58 - 60 and 101.
23. Cock 1980, 100.
24. Cock 1981, 69.
25. Cock 1981, 75.
26. Cock 1981, 76.
27. Cock 1981, 64.
28. Cock 1980, 4.
29. Cock 1980, 19.
30. Quoted in Cock 1980, 20.
31. Gaitskill, D, J Kimble, M McConachie & E Unterhalter "Class, Race and Gender : Domestic Workers in South Africa", Review of African Political Economy, 1984 27, 28.
32. Gaitskell et al 1984, 91.
33. Gaitskell et al 1984, 87.
34. Gaitskell et al 1984, 87.
35. Gaitskell et al 1984, 88.
36. Gaitskell et al 1984, 91.
37. Gaitskell et al 1984, 89.
38. In addition, the following works support these generalizations. For example: McNeil, C "Here to Win. Here to Stay : A Study of Organization Among Domestic Workers in Durban" Unpublished Honours Dissertation, University of Natal, 1986; Turner, J "How Do Black and White Women Interact Within the Context of Domestic Service in South Africa" Unpublished Honours Dissertation, Nottingham University, 1986. This is largely a review of already published literature; Shindler, J "The Effects of Recession, Influx Control and Labour-Saving Appliances on Domestic Service in South Africa" Unpublished Honours Dissertation, University of Witwatersrand, 1982.
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40. Cock 1980, 173.

41. Cock 1980; Van Onselen 1982; Boddington 1983.

42. Gaitskell et al 1984, 95. Gaitskell provides us with a summary of the three works mentioned. See also Cock 1980, Chapter 6, Boddington 1983 and Van Onselen 1982.

43. Cock 1980 refers here to: (i) direct coercion: being taken captive by settlers/police; (ii) economic compulsion: slow collapse of pre-capitalist economy due to wars, dispossession of the land, etc. Also the role of traders in facilitating this; (iii) extra-economic coercion: use of law to enforce proletarianization, for example, poll-hut tax.

44. Cock 1980, 281. For an excellent discussion on the role of missionaries, see Chapter 8 "Education for Domesticity".

45. Gaitskell et al 1984, 98.

46. See also Behardien et al 1984 and Vukani Makhosikazi Collective 1985. The studies referred to are those of Boddington, Cock, Van Onselen, Whissen and Weil, Preston Whyte.

47. Boddington 1983, 212.

48. Cock 1980, 7.

49. See Van Onselen 1982.

50. See D Lessing The Grass is Singing London 1980. This story of the relationship between a white woman employer and a black male domestic worker, highlights aspects of class, gender and racial struggle and emphasizes the level of violence which can characterize such relations.

51. Shindler, J E "The Effects of Recession, Influx Control and Labour-Saving Appliances on Domestic Service in South Africa" Unpublished Honours Dissertation, University of Witwatersrand 1980.

52. Shindler 1980, 64.

53. Van Onselen 1982 and Boddington 1983. For a critique of Van Onselen's "black peril" scares, see T Kegan "Black Peril, Lapsed Whites and Moral Panic : A Study of Ideological Crises in Early Twentieth Century South Africa" Unpublished, University of London 1980.

54. Van Onselen 1982, 45.

55. Kegan 1980,

56. Kegan 1980, 1.

57. This raises the question of whether black males have been raped or sexually harassed/abused in domestic work. Sexual harassment as a form of control of domestic workers must not be seen merely as male employer on female worker but female employer on male worker as well. For the personal story of an "ex-houseboy", see M Nyagumbo With the People, London 1980.

58. See for instance Cock (1980) who develops an idea of ultra-exploitability based on a system of racial domination which operates at the level of political rights, property and residence rights, employment, education, income and sexual domination which occurs in legal status, employment, education and reproduction. Van Onselen clearly highlights how the state and capital together attempt to solve the shortage of domestic labour/mine labour.

59. For a full and comprehensive discussion of the legal position of domestic workers, see Behardien 1984.

60. Influx control legislation tied the access of African women to housing and jobs in the urban areas through a husband who had "legal" accommodation and residence in the urban areas.

61. Also relevant here is the issue of maternity rights. Domestic workers have no maternity rights at all. Why? How did this develop? Was it a specific state policy? If so, why? All these questions need answering.

62. Cock 1981. Note that as pointed out above, this particular work represents a development on Cock's view in Maids and Madams as regards daily struggle and resistance. And this provides us with a clearer direction to move forward from.

63. Boddington 1983, Chapter 5.

64. Van Onselen 1982, 59.

65. Boddington 1983, 241.

66. C McNeil 1986 and Gaitskell et al 1984.

67. Gaitskell et al 1984, 103. Both types of unions merged in December 1986 to form the South African Domestic Workers Union.

68. Layne, V "We Must Free Ourselves". Unpublished third-year paper, Department of Sociology, University of Cape Town, 1987.

Chapter Five

1. For a fuller account of these processes, see: Hindson, D "The Pass System and the Foundation of an Urban African Proletariat in South Africa". PhD, University of Sussex, 1983; Kimble, J & E Unterhalter, E " 'We Opened the Road For You, You Must Go Forward' African National Congress Women's Struggles 1912 - 1982", Feminist Review, 1983; Lodge, T Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945, Johannesburg, 1983; Lacey, M Working for Boroko : The Origins of the Coercive Labour System in South Africa; Mariotti, A M "The Incorporation of African Women Into Wage Employment in South Africa 1920 - 1970", PhD, University of Connecticut, 1980; Vukani Makhosikazi Collective Vukani Makhosikazi, London 1985; Walker, C Women and Resistance in South Africa, London 1982; Wells, J C "The History of Black Women's Struggle Against Pass Laws in South Africa 1900 - 1960", PhD, Columbia, 1982; Yawitch, J "The Relation Between African Female Employment and Influx Control in South Africa 1950 - 1983", Masters of Arts, University of Witwatersrand 1984.
2. For further discussion, see for instance: Bozzoli, B 1983; Marks S & E Unterhalter "Women and the Migrant Labour System in Southern Africa" Unpublished paper. Conference on Migratory Labour in Southern Africa. Lusaka, 1978; Wright, J "Women and Production in the Zululand Kingdom" Unpublished paper. Workshop on the History of Pre-Colonial Nguni Societies. Rhodes University, 1979.
3. Delius, P The Land Belongs to Us, Johannesburg 1983, 49. It is worth noting that Delius makes NO mention of the daily and generational reproductive labour that women undertook!
4. Delius 1983, 52.
5. See for instance Delius 1983,
6. Bozzoli 1983, 149.
7. Harries, P
8. Delius 1983, 67.
9. Yawitch 1984, 57.
10. Plaaitjie, S T Native Life in South Africa, London 1916. I was first alerted to the value of this book by noticing this quote in Bozzoli's work (1983, 151). See also Beinart, W The Political Economy of Pondoland 1860 - 1930, Johannesburg 1982.
11. Bozzoli 1983, 151.

12. Robins, N "Labour Migrancy and the Subordination of Women" Unpublished African Economic History Course Paper, 1987. See also Yawitch 1984.
13. Stone, C "Industrialization and Female Labour Force Participation", South African Labour Bulletin, 2, 4 1978, 8.
14. Suttner, R "African Customary Law - Its Social and Ideological Function in South Africa", African Studies Seminar Paper, University of Witwatersrand 1983. Quoted in Yawitch 1984, 56.
15. Yawitch 1984, 56, 57.
16. Cock 1980, 266.
17. Mariotti 1980, 30.
18. Yawitch 1984, 61.
19. Yawitch 1984, 80.
20. Yawitch 1984, 69.
21. See Hindson 1983, Lacey 1981. Many different works have contributed to our understanding of the racial division of labour with South African capitalism. The list is too numerous to mention. The reader is referred to two works already cited as examples.
22. For a general overview of this process, see Mariotti 1980 and Vukani Makhosikuzi 1985. For a regional study of the Cape, see Boddington 1983.
23. Cock, J, E Emden, B Klugman "Childcare and the Working Mother", Carnegie Conference Paper, Cape Town 1984, 14.
24. Lawson, K Women and Work, Johannesburg 1985,
25. For example, see Boddington, 1983; Cock 1984 and Mariotti 1980.
26. Cock et al 1984, 6. See also Ramphele, M "The Male-Female Dynamics Amongst Migrant Workers in the Western Cape", Social Dynamics 12, 1, 1986; Van der Vliet, V "Staying Single : A Strategy Against Poverty", Carnegie Conference Paper, Cape Town 1984 and Vukani Makhosikazi 1985.
27. Vogel 1983, chapters 10, 11.
28. Cock et al 1984, 16 - 18.
29. Cock et al 1984, 8.
30. See for instance Kimble and Unterhalter 1983, and Wells 1982.
31. Hindson 1983, 179.

32. Yawitch 1984, 308.
33. Yawitch 1984, 108.
34. Vogel 1983,
35. Department of Health and Welfare The National Family Planning Programme 1982, Pretoria 1983. See also The Man and Family Planning, Pretoria 1981.
36. Department of Health and Welfare 1983, 20, 21.
37. Cock et al 1984, 12.
38. Kuzwayo, E "The Role of African Women in Towns", Urban African Conference, South African Institute of Race Relations. Quoted in Van der Vliet 1984, 5.
39. Ramphele 1986, 21.
40. Vukani Makhosikazi Collective 1985, 92, 195.
41. Van Zyl, M "Violence as a Means of Control : Women's Experience of Violence in their Communities", 17th Annual Conference of the Association of Sociology in Southern Africa, University of Natal 1986, 3.
42. Van Zyl 1986, 5.
43. Viennings, I and C Kleeberg "The Perceptions of Battered Women", 17th Annual Conference of the Association for Sociology in Southern Africa, University of Natal 1986, 7.
44. Ramphele 1986, 21.
45. Van Der Vliet 1984, 5.
46. Van Der Vliet 1983, 3.
47. Cock et al 1984, 7.
48. Cock et al 1984, 6.
49. Kompe, L "Trade Unionist - NOT TEA GIRL", Vukani Makhosikazi, 1985, 105.
50. Quoted in Checkers Consumer Focus Support Your Consumer Groups, 1986. Implicit in this pamphlet is the racial division of consumers according to Group Areas as each racial category (sic) has its own consumer protection society. Thus Checkers, who claims to be non-racial, is actively promoting racial as well as class divisions within the consumers.

51. McClintock, A M "The Contest is Little Girls" in SPEAK, October/November 1978, 19.
52. Vukani Makhosikazi Collective 1985, 168.
53. Vukani Makhosikzai Collective 1985. Especially the section entitled "Overcoming Despair".
54. Vukani Makhosikazi Collective 1985, 137.
55. Gaitskell, D Housewives, Maids or Mothers : Some Contradictions of Domesticity for Christian Women in Johannesburg, Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town 1982, 1.
56. Cock 1980. See Chapter Eight.
57. Belinda Belinda's Book for Colonial Housewives, Durban 1916. This is the fourth edition and I was unable to obtain information as to Belinda's surname or the date of first publication.
58. Cock 1980, 260.
59. Cape Times, 7 May 1987.
60. For a fuller discussion on women's resistance, see: Beinart, W "Amafelandawonye : Rural Popular Protest and Women's Movements in Herschel District South Africa in the 1920s", History Workshop, 1984; Chikanda, E "Black Women : Mother and Revolutionary", 17th Annual Conference of the Association of Sociologists in Southern Africa, University of Natal, 1986; Patel, L "South African Women's Struggles in the 1980s" (photocopy) 1987 and Cock 1980, Kimble & Unterhalter 1982, Mariotti 1980, Vukani Makhosikazi Collective 1985, Walker 1982, Bradford & Walker 1982 and Wells 1982.
61. Cock et al 1984, 35.
62. Volbrecht 1986, 19.
63. Congress of South African Trade Unions Executive Committee A Message to all Members of COSATU, Johannesburg 1987.

Chapter Six

1. My thanks to Mama R, Mrs B, Karyn and Astrid for giving me access to interviews undertaken for a honours course UCT SEPTEMBER 1986. The remaining interviews were conducted by the author.
2. Tables compiled from census data Dept of Statistics 1921-1980. Note the census data is highly problematic being plagued with racism and sexism. The figures are for registered workers only and thus are far too low. Furthermore the basis of numeration has changed over the years and this makes comparisons difficult if not impossible. Nevertheless the tables serve to highlight the large number of domestic workers and the domination of this section by women.
3. Information in tables supplied by DWA, 1986.
4. Interview with S.T. union organiser. 1986. Figures refer to 1979/80.
5. Central Statistical Services. Statistics of Houses, Domestic Servants (Pretoria 1983) 14.
6. Interview with Z, May 1986.
7. Interview with Ny, June 1986.
8. Interview with R, September 1986.
9. Interview with M, May 1986.
10. Working class women's use of their gender socialisation to survive in a hostile male world maybe very extensive. For a useful discussion see Christine Obboc, African Women: Their Struggle for Economic Independence, Johannesburg 1981.
11. Interview with F, August 1986.
12. Interview with E, August 1986.
13. Interview with ST, June 1986.
14. Shindler, J E The Effects of Recession, Influx Control and Labour Saving Appliances on Domestic Service in South Africa, University of Witwatersrand, unpublished Honours dissertation 1980.
15. In Cape Town given the acute housing shortage accommodation is at a premium. On the housing shortage see Humphrey, J Low Cost housing in Cape Town: The supply, shortage and possibilities for improvement. Carnegie Conference Paper 158 1984.
16. Interview with R.
17. Interview with ST.
18. Interview with ST.
19. Interview with Mrs B.
20. Interview with ST.
21. The life story of S. This story was written by a worker and passed to me via the union.
22. Interview with Ny.
23. K Marx, Capital Volume 1 (USSR 1977) 168.
24. Evidence of this is minimal. However Van Onselen (1982) argues that domestic workers were a necessity in early Johannesburg since many of the white miners were single men and consequently required a domestic to undertake daily reproductive tasks. Similarly Lewis (1984) argues that the skilled white working class organised into trade unions won this demand from capital in the 1920's.

25. Behardien, A 1984.
26. Marx 1977: 505/6.
27. Interview with ST.
28. Interview with ST.
29. For a fuller discussion on employer attitudes to wages see Cock 1984. Evidence relating to wages, wage increases, holiday and sick pay are supported by Cock's study. See especially Chapters Two, Three and Five.
30. Interview with Ny.
31. Interview with E.
32. Interview with ST.
33. Interview with Ny.
34. Interview with ST.
35. Interview with ST.
36. Interview with ST. Poem by Rosaline Naapo
37. Interview with ST.
38. Interview with M and Ny.
39. Interview with Z.
40. Interview with E.
41. Interview with D.
42. Interview with M.
43. Marx 1977: 225.
44. Interview with D.
45. Interview with ST.
46. Interview with ST.
47. Interview with ST.
48. This part has emerged in a number of informal (unrecorded) discussions with workers in the union office.
49. Interview with Mrs D.
50. Interview with Z.
51. Interview with M.
52. Interview with Z.
53. Interview with N.
54. Interview with M.
55. Interview with E.
56. Interview with ST.
57. Health Information Centre, Working Women, Pregnancy and Maternity Rights, Braamfontein. The H.I.C does not mention the hazards of domestic work at all. In fact domestic work is not even seen as a form of work within the booklet. See pp.9 & 10.
58. Interview with Ny.
59. Interview with D.
60. Interview with N.
61. Interview with Ny.
62. Interview with Ny.
63. Interview with ST.
64. This is not to exclude gender struggle. Yet the family is already a site of gender struggle and the presence of a working class woman can only intensify the struggle.
65. Interview with M.
66. Interview with ST.
67. Interview with M.
68. Interview with E.
69. Interview with Ny.

70. Interview with ST.
71. Interview with ST.
72. Interview with ST.
73. Interview with Z.
74. Interview with M.
75. Interview with E and ST.
76. Interview with ST.
77. Interview with Ny.
78. Interview with M.
79. Interview with E.
80. Cape Times, 8 August 1986, p.7.
81. Interview with ST.
82. Interview with ST.
83. Cape Times, 8 August 1986, p.7.
84. Interview with ST.
85. Cape Times, 8 August 1986, p.7.

Ntombi Makwasa, Union organiser, further notes that:

Last week seven women came here to tell me their male employers had sexually harassed them, or threatened to rape them. In some cases, the man threatened to withhold the worker's salary unless she complied with his demands. What makes it worse is that the police won't accept the charges of sexual harassment unless the woman was actually raped. (Cape Times, 8/8/86)

Furthermore, where the employers do not succeed in controlling the lives of workers, the police can always be called on some pretext or another:

With the police on the employer's side, the police are often called in to come and see whether there is somebody living with her and this can be very embarrassing for a sleep-in domestic worker. Again here because she needs her job, you can know she overlooks it. It makes her more and more unhappy about being free as a person. (Cape Times, 8/8/86)

86. Interview with ST.
87. Interview with Ny.
88. Interview with M.
89. Interview with Z.
90. Interview with N.
91. Interview with B.
92. Interview with E.
93. Interview with ST.
94. Interview with Z.
95. Interview with M.
96. Interview with Mrs B.
97. Interview with D.
98. Interview with R.
99. Interview with Ny.
100. Interview with ST.
101. See V. Van Der Vliet (1984) for a fuller discussion.
102. Interview with Ny.
103. Interview with Z.
104. Interview with Ny.
105. Interview with ST.
106. Interview with Z.
107. Interview with Ny.

108. Interview with K.
109. Interview with Z.
110. Interview with Z.
111. Interview with Z.
112. Interview with E.
113. Interview with E.
114. Interview with M.
115. Interview with Z.
116. N. Dlanga, DWA member from Forward Worker, Newsletter of DWA, May/June 1985.
117. Interview with M.
118. Interview with Z.
119. Forward Worker, September 1986.
120. Interview with Z.
121. Interview with ST.
122. Interview with ST.
123. Interview with ST.
124. Forward Worker, June 1985. With the help of the organisers, Martha managed to get holiday pay, notice pay and her salary for that month.
125. Interview with Ny.
126. Here domestic workers are teaching their children to do domestic labour. See above.

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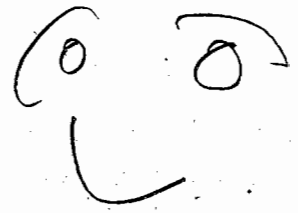
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HAIT A

Phyllis



Thankx for conscotent
help with this tomb! bomb!

Will it be a pain to

Correct both copies?

or could you photocopy
corrected pages and then I'll
pay?

Thank a mountain



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Textual Defects / Minor factual errors

p. 3 ✓	Spelling of Guinea Bissau
p. 4. last paragraph ✓	"What have some of the class ..."
p. 5. 2nd paragraph ✓	Spelling - diffuse
*p. 6. 2nd paragraph ✓	"Thus, to an extent ... has been fulfilled" I do not know what Abrams means here.
p. 7. spelling ✓	oral testimonies
p. 12 last paragraph ✓	"late capitalism" written as one word. see chapter 5. add in
p. 15 "see below" ✓	Abrams often does not specify "where below"
p. 22. derive quote ✓	... "women continues" - should read "women continue"
p. 23. first quote ✓	"... as the addition of <u>a new role</u> "
p. 24. " " ✓	"Important as <u>these</u> changes were ...
p. 25 first quote ✓	... has recently been taken up <u>by</u>
p. 25 2nd paragraph ✓	"It has allowed theorists + militants ... Which theorists; which militants. chauvinism.
p. 25 spelling ✓	Kollontai - misspelt throughout
p. 27 spelling ✓	"They <u>began</u> to develop an understanding
*p. 27 2nd 1st paras. ✓	of relationship between working class women, reproductive labors, the public-private dichotomy, the sexual division of labour and bourgeois ideology. Not wholly true. Many of them failed to deal with <u>precisely</u> these issues.
	underline < began plee
p. 27. 1st paragraph ✓	spelling "They specifically rejected ...
p. 28. Should read ✓	... for the resolution of the Woman Question <u>in</u> the public sphere. (new sentence) <u>Some</u> Marxists traditions ..."

p. 30. 1st paragraph ✓
 spelly ✓
 p. 31. quote spelly ✓
 p. 35 quote ✓
 p. 37 capitals ✓
 p. 38. quote ✓
 p. 39 and quote ✓
 p. 42. quote ✓
 p. 43 1st quote ✓
 p. 49 3rd para ✓

p. 53 Critique (⊗)

p. 59. spelly ✓
 p. 61 - Spelly ✓
 p. 61 last line ✓
 p. 62 spelly ✓
 p. 69. * ✓

add
 ~



Classical socialist
 "chauvinism"
 "... is to socialize its tasks"
It is not advertising alone which creates...
 "their potency when they cross the threshold."
 ... This basic myth ...
 "This in turn ..."
 "The location for work ...
 ... by their racist and sexist his: a problem which confronts.
 "Such an ~~approach~~ ^{severe political} and ~~theoretical results~~ " Abrams does not spell these out.
 "... and finish when they are sleeping."
 ... emphasizes on the importance of this relationship."
 "why there are so few ..."
 "... historian is not a passive recorder of events."
 Critique of Cook not fair
 "Her Analysis is almost completely devoid of any ^{explicit} concept of struggle ..."
 Cook does not use the word but "struggle" is implicit in her analysis.
 "Resistance in the work place takes on many forms & Cook shows this. She also argues that Black women are more feminist than white women employers"

p. 72. Spelling ✓
penetrative

"... offer us no insight..."

5

p. 73. clumsy ?
Sentence. Needs
to be reconstructed.

"In other words, why women bear
... work as form of wage labour

p. 75. last ✓
paragraph. Spelling

in this sector as there was little or
no demand ... "

p. 76. last para. ?
Clumsy sentence.

"The site for this labour ... private
sphere."

p. 78. incorrect ✓
fact.

"... this has meant the disappearance of
domestic workers ..."

p. 78 spelling ✓

"... both racism and sexism served to
subordinate and were ...

p. 81 spelling ✓

"... in that it tries to relate wider
economic trends"

p. 82 quote ✓

"... racial hegemony and to the control."

p. 82 2nd para. ?

Clumsy opening sentence.

p. 84 1st para. ✓

"... and their relationship to the
wider forces."

p. 84 last quote ✓

"... atomised workers who in situations."

p. 99. clumsy ✓
Sentence.

"The precapitalist sexual division of
labour ... identity as well."

Does not make sense

p. 100. clumsy ✓
Sentence.

"The agents who introduced ...
to the rural areas."

2nd para. ✓
both

"... agriculture and land alienation"

p. 104 quote ✓

"So it remains women's work."

p. 106. last ✓
parag.

However, this does not mean that
women will stop - ...

p. 112 clumsy ✓
sentence.

"Since male wages are low ... this
women working."

p. 114 ✓

"To this migrant worker ...

p. 117. 2nd parag ✓
penultimate line

... it may be prefaced by a long
period.

p. 122 - 2nd line ✓

South Africa

p. 126. 2nd parag ✓
Capitals

"They are absorbed directly. ...

p. 130. grammar

The United W's Congress was

p. 177 spelling ✓
3rd line from
top

"housewife"

p. 177. ✓

... housewife supervisor then with
the husband suggesting

p. 216

spelling of Kollontai

p. 217 no. 30 ✓
Spelling

for housewifery

p. 222. Spelling

Gaitskell

Corrections to be made:

~~There~~ are an excessive number of typographical errors which need to be corrected.

The contents page needs to be expanded in order to find the relevant material in the thesis which should be indicated by page numbers.

Page sequence 172 and 173 has been reversed.

The inverted commas to 'other' in the quotation from Fox-Genovese on p. 13 need to be inserted.

On page 73, lines 21 and 22 appear to be disconnected.
