

## *Domestic Distinctions: constructing difference among paid domestic workers in Toronto*

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**ABSTRACT** *Live-in paid domestic work represents a peculiar form of paid employment and employer–employee relations. Contradictions and ambiguities arise from the domestic worker’s ‘workplace’ being her employer’s ‘home’; while intimacy, affective labour and a high degree of personalism veil the asymmetrical class relation between employer and employee. In Toronto, employers are often white women, while domestic workers are often (im)migrant women, especially ‘third world’ women of colour. Given this, we draw on in-depth interviews with paid domestic workers working in Toronto to examine ways in which the employer–employee relations are constructed through interlocking, relational systems of difference, especially gender, ‘race’/ethnicity, nationality, immigration/citizenship status and language. We focus on three major aspects of the employer–employee work relation from the viewpoint of the domestic workers—living-in, being ‘like one of the family’, and feelings of respect, dignity and self-worth. We find that many of the women shared a number of common concerns and experiences. However, the specific articulation of systems of difference led to a range of experiences of the extent of asymmetry in employer–employee power relations.*

Have you seen the movie *Mary Poppins*? There’s a song that says that if you can find the good things, then everything else is OK. What she says is actually amazing. The kids love it too. It’s my theme song to keep me going sometimes. That is our song, the nanny song. ‘You find the fun and the job’s a game’. That’s exactly it, ‘a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down’, that’s it literally, and figuratively speaking. A pat on the back goes a long way. But I didn’t get that at all. That’s the reason why I was unhappy [with her previous employer]. (Silke, a 30-year-old German woman employed as a domestic worker in Toronto).

Silke came to Toronto in 1986 to work as a nanny. She is one of more than 90,000 women who have arrived in Canada over the past 15 years under two federal government programmes (the Foreign Domestic Movement programme, 1981–1992, and the Live-in Caregivers Programme, 1992 to the present). These programmes *require* that domestic workers/caregivers be ‘live-ins’ at their employer’s homes for their first 2 years in Canada. Silke had a difficult relationship with her employer, partly as a result of the contradictions and ambiguities associated with her ‘workplace’ being her em-

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ployer's 'home'. In this paper we explore how paid domestic workers in Toronto, including Silke, negotiate the dynamics of their employer–employee relation.

Unpaid domestic labour and the gender division of labour have been central themes for feminist geographers over the last 20 years. There has been extensive exploration of these questions in the context of heterosexual couples, with ample evidence that regardless of paid employment status, women have primary responsibility for domestic labour. The increasing popularity, especially among dual-career couples, of employing paid domestic workers changes the complexion of these questions for such households. It is usually the woman in these households who employs and manages the paid domestic worker. As in Canada as a whole, live-in paid domestic work in Toronto is usually the work of migrant or immigrant women, especially 'third world' women of colour. However, most employers are white. Thus, our investigation of the employer–employee work relation hinges on an exploration of difference and diversity. Recent discussions in feminist studies stress the simultaneous and inseparable operation of various social relations of difference. In other words, social relations of difference are not merely additive, instead the experience of one transforms the experience of the others. Taken together, gender, 'race'/ethnicity, class and so on form interlocking, relational systems of oppression and privilege within which there are a multiplicity of identities, which in turn gain meaning in relation to other identities (Spelman, 1988; hooks, 1989; Hill-Collins, 1990; McDowell, 1991; Kobayashi & Peake, 1994; Ruddick, 1996). In this paper we explore the experiential pluralities of women in paid domestic work, keeping in mind hooks' words that 'interlocking systems of domination ... acknowledge the diversity and complexity of female experience, of (their) relationship to power and domination' (1989, p. 21).

### **Towards a Household Geography of Paid Domestic Work**

Two trends are emerging from the small, but growing geographic literature on paid domestic labour. One set of studies highlights the increase in the national and international migration of women domestic workers (Radcliffe, 1990; Mattingley, 1996; England & Stiell, 1997; Pratt, 1997). A second set links the re-emergence of paid domestic work in advanced Western countries to the increase in women, particularly mothers, employed in well-paid, high-status jobs in the service class (Gregson & Lowe, 1994; Moss, 1995a). Both these trends are evident in Toronto. Domestic workers are one of Canada's largest group of temporary foreign workers, and the majority of legally documented, foreign domestic workers reside in the Toronto area (Serwonka, 1991; Sherman, 1996). Not surprisingly, most Canadian research on foreign domestic workers focuses on Toronto (Silvera, 1989; Arat-Koç & Villasin, 1990; Cohen, 1991; Serwonka, 1991; Bakan & Stasiulis, 1994, 1995; Arat-Koç & Giles, 1994; England & Stiell, 1997; but see Pratt, 1997, for a Vancouver case study). At the same time, Toronto has seen an exceptionally large increase in the numbers of women in paid employment (especially those working as managers and professionals in the advanced services), which has been linked to the increased demand for paid domestic workers in the past decade or so (Bradshaw-Camball & Cohen, 1988; Bakan & Stasiulis, 1994).

While our focus here is at the scale of the household, the socio-spatial relations we describe are linked to wider spatial scales. For example, a large proportion of Canada's foreign domestic workers are from the 'third world' and so, to some extent, the legacy of colonialism and the subsequent geographies of underdevelopment and poverty help generate the international supply of domestic workers. On the other hand, the demand

for domestic workers results from socio-economic changes within Canada—the continuing shortage of affordable, quality childcare, the increase in dual-income and dual-career couples, and the feminisation of employment, particularly high-status occupations. These, in turn, are reflections of the globalisation of the economy and the shift to service industries (Bradshaw-Camball & Cohen, 1988; Enloe, 1989; Arat-Koç, 1992b; Murdock, 1992; Bakan & Stasiulis, 1994).

The backdrop to our study is embedded in trends at the global, international (patterns of development, immigration and the globalisation of the economy), regional and metropolitan scales (spatially uneven patterns of economic growth and of women's employment). Furthermore, while the interviews enabled us to take a peek behind the front doors of their workplaces, the dynamism behind these front doors has ramifications at every other 'door' along a spectrum of geographical scales. For instance, attitudes and demands of employers affect the day-to-day operation of domestic worker placement agencies with Toronto-wide catchment areas. Employers can, in turn, influence policy directions at Employment and Immigration Canada; and, of course, Employment and Immigration Canada influences the position of domestic workers (England & Stiell, 1997).

#### *Blurring the 'Public'/'Private' and 'Home'/'Work' Divides*

Since 1981, Canada's federal policies have strictly stipulated that foreign domestic workers can only enter Canada if they 'live-in' for 2 years. Various advocacy groups have lobbied to remove the live-in requirement, but the government insists that the demand is only for *live-in* domestic workers, and that *live-out* jobs in domestic work can be easily filled by workers already in Canada (Employment and Immigration Canada, 1991, 1992). Live-in domestic work represents a peculiar form of paid employment and employer–employee relations. First and foremost, the domestic worker's 'workplace' is her employer's home, with its high degree of personalism in a 'private' (as opposed to the more usual 'public') domain of work. So, live-in paid domestic work blurs the boundaries between 'home' and 'work' and 'public' and 'private' which, in turn, complicates the employer–employee relation. Secondly, the work relation is shaped by intimacy, affective labour, ideologies of the family, as well as public discourse about 'good mothering'. It is a work relation summarised by the notion that it is a 'labour of love' and that paid domestic workers are *Like One of the Family* (Childress, 1956) [1]. Thirdly, that the boundary of public and private is blurred and even undefined, means that live-in domestic work can lead to exploitation (Rollins, 1985; Colen, 1989; Arat-Koç, 1992b; Ng, 1993; Bakan & Stasiulis, 1994; Gregson & Lowe, 1994; Thornton-Dill, 1994). For example, Arat-Koç and Villasin (1990) found that 65% of the domestic workers they surveyed in the Toronto area were routinely required to work overtime, 44% of whom received no compensation. More generally, Bakan and Stasiulis (1994) remark that:

Domestic workers are highly vulnerable to abusive conditions as a result of the live-in requirement and the ambiguity of the social space constructed out of relations between live-in domestic workers and their employers.... Waged domestic workers are commonly expected to offer time and services out of goodwill to their employing families in ways that would be unthinkable in most public employment situations in an advanced capital state. Domestic workers are reluctant to escape such imposition, however, because of their requisite live-in status and the perpetual threat of deportation associated with workplace conflict or employer reprisals. (1994, pp. 16–17).

That the household is in the 'private' sphere and that paid domestic work is imbued with the 'like one of the family' ideology, veils the asymmetrical class relation between employer and employee. There is a 'class difference' between employer and employee—one is selling her labour to the other for a wage (Gaitskell *et al.*, 1984; Gregson & Lowe, 1994). When an employee is legally required to live-in as part of her job, work relations are complicated by antagonisms and ambiguities based on the merging of public 'work' and private 'home' spheres, and the emotional complexities of trying to simultaneously maintain both a personal relationship and a work relationship.

The literature on the experience of paid domestic workers highlights a set of *commonalities*. It tends to be characterised by oppressive material conditions, including isolation, loneliness, powerlessness and invisibility. Even for the *live-out* domestic workers (who form the focus of many non-Canadian studies), exploitation is a frequent experience, imposed by long working hours, unpaid overtime, and limited time off. For some domestic workers, working in what they see as a low-status occupation means that stigma, low self-esteem and low self-worth are also relatively common. In part, these experiences relate to the asymmetrical power relations between the domestic worker and her employer (Cock, 1980; Gaitskell *et al.*, 1984; Rollins, 1985; Glenn, 1986, 1992; Bradshaw-Camball & Cohen, 1988; Colen, 1989; Romero, 1992; Thornton-Dill, 1994; Mattingley, 1996). The characteristics and experiences of domestic work are further exacerbated when the domestic worker is 'living in'. Certainly, significant improvement in work experience is reported when the 'live-in' arrangement is removed (Colen, 1989; Romero, 1992). This is clearly the case in the US where the trend towards live-out, 'day-work', multiple employers and more formal work schedules has decreased the intensity of isolation, dependence and exploitation which are still features of live-in domestic work in Canada.

The Canadian literature on domestic workers also emphasises a key *difference* among groups of foreign domestic workers. Some women (most often from the 'third world') view Canada's foreign domestic worker/live-in caregiver policies as their only opportunity to apply for landed immigrant (permanent resident) status as an independent migrant. For other women (usually Europeans), the policies are regarded as a way of travelling and working, while many non-Anglophone Europeans look upon them as an opportunity to learn English. Cohen (1991, p. 199) describes these women as 'transient workers', since they usually intend to return to their countries of origin, and not apply for landed immigrant status (also see Arat-Koç 1992a, 1992b; Murdock, 1992; Ng, 1993; Bakan & Stasiulis, 1994, 1995; England & Stiell, 1997). More generally, 'race'/ethnicity has been a significant theme in many studies of domestic workers in Canada and the US (Rollins, 1985; Glenn, 1986, 1992; Silvera, 1989; Arat-Koç, 1992a, 1992b; Ng, 1993; Arat-Koç & Giles, 1994; Thornton-Dill, 1994; Mattingley, 1996). Also, in Canada, at least, there is evidence that strongly suggests that paid domestic work has become racialised. Key to the process of racialisation is the ideology that a domestic worker's relative worth is judged relative to the poverty (or wealth) of her country of origin. European women seem to be accorded more prestige than 'third world' women. Moreover, it seems that Europeans may receive higher pay, better treatment, and be regarded as 'nannies' in the strictest sense of doing mainly childcare. 'Third world' women may receive less pay and be treated less well, while being deemed 'domestics' who are expected to do extensive housework as well as childcare (Arat-Koç, 1992b; Bakan & Stasiulis, 1994, 1995).

Despite their vulnerability, domestic workers are not helpless victims. Their strategies for survival and struggles to organise have been persistent themes in Canada (Cohen,

1991; Serwonka, 1991) and the US (Rollins, 1985; Romero, 1992). Attention has focused on domestic workers' creating coping strategies within the workplace (that is their employer's home), as well as networks and informal support groups with other domestic workers (Cock, 1980; Cohen, 1991; Thornton-Dill, 1994). There are also collective, formal acts of struggle and resistance by domestic workers, although attempts at unionising have not always been successful. [2] For example, in Canada, domestic workers rights advocacy group—such as INTERCEDE (International Coalition to End Domestic Workers' Exploitation) Toronto Organisation for Domestic Workers [3]—have been prominent in their struggles to improve domestic workers' rights, especially regarding employment legislation, access to collective bargaining and the removal of the live-in stipulation (Brand, 1987; Arat-Koç & Villasin, 1990; Serwonka, 1991; Ng, 1993; ILGWU & INTERCEDE, 1993).

### *Employer–Employee Relations*

Previous studies indicate that women are more likely to hire domestic workers if they are unable to negotiate an equitable division of domestic labour with their male partners (Rollins, 1985; Hertz, 1986; Arat-Koç, 1992b; Ng, 1993; Gregson & Lowe, 1994). In other words, despite the growth in women's employment, women continue to be largely responsible for domestic work whether as paid domestic workers, or as 'managers' of domestic workers they hire. However, the gender commonality between employer and employee is often marked by myriad differences. For example, that immigrant women of colour are over-represented among domestic workers is naturalised as their being predisposed to domestic work (Rollins, 1985; Glenn, 1992; Macklin, 1992; Ng, 1993; Bakan & Stasiulis, 1995). Macklin (1992) demonstrates this point with the example of Mary, the white Canadian employer of Delia, a Filipina domestic worker:

Mary (can) objectify Delia in various ways that are influenced, but not precluded, by gender. For example, Mary can hardly claim that Delia is ideally suited to domestic work because she is a woman without impugning herself, but she can fall back on *Filipino* women being 'naturally' hard working, subservient, loyal, tidy housekeepers and 'good with children'. In this context, race, ethnicity and culture conjoin with sex to create a sub-category of women whose subordination other women can rationalise by projecting onto them the stereotypical 'feminine' qualities that patriarchy has used against women generally" (1992, p. 754, emphasis in the original).

Of course, not all employer–employee relations in paid domestic work are exploitative and abusive. Bradshaw-Camball and Cohen (1988) suggest that the range and variety of employer–employee relations can be placed along two intersecting continua: one representing the domestic worker's 'sense of self-worth', the other representing the employer's 'concern with equity and fairness'. So, for instance, potentially exploitative work relations may result from an employer with little 'concern with equity and fairness' employing a domestic worker with a low 'sense of self-worth'. The employer's and domestic worker's location on these continua are mediated by issues of identity. Employers of domestic workers in Toronto are more likely to be white and middle-class and, most commonly, Anglophone. On the other hand, domestic workers are frequently of a different 'race'/ethnicity, country of origin, immigration/citizenship

status, and language, and these differences can alter the complexion of employer–employee relations.

In this paper, we take the first world/third world dichotomy as a starting point. However, we want to avoid an over-emphasis on the fixed and oppositional categories of black/white dichotomy of ‘race’. This is particularly important in the case of foreign domestic workers in Canada, because if the more subtle differences of language are not accentuated, Filipinas might not be differentiated from Afro-Caribbeans (the two largest groups of foreign domestic workers in Canada). Even a homogeneous white or European category disguises language and cultural differences. In English-speaking Canada language is important in differentiating between Anglophone, white immigrants (Americans, British and Irish, for example) and non-Anglophone, white immigrants. Among this latter group, cultural diversities further differentiate East Europeans from West Europeans and in turn, French from, for instance, Germans. At the same time, the black/white dichotomy tends to de-emphasise the oppression of white women by other white women, and ignores class differences among black women, with the assertion that most white women are middle-class and privileged, while black women are working-class and oppressed.

In addition, much of the previous literature on domestic workers considers the ‘race’/ethnicity, class and gender identities of *one* ethno-cultural group of domestic workers—for instance, African-Americans (Thornton-Dill, 1994; Rollins, 1985), black South Africans (Cock, 1980; Gaitskell *et al.*, 1984), Japanese-Americans (Glenn, 1986, 1992), Afro-Caribbean Canadians (Silvera, 1989) and Chicanas (Romero, 1992). In light of the diversity among Canada’s foreign domestic workers, we look at a number of groups of paid domestic workers in Toronto. Our analysis highlights the simultaneous operation of systems of difference (gender, ‘race’/ethnicity, class, language and so on) that texture the experience of paid domestic workers, and emphasises that within these interlocking systems there are a range of locations with varying degrees of power and marginality.

## Background to the Study

The empirical portion of our paper is based on our collaborative analysis of 18 lengthy, in-depth interviews conducted by Bernadette with women who were, or had been, paid domestic workers in Toronto (see Table 1; the women are identified by pseudonyms). The women were reached through notices in the offices of INTERCEDE and ‘snowballing’. The women interviewed came from nine countries of origin—Canada, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Eire, Jamaica, Philippines and Thailand. In no way do we contend that this small sample is representative of all domestic workers in Toronto; rather, we believe these 18 women reflect some of the diverse identities and experiences of this varied group of workers. The majority of the women were in their twenties and thirties, all but two were single (the two who were married were also the only ones with children). One was Canadian, five were landed immigrants; of the others, five were on open permits (an immigration status between a temporary work permit and landed immigrant), and seven were on temporary work permits. Most of the women were live-ins, but three were live-outs and another three (who were no longer on temporary work permits) had recently left paid domestic work.

Our focus in this paper is the experiences of domestic workers, rather than their employers who, although being the other side of the employer–employee relationship, were not interviewed for two reasons. First, we felt that given the uneven balance of

Table 1. Characteristics of domestic workers interviewed

Pseudonym	Country of origin (in alphabetical order)	'Race'	First language	Age (years)	Marital status	Children	Year of arrival	Immigration status	Current job: live-in/out
Barb	Canada	white	English	24	single	none	N/A	citizen	live-in
Kath	England	white	English	22	single	none	1989	open	live-in
Karen	England	white	English	23	single	none	1993	temp	live-in
Sue	England	white	English	23	single	none	1993	temp	live-in
Maryse	France	white	French	27	single	none	1991	temp	live-in
Ingrid	Germany	white	German	29	single	none	1991	temp	live-out
Silke	Germany	white	German	30	single	none	1986	landed	live-out
Alena	Hungary	white	Hungarian	26	single	none	1991	open	live-in
Anna	Hungary	white	Hungarian	27	divorced	none	1990	open	live-out
Maggie	Ire	white	English	29	single	none	1986	landed	live-in
Cynthia	Jamaica	non-white	English	30	single	none	1991	temp	live-in
Felicity	Jamaica	non-white	English	35	married	2	1992	temp	live-in
Edith	Philippines	non-white	Tagalog	50s	single	none	1986	landed	house-keeper, live-out
Joan	Philippines	non-white	Tagalog	32	married	1	1987	landed	live-out cashier*
Jocie	Philippines	non-white	Tagalog	34	single	none	1989	open	live-in
Naomi	Philippines	non-white	Tagalog	28	single	none	1991	temp	live-in
Wilma	Philippines	non-white	Tagalog	30	single	none	1990	open	live-in cashier*
Amy	Thailand	non-white	Thai	30	single	none	1989	landed	live-in cashier*

\*Woman with open/landed immigrant status who no longer works as a paid domestic worker.

power in the paid domestic work relation, and as it is domestic workers who most acutely experience this, it is their voices that are heard here. Secondly, many of the women interviewed were concerned that their job security and sensitively balanced working relationships would be jeopardised if their experiences and opinions were shared with their employers. Several of the women said they would have been less open or candid if their employers were also interviewed; others said they would have refused to participate.

I (Bernadette) conducted the interviews, and quickly realised that my own identity was a significant factor in the subtle and not too subtle interactions between myself and the participants (this issue has recently received a great deal of attention by geographers; see, for example, England, 1994; Katz, 1994; Moss, 1995b; Sparke, 1996). My country of origin (England), language and accent (south-east English), 'race' and culture (British-West Indian), education (graduate student at the University of Toronto), and, of course, gender, all to some extent affected the negotiation of the 'betweenness' of the researcher—researched relationship. I was able to relate with great ease with the English and Irish women. We chatted quite generally about our shared experience of being 'Anglos' in Canada. There were also partial points of connection between the Jamaican women and myself in terms of a shared 'West Indian' identity—they disclosed a number of experiences and opinions that I do not believe they would have so readily revealed to a Canadian or white English interviewer (like Kim!). At the same time, however, there were occasions when I realised they had assumed rather too much common ground and I was unable to appreciate fully the more subtle nuances of everything they said because I am not Jamaican.

Perhaps the greatest social distance was between the Filipina women and myself, which was in part due to a lack of shared language fluency and my unfamiliarity with their culture (all the interviews were conducted in English). I attended a number of INTERCEDE meetings (where I seemed to blend in quite well, until I spoke) and was able to talk more informally with domestic workers generally, especially Filipinas, who are the majority of the membership. Kim and I decided I should conduct more interviews with Filipinas, not only because they are the largest group of foreign domestic workers in Toronto, but because I wanted to obtain a clearer picture of the range of individual experiences and the complexities of their social worlds, precisely because I was less able to draw on overlapping biographies, partial commonalities and shared experiences.

I did not consciously attempt to portray or exploit particular facets of my identity to gain the women's confidence, but these facets seemed to emerge as access and confidences were negotiated. This is clearly a two-way process. Throughout the interviews I realised that I was privy to only a very small fraction of these women's complex identities (and they to mine). Whatever the overt significance of our individual and collective identities in mediating the researcher—researched relationship, both myself and the women interviewed are complex and nuanced individuals with personalities, behaviour and attitudes that shift and change in many contexts. This research only aims to scratch the surface of some of these human complexities.

Of course, Kim's positionality was also important in the research process. While Kim and I share some commonalities—we are both well-educated, British-born women who have/had (im)migrated to Canada—there are important differences. Not least is that Kim is white and that there was a very significant asymmetrical power relation (even 'class difference') between us when this research was conducted, because this paper had its beginnings in my MA research paper, written under Kim's supervision. While we



have chosen to employ ‘we’ throughout most of the paper, by no means does this mean that we agreed on all readings of the interviews (nor the literature). Indeed, our readings are based on partial, embodied, situated knowledges meaning that we cannot fully know the women with whom I spoke, and this paper is more or less the consensus (and compromise) we reached at the time the paper went to press.

## Employer–Employee Relations and the Construction of Difference

A number of major themes emerged from the interviews regarding the relationship between the paid domestic workers and their middle-class employers. We examine these and emphasise the ways in which the subtle differences in identity are mediated through employer–employee relations. In particular, we look at the domestic workers’ experiences of living-in, being ‘one of the family’ and the degree of respect, dignity and self-worth they feel. We not only consider these experiences around issues of class and ‘race’/ethnicity, but in terms of domestic workers’ immigration/citizenship status, country of origin (or nationality), and language.

### *Living-In*

Living-in means you are on call 24 hours a day. Living-in means if (the employers) feel like going to a party at 10 o’clock, then that’s OK, the nanny’s there. And you don’t get paid for that. (Felicity, Jamaican)

More than any other issue that emerged from the interviews, the living-in requirement was unanimously cited as being especially problematic. However, this was not the case for every woman interviewed. As a white, Anglophone Canadian, Barb was not required to live-in. She saw living-in as an opportunity to live away from her parents that enabled her to continue living in a comfortable middle-class home (something she could not afford if she was in a different occupation). Regardless of their motivations for coming to Canada or their long-term immigration goals, all the women who entered Canada as domestic workers/caregivers [4] were legally required to live-in their employer’s home for their first 2 years in Canada. Although some commented that living-in was beneficial in providing an initial level of security (for instance, having a home without the responsibilities of bills, or travelling to work), many soon found that living-in became increasingly difficult—especially for those women beyond their mid-twenties [5]. In fact, Ingrid (German) and Anna (Hungarian), both in their late twenties, admitted to moving out of their employer’s home before the end of their required 2 years as live-ins.

Corroborating previous studies we found that regardless of their identities, most of the women interviewed felt that they had experienced some level of exploitation through excessively long working hours, overtime without pay, restricted days off, or performing tasks outside their contract—all of which they attributed wholly or partially to their living-in. As Joan (Filipina) and Felicity (Jamaican) put it:

When you live-in they can demand a lot, because they see that you’re there. In the night, if they want something to eat or drink, they will call you. As long as they are awake, then you have to stay awake with them too. (Joan, Filipina)

I knew it wasn’t going to be easy living in someone else’s home. What I didn’t prepare myself for was the subtle abuses ... Living-in means they come in at 5:30pm, but you keep the kids until they’ve finished supper. Then you clean up, after you clean up, they might decide they want to go for ice-cream or coffee, but you are still working. When you even mention that you’re supposed

to get overtime pay, they say 'You're a trouble-maker'. They say no-one has ever asked for that before. (Felicity, Jamaican)

Although exploitation was a general feeling, it is interesting to observe the ways in which different groups of domestic workers experienced these problems and how they were able to deal with them. One important issue was the perceived need to remain in an unsuitable job. When the English NNEB [6] trained nannies reported enduring poor working or living conditions it was usually in their first job, which was often arranged before their arrival in Canada. These jobs often fell short of their expectations, but they remained with these employers in the pursuit of a good reference for their next job. As Kath described:

My first job changed, that's why I was only there for a year. It was awful. They changed a lot of things once I got here ... they wanted a housekeeper and they took the car away from me, extended my hours, but that just wasn't on. When I tried to talk to them about it they said they'd deal with it later, but later never came. When you're at college they drum it into you that you have to do your first year, you have to get that experience and then a good reference. They don't tell you how easy it is to get another job over here. So I stuck it out, I was unhappy, but I did it. (Kath, English)

Despite Kath's confidence and assertive nature, she felt powerless to effect change with her exploitative employers. As a 'career nanny' her perceived need for a good first reference effectively removed her bargaining power and left her with no choice but to 'stick it out', even though she was unhappy. Of course, while asymmetrical relations can still exist for English NNEB nannies, many soon realised that their 'Englishness', experience and training could secure them a higher paying job with better conditions and more respect. As Sue noted:

(My first employer) wanted the best of both worlds, but at a very cheap price. She was silly, because she won't get a qualified English nanny to do what she wanted. Other (nationalities of) nannies will work extra hours with no pay, but not me! For a lot of my English nanny friends, their first job doesn't go well. Once they've got into Canada, they'll get themselves a job that they want. (Sue, English)

Sue soon realised that the fact that she was a trained English nanny meant she could pick and choose the best jobs and accommodation. She went on to describe her subsequent employment experiences:

I went for eleven interviews before I got my second job, and I was offered ten of them, and I turned them down for various reasons, mainly because the house was too small. I wanted some space. (Sue, English)

Certainly when we reviewed the women's work-day length and their responsibilities, we found that Barb and the three English women had slightly shorter workdays and that their non-childcare chores tended only to extend to tasks associated with the child(ren), such as doing their laundry or cooking their meals. We think that for a number of the 'third world' women, it was their desire to apply for landed immigrant status that may have led them to put up with intolerable conditions and treatment from their employers. In a number of instances, domestic work provided much-needed remittance to support children and relatives in their homeland. Changing jobs entailed bureaucratic delays, considerable expense and could reduce their chances of being viewed as reliable and hard-working when they came to submit their application for landed-immigrant status.

Lack of freedom to change jobs, negotiate with employers or even complain about their treatment was expressed by a number of 'third world' women, including Cynthia and Jocie:

Each time you have to change jobs, you pay Immigration \$100 ... It doesn't look good on your record—that's why a lot of people take the abuse, you can't be bothered changing this and that. And then the probability of you meeting someone who is decent is 0.000000 up to infinity 1. (Cynthia, Jamaican)

There's less problem [with Filipinas], because they don't complain. Even though they get into trouble, they just stay quiet. You know why? Because they don't want to get bad record from government. They want their immigration status. (Jocie, Filipina)

For most, living-in contributed to the feelings of isolation and loneliness associated with their job. Joan (a Filipina carer of an elderly couple) remarked that 'when you live-in, you feel lonely, when you don't see anybody, just this old couple'; and Amy (Thai) said that: 'My first employer never made me feel as if their home was mine. I missed my family. I became very lonesome and they wouldn't allow my friends to visit.' Many of the domestic workers said that they felt like an intruder in their employer's house. For example, paid domestic workers are often segregated to selected areas of the household at specific times of the day—a practice that Romero (1992) terms 'spatial deference' (also see Glenn, 1992). Cynthia (Jamaican) illustrated this concept when she talked of her employer's insistence on family privacy extending to making Cynthia wait until they had finished eating the meal that she had prepared, before 'crawling out of my room to get something to eat'. Of course, 'spatial deference' highlights the use of space to reinforce the invisibility expected of domestic workers when their services were not required; and the 'non-person', invisible identity domestic workers are expected to assume emphasises the significance of geography at the household scale.

Typically, the women resented living-in because it often engendered a feeling of being trapped and also impinged upon their independence as adults. This was summed up by Joyce (Filipina): 'I'm living under someone else's rules' and Ingrid (German) 'I don't have to tell them where I'm going or what I'm doing all the time, but they ask anyway'. Such feelings were exacerbated by the family's lack of respect for the domestic worker's privacy and space, especially when they have to share a bathroom, or if their bedrooms are all on the same floor. Immigration Canada states that employers should 'provide accommodation which ensures privacy, such as a private room with a lock on the door', for which room and board is deducted monthly (Employment and Immigration Canada, 1992). Six of the women said that in at least one job they had bedroom doors without locks, which sometimes resulted in members of the family entering without knocking. While most of the women felt that they had reasonable accommodation, two extreme cases are noteworthy. In a previous job, Joan (Filipina) slept on a spare bed in the living room, and Kath (English) lived in a five-room basement apartment with a private entrance. Kath told Bernadette that she felt she was able to secure a job with a more equitable employer and better accommodation because of her training, which is also inextricably linked to her 'Englishness'.

Regardless of how equitable or informal the employer–employee relationship was, the domestic workers still needed to get away from their employers at the end of the day. Having their own space was important, because as Kath pointed out: 'You don't want to mix with them all the time—you've got your own life to lead' (Kath, English). In order to maintain a level of autonomy, many of the women discussed needing to get away at

weekends to relieve their weekly stress. A number of the Filipinas pooled their meagre resources and shared an apartment on their days off. Almost all the women had created informal coping strategies reminiscent of those described by Cock (1980) and Cohen (1991), including meeting friends (who were often also domestic workers) on days off and chatting with other domestic workers in the park while supervising their 'charges'. In terms of more formal institutions, many of the Filipinas commented that they benefited from meeting other domestic workers at social events and monthly meetings organised by INTERCEDE (meetings that also informed them of their rights and facilitated their politicisation). Alena (Hungarian) described social gatherings organised by a particularly progressive domestic worker placement agency in her suburban Toronto neighbourhood. Alena said these gatherings were empowering and reassuring, and provided women with the vital opportunity to escape the isolation of live-in domestic work that may be more extreme in less accessible suburban areas, especially if they do not have access to a car. Similarly, others (mainly Europeans and one Filipina) discussed the inspirational strength and support they received from a conference organised annually by the Canadian Coalition for in-Home Care (an advocacy group representing the concerns of employers, agencies and their (predominantly European) 'caregivers'). This strongly suggests the important social and political role played by some (unfortunately, very few) domestic worker placement agencies and other occupation-based organisations, in fostering social contacts among domestic workers.

Generally, living-in was less resented in more equitable, respectful employer–employee relationships, and the more privacy and freedom the women had, the more content they tended to be living-in. Once in a 'good job', compromises were less frequent and usually compensated, and/or appreciated.

*'Like One of the Family'?*

You're supposed to feel so privileged to be part of their family that you overlook everything else. (Cynthia, Jamaican)

The interviews indicated that 'living-in' was an almost uniformly problematic experience for the women, but that the experiences of being 'like one of the family' was less even. The emotional involvement of domestic workers in private households can result in mutual friendships with the employers. Rollins (1985) even uses the term 'maternalism' to convey the highly gendered and personal nature of this type of work relation, where women's supportive, nurturing roles alter the power dynamic. While nationality, 'race'/ethnicity and class differences are very significant, the extent and way in which personalism is experienced obviously also depends on the personalities of the individual domestic worker and her employer. However, we think the interviews suggest that more equitable, mutually supportive and respectful relationships were most often experienced where there was greater similarity in the identities of the domestic worker and her employer.

More than any other group, the white Anglophones (Canadian, English and Irish) reported having more informal and symmetrical relationships with their employers, sometimes describing their employers as 'friends', or feeling that they are considered to be 'like one of the family'. As Barb (Canadian) told Bernadette:

Sometimes we go from being like best friends to employer–employee. There's a line you can't cross when you're in this job. It's kinda weird, sometimes

you're really good friends, and sometimes you can just say the wrong thing, if you are not in the friendship mode. (Barb, Canadian)

However, being 'like one of the family' was also interpreted by some of the woman as a means of extracting further unpaid physical and affective labour, without the genuine caring and respect associated with familial relationships. Gregson and Lowe (1994) describe such relations as false kinship ties. Felicity expresses her disdain at what she felt were false displays of affection and kinship from her white employer:

What I can't deal with is the idea that because I mop their floors, I'm stupid. They can do anything they want to me. They don't have to respect you, but they come with this disguise, 'Oh, you're part of the family.' They hug you. I don't want to be hugged! For God's sake, I'm your employee, treat me like an employee! I don't want to be hugged. But that's their way of trying to outsmart you. It's emotional blackmail. You're meant to think, 'This nice white lady, she's hugging me.' Then I'm supposed to take everything they dish out. I don't want that. I just want to be respected as a worker, with an employer-employee relationship. (Felicity, Jamaican)

Both Jamaican women with whom Bernadette spoke objected to what they considered to be a patronising emotional association. Their comments also reflect Rollins' (1985) and Romero's (1992) observations that personalism across racial lines is often advantageous to the employer. Women of colour can become safe confidants for their middle-class, white employers, as they each tend to have entirely different social networks. The inherent power relation means that the middle-class, white employer need not fear rebuttal, disapproval or rejection.

In the case of Amy (Thai), Edith, Joan, Jocie, Naomi, and Wilma (Filipinas) a marginalised language, as well as 'race'/ethnicity, are introduced into the employer-employee asymmetry. Unlike Cynthia and Felicity (Jamaicans), Joan, Naomi and Wilma (Filipinas) said that they *preferred* to feel 'like one of the family', and that if their employers treated them well, they were happy to work hard. We wondered whether perhaps their search for respect and dignity in live-in domestic work resulted in trading in additional work or poor living conditions for the psychological benefits of family inclusion. Joan gives examples of conditions she has tolerated, that we suspect many other domestic workers would reject:

In my second job they got only one bedroom apartment, so they give me an extra bed in the living room. But I don't mind because they are very nice to me. They really treat me as a member of the family. We eat together, we watch TV together. They are a very nice family, (Joan, Filipina)

Personalism can also be extended to gift-giving by employers. This was mentioned by Jocie and Edith (Filipinas), who were appreciative of these gestures. However, this form of benevolent materialism was interpreted by some of the women as an attempt to 'buy' compliance. Moreover, Romero (1992) suggests that gift-giving could be seen as strengthening the employer's own image as kind and generous. The practice of giving gifts can further reinscribe an unequal and unilateral relationship, where the conveyed message is that the domestic worker is 'needy', which serves to reinforce class distinctions between employer and employee.

Of course, no matter how symmetrical the employer-employee relationship, there still remains a status differential in terms of the work relation. Maryse (French) came to Canada as a nanny to learn English. In her first job she had difficulties based on her

language ability. However, in her present job, class has emerged as an prominent factor in her relationship with her employer, who does not have a paid job outside the home:

She's not from a rich family, but, because she's married to a neuro-surgeon, she feels she must live a good life ... she's not a bad person, she's just snobby, and because of that it makes a big difference. *She's a woman, she says 'It's because I pay (you) I need everything, you have to give me everything'*. And she's really demanding. When she wants something, she wants it now. She's just like a spoilt kid. (Maryse, French, emphasis added)

We see the intersection of gender and class as very evident here. Asymmetric power relations are enforced because Maryse's employer feels that she should be able to purchase obedience through her husband's class position and her status as his wife. The gendered character of the domestic division of labour also comes into play as the employer sees herself as paying Maryse to do 'her' chores. Moreover, it seems to us that the deference inherent in this type of work relation may have placed the employer in a position of power not otherwise available to her as a 'housewife'. This power differential seemed to have been internalised by Maryse who said: 'You feel like a real slave ... I feel extremely humiliated sometimes. I know I shouldn't take it that way, but its the way I feel'.

At the same time, and despite the relative power 'advantage' white, Anglophone domestic workers can experience in work relations some, including Maggie, appeared well aware of class differences and the stigma often associated with their occupation.

In the really wealthy areas, a lot of the girls are treated as if they are beneath the person they are working for and taken for granted more so. I can't stand that power, status thing. I've been out with men who have had better jobs than the father of the kids I'm looking after, and I've got friends who are doctors and lawyers. So it's terrible to feel that way, but it's society isn't it, that makes you feel (like that) even though you are in charge of their most important commodity. (Maggie, Irish)

Maggie indicates that she has both a general 'class consciousness' of the low status attributed to domestic workers, as well as an awareness of the subtlety of the articulation of class differences in her own life.

The introduction of 'race'/ethnicity differences into an already asymmetrical relationship multiplies the subtleties of those differences already inherent in class difference. Cynthia and Felicity (Jamaicans) both told Bernadette that they had experienced racism (as well as classism), often in quite overt and complex ways. Felicity maintained that racism was fundamental to explaining her situation, although she clearly understood that it is impossible to untangle 'race' from other structures of differentiation.

Sometimes when they treat you badly, it's because you're black, and they really just don't have any respect for you as a human being, no matter how educated, well-spoken and no matter how good you are with the kids. But it's also because they pay you to be in their house that makes it even worse, you become nothing in their eyes. I can't tell you why, there are so many reasons, but they happen together, *we come as one package* ... They just abuse, abuse, abuse you. It doesn't matter how intelligent you may appear to be, they just look at you as a black helper ... *Colour doesn't have any respect for class*. They will still see you as a helper, no matter what. (Felicity, Jamaican, emphasis added)

In short, intimacy, affective labour and a high degree of personalism often veil the asymmetrical class relation associated with paid domestic employment. However, we think the interviews also reveal that the class relation is constructed in relation to interlocking systems of 'race'/ethnicity and gender.

*Respect, Dignity and Self-Worth*

I'm pretty well respected ... what you say goes, and they're willing to come around to what you want. Well this one (her current employer), more than the first one. They know what you're capable of. She's always had NNEBs. She knows what to expect. (Kath, English)

Respect and dignity are fundamental to a person's feeling of self-worth and self-esteem, and are important in defining the dynamics of the social relations of paid domestic work. It does seem that the degree of respect experienced by different groups of domestic workers is highly variable and nuanced, with the overriding significant factor being the precise nature of each employer–employee relation—the attitude of the employer to her employee, and the ability of each domestic worker to be assertive in a given situation. The relative presence or absence of respect in the employer–employee work relation can also indicate the level of asymmetry in the power relation. Bradshaw-Camball and Cohen's (1988) concepts of the employer's 'concern with equity and fairness' versus the employee's 'sense of self-worth' are useful here.

As a white, Anglophone Canadian, Barb shared the same citizenship and (at least in terms of her family background) class position as her employer. So, relative to the foreign domestic workers Bernadette interviewed, Barb experienced the most symmetrical power relations with her employer.

My dad is not poor. I am not a poor person, I'm basically pretty privileged. My boss finds it weird that I'm on the same social scale as she is. I'm not impressed by the car she drives, or the house she lives in, so in a way that is different. I'm Canadian, I speak near-perfect English, and I'm educated ... (our relationship) is pretty good. Having me was a bit of an adjustment because she was used to having a Filipina nanny, and to have someone who understands everything she says to me, and someone who's not going to fight her exactly, but not meekly let her walk all over me, was a big change for her. Sometimes we have our altercations over it. Other than that she really likes me, and I really like her. (Barb, Canadian)

Barb's confident and assertive personality must be placed in the broader context of her identity. Barb makes the interconnections between numerous systems of difference when explaining her reasonably symmetrical work relation. She does not stress her class background alone. Her country of origin (including its relative wealth), citizenship, language and education intersect to construct her relatively privileged position. Indeed, the openly contested nature of this work relation appears to have presented more challenges for Barb's employer, who had been in a position of clear authority and control with her previous Filipina employee. As Barb put it: 'The difference with me is that I have more choice, more freedom. Tomorrow if I think "well, screw you", I can walk out the door and go home.' Barb became a nanny because she 'loves kids', but she only saw her job as 'something to do for now'. We argue that Barb's secure social, economic and political status as a Canadian, without immigration or employment restrictions, helped create a much more equitable power relation between her and her employer.

Although not as secure as Barb in terms of citizenship, the white, Anglophone, foreign domestic workers also tended to form fairly equitable and friendly relationships with their employers and had a strong 'sense of self-worth'. For example, all three of the English women maintained that their NNEB qualifications are recognised around the world as setting them apart from other domestic workers. We interpret their remarks as indicating that in addition to being white and Anglophone, their training allowed them to command a high degree of respect from their employers. As Sue remarked:

The people I work for now respect me a lot. One, because I am a qualified nanny, and two, because I did four years of nursing. The mother is quite highly strung, so she needs someone who is calm and will say 'don't be silly'. So that works quite well. She takes it quite well. I'm very blunt with her. I tell her to calm down and there is no problem. (Sue, English)

Although asymmetrical relations can still exist for English NNEB nannies many soon realise that, if necessary, their 'Englishness', experience and training will enable them to easily secure another job, perhaps with higher pay, better conditions and more respect. Similarly, the Irish woman, Maggie, expressed the confidence that her nationality, 'race', language and personality allowed her in forming a more symmetrical relationship with her employers:

I've had three live-in employers. My relationship was slightly different with each of them, but usually we became friends. It was the way I was brought up. I would never let myself feel that I was less than anyone, or would never feel that anyone was less than me either. And I will transmit that to people. Basically you're treated in the way you let yourself be treated. I think if you come across as being intelligent, responsible, then you'll be treated that way. (Maggie, Irish)

Maggie's identity means that she never feels 'less than anyone', which reinforces the confidence her positionality affords her.

The other groups of foreign domestic workers seldom expressed the same level of friendship with, or respect from their employers. English language difficulties can distance non-Anglophone domestic workers (even those from Europe) from the mutual respect or intimacy of personal friendship. Although they often talked about respect and mutuality, the non-Anglophone domestic workers also talked of being made to feel 'stupid' because of language and communication difficulties:

These employers respect me, they respect what I have to say about the children, what I think should happen. They respect me (but sometimes) I think they must think that we are pretty stupid ... They really underestimated my intelligence, which is really insulting. (Silke, German)

However, it seemed to us that the non-Anglophone Europeans often challenged their employers when they 'underestimated their intelligence'. As Anna (Hungarian) told Bernadette, 'If your English is not that great, they think you're as stupid as your English is. But the first time you show that you are not, they know it!' We feel it is important to differentiate between East and West Europeans. For instance, Anna and Alena (Hungarians) experienced further degrees of isolation and alienation based on their transition from a socialist background to the Western culture of Canada. Alena felt that her employer had been especially neglectful of her responsibilities towards her foreign employee, and was insensitive to Alena's 'culture shock'. She felt that this, combined with her feelings of powerlessness and her employer's apparent lack of respect for her needs, prevented Alena from objecting to her employer's demands for emotional support:



She's a single mother, when she comes home after a hard day, I am her spouse! When she talks to me about her troubles, all her hard times at work, somewhere behind that (is) 'what an easy life you've got'. Sometimes she wants to comfort me and say 'I know how hard your day can be', but basically, I know what she thinks. Many times we ended up talking, imagine, I am desperate to get to my room ... I am willing to listen to her, but I'm very bothered by the fact that I'm paid there (and) she's still the boss actually, no matter how friendly she is. (And the) fact that she can use those things against you (in day-to-day confrontations and negotiations, or even with Employment and Immigration Canada), if I start talking about my problems. (Alena, Hungarian)

This situation is clearly not a mutually supportive emotional relationship. The asymmetric power relation is obvious, and it is only the emotional needs of the employer that are being met, with little consideration for the boundaries of the work relation, or Alena's personal needs.

'Race'/ethnicity differences further reinforced feelings of language inferiority, particularly if the employers did not seem to respect their employees efforts to learn English. Moreover, having their intellect demeaned was a particularly familiar experience for the Thai and Filipina women, as Amy (Thai) and Joan (Filipina) show:

I didn't get on well with my employer. I couldn't speak English well. After seven months things got better, but they think you are stupid because you can't speak English, so they over-work you, they think you don't know the rules ... I was so upset when I heard them call me stupid. That made me determined to learn to speak English. (Amy, Thai)

Sometimes when I want to tell her something, like I keep forgetting the proper words to use to say it and I get frustrated. I have to think first and then go back to her. My first employer thinks I am stupid. They don't want me to talk to other Filipinos. They say they don't want me to use the telephones. (Joan, Filipina)

Indeed, Joan's comments also indicate that her first employer actively increasing her sense of isolation by trying to prohibit her from having contact with other Filipinos. The interviews are full of statements that illustrate that the stereotype of the uneducated, poor, 'third world' domestic worker of colour, who cannot speak English is so persuasive and potent that it can lead to their educational achievements or middle-class background being discounted. Joan described her previous job:

At my last employer, her daughter—she were talking to me, asking me about life in the Philippines ... And I was telling her, I never worked as a domestic back home. All of my family are educated, all the children and everything. And she felt that because she was not educated, she was just a high school graduate, working in Bell Canada, she felt like I am over her. *She said to me, even though you are educated, they don't acknowledge your education here and you still belong to poor country.* That's what she told me! I don't say anything, because I think I hurt her feelings in some way. *She had to find some way to put me down.* I just don't say anything. I feel bad, but I just don't say anything. I just keep quiet. (Joan, Filipina, emphasis added)

It is evident that Joan disrupted and challenged the 'third world domestic' stereotype. This family member re-asserted an asymmetric power relation by *re-constructing* Joan as

a 'third world domestic' by discounting her worth, achievements and background as 'inferior' to her own.

In the case of Cynthia and Felicity (Jamaicans), 'race' is introduced without the added complication of English-language difficulties. Even when language problems are not an issue, the feelings of inferiority and disrespect remain, as Cynthia indicated:

It's a matter of colour too. Let's face it ... it's a combination of the fact that you're third world, and it's racial too. Because they figure *you're black and you're stupid, or you're coloured and stupid, or you're third world and stupid*. ... Even if you're not stupid, it doesn't make a difference! (Cynthia, Jamaican, emphasis added)

Felicity and Cynthia's experience of racism greatly shaped their consideration of respect or dignity. Their comments show that they see 'race' and racism as fundamental in explaining their exploitation and the lack of respect shown by their employers. However, as Felicity said, they recognised that it is impossible to untangle 'race' from other systems of difference that shape their situation.

As with personalism, a 'sense of self-worth' is dependant on a number of structural factors, including 'race'/ethnicity, class, education and training, as well as other factors such as personality, life experience, support networks and family responsibilities. Similarly, the employer's 'concern with equity and fairness' can also be related to her own and her employee's identity, personality and life experiences. Overall, the interviews indicated to us that the white Anglophones generally appeared to have a higher degree of confidence and a stronger 'sense of self-worth', enabling them to be more assertive, while non-Anglophones and women of colour experienced increasing degrees of difficulty in negotiating their position and gaining their employer's respect.

## Conclusions

Our paper illustrates how paid domestic workers' experiences of the employer–employee relation are mediated through an interlocking, relational system of difference, particularly gender, class, 'race'/ethnicity, immigration/citizenship status and language. Commonalities of gender and occupation shared by domestic workers are cross-cut by locations of privilege and marginality in terms of class, citizenship/immigration status, 'race'/ethnicity, country of origin, training, and language. The most privileged was the white, Anglophone Canadian who experienced the most freedom, choice and power, which meant she had a much more secure, symmetrical relationship with her employer compared to many of her foreign counterparts. Of the foreign domestic workers interviewed, the specific articulation of systems of difference led to a range of experiences of the extent of asymmetry in employer–employee power relations, with the greatest symmetry tending to be in those situations where the employee and employer held more similar positions in the social relations of difference.

However, we also want to emphasise that many of the women interviewed shared a number of common concerns. Almost all the domestic workers had, at some stage, experienced difficulties related to living-in, especially in dealing with employers who frequently demanded additional duties not stated on their contracts. But those who are less marginalised tended to be better able to negotiate these situations. Their locations in the systems of difference often related to their 'sense of self-worth' in terms of their occupation and their experience of respect. One result tended to be that Anglophone 'nannies', unlike 'third world' 'domestic workers' were more likely to find jobs with better hours and less or no housework.

We have attempted to provide insights into the dynamic, complex and interrelated character of the processes that shape employer–employee relations marked by the antagonisms, contradictions and ambiguities associated with a ‘workplace’ being someone else’s ‘home’. We have stressed that specific articulations of difference (as well as the specific context and the individual personalities involved) produce difference constellations of experiences of live-in paid domestic work.

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## NOTES

- [1] Alice Childress’ book is a fictional account that draws on lived experiences from the everyday lives of African-American domestic workers.
- [2] Domestic workers’ invisibility and isolation in the household have hampered their attempts at unionising. In many instances, established unions have not been particularly supportive of domestic workers’ efforts to organise, which further marginalises domestic workers and raises a number of issues regarding class solidarity. Moreover, in Canada, domestic workers are not covered by all provincial labour laws, and are effectively prohibited from unionising since more than one person is required per bargaining unit (Ng, 1993; ILGWU & INTERCEDE, 1993; personal communications with INTERCEDE staff, 1997).
- [3] A 1991 INTERCEDE study (Serwonka, 1991) concluded that approximately 95% of INTERCEDE’s membership is from the ‘third world’, mainly the Philippines (65–70%) and the Caribbean (10–25%). In 1990/91, only approximately 75% of the foreign domestic workers entering Canada were from the ‘third world’.
- [4] The more valued occupational term ‘nanny’ was used by nearly all the Anglo/European women to describe themselves and others, regardless of training. However, many of the ‘third world’ women tended to use the more stigmatised term ‘domestic worker’ to describe themselves. When this latter group used ‘nanny’ it was either applied more generally, or, more frequently, to refer to Europeans. An alternative reading is that ‘domestic worker’ is a more politicised term which makes explicit that the domestic worker is an employee and not ‘one of the family’.
- [5] In fact, most of the women *were* beyond their mid-twenties. It is noteworthy that it is only the Canadian and the three English women who are in their early twenties. In part, this stems from their reasons for doing the work they do. The Canadian saw being a live-in nanny as temporary. She planned to be a writer, and spent much of her free time (of which she was very protective) writing. The three English women saw themselves as ‘career nannies’, in that they had trained as nannies and had only ever worked as nannies. Furthermore, at least when they arrived, they saw themselves as ‘transient workers’ to use Cohen’s (1991) phrase. On the other hand, many of the older women had worked in other fields (especially nursing and teaching) prior to coming to Canada, and some had come with the intent of applying for landed immigrant status when they became eligible. In fact, Felicity (Jamaican) and Joan (Filipina) both had partners and children whom they hoped to sponsor, and other women talked of sponsoring parents or siblings.
- [6] The NNEB (National Nursery Examination Board) diploma is offered only in Britain. It is a 2 year, post-secondary training programme and is one of the most widely recognised qualifications in childcare.

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