

This paper is a work in progress related to my Ph.D. fieldwork, as well as a very rudimentary draft. All of the ideas that I present are still in their beginning stages of thought and will not fully be flushed out until the end of this summer when I begin the writing process. I appreciate any and all comments and suggestions regarding the overall project, possible sources/ interview subjects, etc. If you are crazy enough to want to quote this, please do not.

#### Overview of project:

My PhD thesis is a historical study of domestic work and domestic workers in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa (hereafter KZN) from the 1920s to 1960. Utilizing primary source documentation and oral interviews, I will be tracing two major trends within KZN social and labor history: the shift from a primarily male to female work force within the home through social forces and racial panic; and the formalization of the domestic work industry through legislation and the fabrication of a cultural need for domestic help within the majority of white South African homes. Based on these trends, I argue that it was this prevalence of African women living away from their families and within the homes of their employers that lead to the eventual fragmentation of the African family unit that is today an ever-present and frequently documented reality of South African life.

The significance of my research on domestic work at this time and in this region is two-fold. On the one hand, I am historicizing the fragmentation of the African family due to the generational migration of women through the domestic worker industry that began with the racially motivated push for female workers. On the other hand, I am filling the historical gap of scholarship on labor and gender history in KZN.

The modern African family in KZN is characterized by fluid relationships and prolonged parental absences. While I do not argue that it was exclusively the industry of domestic work that made this so, I do maintain that it was in this time period, and largely due to the increased migration of women for domestic work, that the fluidity of family relations became increasingly normalized. I track the movement of women through census reports and historical documents, as well as through my own oral interviews that probe family relationships and interactions, and the emotions related to 'distance' from childhood to their working lives.

By exploring the KZN example, I am including three unique factors that were not present in the other provinces of South Africa and have yet to be explored historically as a factor in labor history. The first is the predominance of English South Africans amongst the white population of KZN who espoused virtues of Victorian values and notions of domesticity. The second is the inclusion of the formerly indentured Indian population who competed with the African people for jobs, social standing and economic opportunities. The third is the comparative agricultural strength of the Zulu peoples of KZN that allowed African men to migrate to the cities of KZN rather than the gold and diamond mines of modern day Gauteng and Northern Cape Provinces.

#### Sources: Secondary

Domestic work in South Africa is an evolving and ever-present issue for the African people of KZN, as this industry was often one of the only routes to employment in this time period for young men and women in the cities and farm communities. Jacklyn

Cock's landmark book, *Maids and Madams* (1980 and 1989), is the scholarship on which all other studies have based their foundations and interest in the field of domestic work in southern Africa. I, being no different, also credit Cock for her pioneering work. Other scholars who have look directly into the field of domestic work and the larger theme of domesticity in southern Africa are: Cecillie Swaisland's (1993) look into white immigrants who worked as domestics, Belinda Bozzoli's (1991) oral study of domestic workers from a small town in central South Africa, Cherryl Walker's (1990) edited work on gender in southern Africa, Karen Tranberg Hansen's (1992) edited work on domesticity in southern Africa, and most recently, Jennifer Fish's (2006) political feminist work on domestic workers in Cape Town, South Africa. For the male perspective in pre-1920s transitional time, all scholars are reliant upon Charles van Onselen (1982) and Keltso Atkins (1986) for their historical research into the lives of Zulu washermen in the late-nineteenth century that create the demand for professional laundry service. What bonds all of these previous pieces of scholarship together are their central themes of exploitability in Africans and lived experience on a day to day basis. Though Bozzoli was the first to push beyond the theme of exploitability to include issues of economic and female empowerment, however, in looking at such a small group of women from one middle-class town, I feel that she over-generalized the and over-stated the women's ability to choose. From this literature that is directly related to the topic of domestic work in southern Africa, I think that it is clear that to write a history of the occupation in general terms is to leave out large amount of people who did not have a "normal" experience. Therefore I stress that I am painting a picture out of what I have seen with the information that I have found, and that throughout this process I am looking for the largest variety of experience that I can. Ultimately this is why I have chosen to conduct interviews in various areas of KZN, and not just in the urban centers.

While the aforementioned sociologists and historians have studied domestic work in South Africa in the past three decades, no other academic has attempted to look at this time period as it relates to domestic work. Atkins's work on the *Amawasha* Guild of *amaZulu* washermen from the turn of the twentieth century Natal, various studies of the indentured Indian experience in the homes of white South Africans in Natal until the 19-teens, and Preston-Whyte's various anthropological studies of the female domestic worker in Durban from 1964-1984 provide the proverbial bookends to my own research that will attempt to bridge these historical experiences as well as explain the shift from largely men to almost exclusively women within the industry. Additionally, the aforementioned studies primarily used the overarching theme of exploitation as they documented the daily activities of household maids from the 1960s to present day, aside from Atkin's work on the *Amawasha*, which covers both an earlier time period and the work of a guild. While I do not discount their relevance to the debate, my study aims to move beyond the one-dimensional exploitation discourse to include the themes of identity, gender relations and household politics, as well as the grand concept of 'distance' (physical, emotional and social) in order to create a more nuanced look at the men and women who worked in the homes and gardens of KZN.

I have received much help in the formulation of my theoretical lines of questioning from the wealth of new information on Zulu Identity from the historical perspective (Carton, Laband, Sithole, eds. 2007), as well as in the themes of social distance and body pollution, spatial identity, and gender and sexuality from many other

disciplines. In addition, Carline Hamilton's (1995, 1998) re-assessment of Zulu culture and life based upon African paradigms over white interpretations. While Cock (1980) began an inquiry into the idea of social distance, she stopped short in her desire to focus more on the day-to-day toil of the exploited worker. Continued research into this field as well as the more specific field of female body pollution and disease has been produced in order to understand this concept of cleanliness and Zulu medical cosmology's development through increased white interaction, including by Carton (2006), Suzanne Leclerc-Madlala (2007), and Harriet Ngubane's 1977 foundational work on Zulu traditional healers and new diseases. Spatial identity is a key theme that will prove to be a fruitful line of questioning for my informants, and has been specifically addressed by Rebecca Ginsburg's (2001) architecture dissertation on the placement of servant's quarters and Rebekah Lee's (2005, 2006) historical look into African home improvements. This theme was also expounded upon by Gaitskell's (1982) look at Christian influences on African women, Nelson Mandela's choice in floor plans (seen in his autobiography, 1995), and in more recent times to ideas of respectability through "being marriageable" (Thenjiwe Magwaza, 2007) and a loss of respectability through illegitimacy (Sandra Berman and Margaret Naude, 1991). Also crucial to the understanding of South African labor are the many studies on female migrancy, including Teresa Barnes (1992) who first proposed the validity of female migration, Karen Jochelson (1995) who studied the various paradigms of morality based upon group identification, and labor inclusion through empowerment (Helen Bradford's look at unionization, 1987), or coercion (Miriam Lacey, 1981, and Atkins, 1993). Beyond the theoretical, there have been several articles, books, and studies/ theses, which informed my overall narrative of life in KZN in this time period. Jeremy Marten, Krista O'Donnell, Elizabeth Schmidt, John Pape all have looked into rape scares, crime and punishment, and African female sexuality in white homes.

In addition to scholarly sources on domestic work and the surrounding themes and theory, works of fiction are also tremendously useful for collating themes of distance and identity, to the monotony and torment of day-to-day labor. For example, the books of Sindiwe Magona (1994, 1998, 1999) and Ntombi (1987) tell stories of family pain and a mother's anguish at leaving children in order to work. Conversely, the fiction of Zakes Mda (2002) and Miriam Tlali (1975) create a picture of strength and modernity through the use of satire in urban situations separate from rural links to traditions. Other works that cannot be classified as scholarly nor works of fiction, books such as Sue Gordon's *Talent for Tomorrow* (1985) and Tessa Le Roux's *We Have Families Too* (1995), supplant personal interviews with personal narratives collected by other researchers and social workers within South Africa.

### Primary

I began looking through documents from the turn of the twentieth century in an attempt to find a logical start point for my study that would encompass the period of time that domestic work was shifting from a male to a female occupation. This summer I spent a week looking through the American Board papers at Yale Divinity, hoping to find a reference to an increase of African women in Durban and other cities of KZN. I also spent some time looking at their curriculum for the girl's school, thinking that perhaps if I could note an increase in attention to the domestic sciences, I might be able to assume an increase in demand for African girls and women in white homes. This theory was very

short-lived, as the primary goal of these domestic exercises was to civilize the African girl into keeping home for her husband in the European manner. This point is driven home by Linda Heywood and her various studies of hygiene and mothering courses on Christian missions in Angola.<sup>1</sup> The practical applications of these lessons do translate into the work force eventually, however, and these records are useful in the 19-teens and 1920s when they begin to help girls find employment as domestics in white homes. Mission trained girls who were placed as domestics generally worked in upper-class homes as child-minders and cleaners in this time period and commanded higher salaries than their non-mission trained counterparts.<sup>2</sup> The start of these placements are not good measuring points for the gender transition of domestic work, however, as the Mission trained domestics never constituted a very large number in relation to the industry as a whole. Also from the American Board Mission files on Durban I also found that they advocated for a hostel for African women in 1911.<sup>3</sup> While the document contained statistical data that is useful in creating a picture of Durban in this time period, the document clearly states that the women were “monthly visitors to Durban”, and therefore not the start of a new labor trend.

For my first two months in South Africa, I spent most days traveling to and from Pietermaritzburg in an attempt to look through possible document collections that would shed light on female migration, labor, and legislation. In these two months I found very few documents that mentioned women as labor, women migrating, or women employed in the home. The most useful collection of document was in the Secretary for Native Affairs Collection, under which hundreds of letters were filed in 1906 (post Bambatha Rebellion) requesting the use of the children of Native rebels as servants. What is interesting here is that the grand majority of these letters requested boys first and only girls if there were no more boys available. However, more than the majority of these letters came from rural farm towns. It was after this point that I realized that not only did distinctions have to be made between the rural and urban situation of domestic work, but also class distinctions. For this I turned to newspapers, journals and oral testimony in order to get an idea of the overall trends in household labor before turning back once again to government documents.

Beginning in early December I began looking through the *Natal Witness* and the *Mercury*, starting with January 1910. I was hoping to find more in the way of overall trends regarding what was editorialized about domestic workers and what types of workers were being solicited through the classifieds. Remembering that van Onselen found most of his source material through newspapers in his *Witches of Suburbia* chapter, I was hoping that this would be the key to finding a timeline and general narrative. In addition to newspapers, I also began looking through journals, such as *South African Outlook*, and regional surveys, such as the ones published by the University of Natal

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<sup>1</sup> Heywood, Linda. *Preservation of Igbo Identity: Labor and the Construction of New Social Identity: The Case of the Ovimbundu*, unpublished conference paper, ASA 2004, New Orleans, LA.

<sup>2</sup> Papers of the American Mission Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, ABC 15: Letters from Missionaries to Africa, 1834-1919, Unit 2, Reel 203, 15.4: Southern Africa Vol. 29, 0294-0298: “Housewifery for Native Girls”

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 0305-0311: “The Message of the Year from the Different Departments”

Press and Oxford University Press in the 1950s (pertinent ones listed in Bibliography).<sup>4</sup> While the Regional Surveys have proven to be very useful, they only provide information about the 1950s in Natal. For earlier information I am hoping to go to Johannesburg soon to have a look at the census reports for Non-Europeans.

The newspapers have proven to be my most useful source aside from interviews to date, especially after I was told about Killie Campbell's newsbooks full of pertinent articles from over 5 Natal newspapers from as early as 1911. From this I have already found article on black peril in Johannesburg (1908 and 1911), calls for a gender change in home workers (1926), and general consternation at the increase in women coming into Durban looking for work (throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s). In addition to that *The South African Outlook*, despite a more religious focus in its early years, also has several articles regarding the instances of black peril, and a very clear call for women workers in the home. I still have another 15 years to go through of this journal, as well as several more newsbooks to plough through, but already it has proven to be a critical resource for understanding the general ethos of change and concern in this time period.

In terms of other primary source collections that I have not yet gotten through, there are the letters of I. Bourquain at Killie Campbell regarding the Native Hotel for Women in Durban, as well as various Native Economic Commission Reports. With the City Council records, I hope to have more complete idea of the time period as it relates to workers in the home, and specifically about the push for women in the home.

#### Interviews

For this study that is hinged on perceptions of identity, individuals, and specific people who may or may not have official records, the best technique for collecting data is oral interviews and the study of historic interviews that can be found in Killie Campbell. Other studies on domestic work that has relied on oral interviews, including Cock, Fish, and Hansen, have generally collected around 50 to 200 interviews. My method for identifying interview subjects somewhat muddled. On the one hand I am attempting to utilize connections that I have already made with friends and co-workers, and then from there, trying to identify more from their circle of friends. This has not proved to be the most successful method, as it involves a great deal of legwork from me and oftentimes the contact does not come through due to not fitting my criteria or an unwillingness to participate. My other method is through churches and retirement communities. This was my original method for gaining interview subject, though it has proved harder to execute than I had thought. My first limitation is my lack of language skills, therefore necessitating a translator, and my other is in the identification of these social organizations. I have gone to two retirement communities, one in Ixopo and one in Durban (Outspan), and both have proved unsuccessful because I do not have a link to that community. I am planning a trip to a KwaMashu retirement home for this week so perhaps with a link I will be more successful.

At this point in my fieldwork, I have completed 25 interviews with former domestic workers about their experiences before 1960, and with white South Africans

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<sup>4</sup> If anyone knows where I can find more of these, in particular Vol. 3, *The Distribution of Population in Natal*; Vol. 7, *The Native Reserves of Natal*; and Additional Report No. 1, *The Experiment at Edendale*, please let me know. I found the ones that I have at Ike's Book Store on Florida.

who have engaged domestic workers in their own homes, or remember their interaction with domestic workers while growing up in KZN. I have conducted these interviews in various areas of Durban and the larger metropolitan area, as well as the Ixopo region in southern KZN. The interviews in Ixopo, 19 in total, were conducted over five days with the help of community health workers. Through a contact in the local clinic I set out each day to a new area in the region where I was met by several community health workers who had already vetted people within their community to ensure relevancy to my study. I am hoping to replicate this model of contacting community health workers in Vryheid and Ladysmith, though I have not been able to get in contact with any of the clinics in Vryheid so far. I do have one interviewee so far in this region, but I am hoping to have at least some relationship with the local structures before I go up there in a months time.

The types of people that I am interviewing fall into one or more categories of worker, and come from one of the four major regions of KZN (broadly North, South, East and West). I am trying to create somewhat of a balance in numbers related to these categories in order to create a study that shows the widest variety of possible situations. The categories are: urban, farm rural, farm town, female inside the house, female outside the house, male inside the house, female outside the house. As a further distinction with the rural and urban components, I am also trying to distinguish between those who moved from a rural area to an urban area and settled there, and those who moved from a rural area to an urban area and then settled back to the rural area. In line with Bozzoli's Phokeng study, I am trying to denote connections between the home area and the work area of a domestic worker and whether this affects his/her decision to settle. This theme comes up again in the distance line of inquiry below.

Lines of inquiry:

Through the interviews, I am hoping to extrapolate several main themes, as well as concrete data on the person's life. Thematically I am looking into ideas of gender and sexuality, identity, and "distance." Through these interviews I am hoping to fill in the gaps of documentation with the individual stories of people who worked as domestics in this time period.

I begin each interview with asking for the person's life narrative, specifically drawing out information on their family life before they began work, the reasons beginning work as well as whether they perceived that they had any choices in employment, and finally when they began working as a domestic and what that experience was like. Particularly I want to know about the job hunt process, options that they felt they did or did not have, as well as whether or not they felt they had any power in the hiring process or in the changing of employers once they were hired. I have in two instances been fortunate enough to interview both the employee and the employer of the household and compare the perceived situation and power dynamic. I have found thus far that it is impossible for me to generalize the experiences of domestic workers. Each time that I felt that I was on to an over-arching theme that was present in each of my subject, I would do another interview and the entire theme was discredited. At first I found this frustrating, however, now I realize that my aim is rather to explore the variety of experience, rather than creating a mold.

Another line of questioning that I developed after I began the interview process is about crime, violence, and gang activity. After reading more about the gangs of kitchen "boys" in Durban North and the Bluff, as well as Paul la Hausse's work on the *amaLaita*

in Johannesburg, I wanted to probe this issue of safety in this time period, as domestic workers were said to be the group most targeted by the gang members. Again this experience of hearing about or running into violence and gangs is varied based upon region and personal experience. Those who worked in Durban North generally had first hand knowledge of these gangs, whereas those who worked in the homes of the Durban elite, and those who worked in the more rural areas had never heard of the *amaLaita* or the *Russians*. As a counter theme I also ask about police intervention, protection, and fear, though it seems that the police did not play a large role in the lives of female domestic workers until the very tail end of my time period. These two counter-points are inconclusive at this time and I think they will have to be something that I return to at a later date for another paper because of their complexities and the realization that my time here is running out. The police issue is also something that I will return to when looking at a later time period, as it seems that almost all of the people that I have interviewed thus far had no involvement with the police until the 1960s.

On the thematic side, gender and sexuality is the strongest line of inquiry, as women were the predominant sex in the domestic industry. Though my focus will be on women, I am also exploring the experiences of men, who had previously dominated the industry during the 1920s and 1930s when a shift occurred, and the majority of domestic workers became women. This shift occurred due to increasing fear of rape and African sexuality more generally. In addressing this part of history, I am exploring the impacts of this shift on male identity and experience, and question how gender and sexuality have affected the domestic worker experience throughout recent history.

Sexuality is another theme that I expected to see quite a bit of but have yet to hear it directly spoken about. Perhaps it's my embarrassment at speaking to older women directly about such issues, or perhaps my translator has tempered my questions too much as a result of her own discomfort with the questions I am asking. Regardless, I am hoping to hear about sexualized discomfort on the part of the domestics to see whether the idea of the female servant as a concubine is more urban myth than reality. While some women have spoken around issues that they had with male gardeners, they generally deal more with troubles over gendered divisions of labor. An interesting side-note is that every woman that I have spoken with in Durban has claimed that she would "never" be willing to have a relationship with a gardener or male cook. One even went so far as to say that she "hated the garden boys."<sup>5</sup> However, every woman with whom I've spoken to in the rural area of Ixopo said that they had no problem having a relationship with a man who worked in the homes or gardens of whites. In fact two women were married to cooks and one woman was married to a gardener. I don't want to jump to any conclusions at this point however there does seem to be a difference in attitudes between the rural and urban areas, most likely attributed to the rumors of the *amaLaita* and *Russians*. For the male domestics, sexuality comes more into play regarding tasks that they were asked to perform, such as laundering underwear of women, or being asked to scrub floors on their knees, both of which represent an affront to their masculinity.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with Gladys Nzama, Inanda Dam, October 18, 2007.

<sup>6</sup> This can be seen in Mxolisi Mchunu's chapter on the kitchen suit in Carton's edited collection, *Zulu Identities*, as well as in numerous pamphlets from the 1960s and '70s that

In looking at identity, I wanted to see how the domestic worker integrated or changed her identity within the space of the employer, as well as within her community or kin-group. In the beginning I wanted to look at the idea of spatial identity, which I define as the modeling of behavior, consumer habits, architecture, and ideas of respectability. I felt that it would be through this line of questioning and subsequent exposure to the mannerisms and consumerism of the domestic workers that I feel the most will be informative for me about the relative impact of white or European culture on African culture. Though an interesting theoretical line of inquiry, I found that these connections are almost impossible for me to unpack through interviews, mainly due to lack of time with the subjects and my inability to ask around the topic enough to illicit the type of information that I was looking for. While some women pointed out favorite objects of theirs that were given to them by their employers, I do not feel that I have enough background in this area, or enough training in interviewing to sufficiently draw this out. From this line of questioning, however, I did find out more about personal interactions between the employer and the employee and how these relationships differed due to region, ethnic background of the employer, and number of employees employed in the home. Additionally I am able to see more clearly the idea of dualism (to borrow Iris Berger's term) and how the workers balanced their personal and professional lives despite, in most cases, living within their workspaces.

On the more physical side of identity, I also ask the workers and the employers about the issue of uniforms, particularly about the male uniform as it is was more contentious, and about their living conditions. In probing how these two things were tied to them as people and how they were able to adapt it, or not, to themselves as people, I hope to understand more of how the employees either embraced or distanced themselves as individuals from their occupations. So far it has been a mixed story, as, again, their answers very much depended upon their personal relationships with their employers and how nice their employers were to them as people. Largely the men were angered when I brought up the topic of uniforms, whereas the women were largely ambivalent, and some even proud of their uniforms. Two women even showed me their original uniforms from their first jobs in Durban, from over sixty years ago!

The concept of distance in this context is three-fold: 1- physical distance from family and social support structure and the physical act of traveling away from these structures; 2- social distance, real and imagined, between the employer and the employee as tied to notions of colonial purity or distance from African culture in order to retain the purity of white culture, and 3- emotional distance from family and social structures, as well as isolation from home, family, and traditional culture. In tandem with these ideas is also the domestic's personal attempts to temper the distance through home visits, the joining of social clubs or church groups, or the involvement in the informal economy which would keep them busy in their off hours with knitting, brewing, carving, etc.

Privacy, or distance from the employer, was a large issue that came up over and over again throughout the interviews. With man women complaining about a lack of privacy in their spaces due to random inspections by their employers, or because of

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were distributed by the Black Sash, the South African Institute for Race Relations and others.



having other employees living with them. One employer whom I spoke with in Ixopo explained very matter of factly that African girls hate sleeping on their own so even though he was willing to put up extra quarters, they would have refused if asked. But he never asked. When speaking with other women in the area of Ixopo, they also told me that this was an often-repeated rumor amongst white farmers. In response to my question as to whether they would have preferred their own quarters, most shrugged and want to ask for such things, preferring to keep the situation temporary and therefore not comfortable or home-like.

Out of distance also comes the impact of distance on families. The impact of absentee parenting, for example, as a result of the wave of mainly women into cities following work or men, is the most critical factor in the transition of African family structure. By interviewing the children of domestic workers from this time period, I also am attempting to create a generational cause and effect of distance on the family, in order to ultimately track the fragmentation of the family through prolonged absence. At this point I have only interviewed a few women whose mothers or fathers were also domestics, though their stories are poignant. They are generally the younger of my subjects and were born in the urban area.

Trust is an issue that aligns itself with the concept of social distance. Trust is one that is much more pervasive on the side of the employer and each one had their own way of vetting a new employee and ensuring that they could be trusted in their homes. What is important here is the employer's ability to keep the employee in a separate class from their family. They may treat the person as one of the family, but they always remember that their employee is from a different space, with different levels of instruction, and different ideas of what is correct and wrong. This is obviously not always true, as each employer has a different way of handling the employees. One woman who I spoke with in Durban noted as she grew up that her mother treated the servants like a friend, until something went wrong or was broken, which would cause her to fly into a rage and then blame herself for trusting the servant who could not retain how to do what she deemed simple tasks. From these early lessons, my informant decided that she would be cold to her employees and keep a wall up between them, even so far as not allowing her children to begin relationships with their nannies. This, she claimed, has worked for her throughout her adult life and she does not change this attitude despite changing workers many times.

Out of trust and respect comes the idea of loyalty, another topic that elicits many varied responses. This issue is also tied, most importantly, with financial security and fear of the unknown in a new employer. Several women in the rural area of Ixopo told me that they stayed with one employer for their entire careers as domestic workers, even though some were paid far less than other people that they knew in the same neighborhood. I found that the reason for this is largely because of the temporality of the situation, either real or perceived. Though they knew that they could get higher paying jobs, perhaps even commiserating with increased experience, they were either unwilling to rock the boat and lose what little perks that they had, or they liked their employers as people despite the low pay and were willing to stay with them because of their relationships. The Durban interviews have been different in this regard, though many women have remained loyal to one employer throughout their careers, even sending their daughters to replace them when they retired in some cases, many more of those

interviewed hopped jobs as they saw fit in order to gain higher wages, more free time, or better working conditions. An employer that I spoke to even admitted to having over 15 employees come and go in the span of two years before she found the “right fit.”

The final topic that I speak about in the interviews is that of financial relationships with their employers (loans, paying on time, etc.), as well as financial security after retirement. This, like all of the other lines of inquiry, depended most on the demeanor of employer and whether their relationship with the employer was a good one. However, unlike other questions in which some patterns may be teased out regarding region, economic level of employer, etc, this question has not yet provided any such patterns. While one employer in Ixopo might be a wonderful boss and friend, they may not allow for loans or school fees because they feel they give enough. On the other side, there is a case of an employer who was openly mean to their employees, paid them little, but they are still paying the employee on a monthly basis twenty years after retirement. Perhaps after more interviews a pattern might emerge, or if not the information may just have to speak for itself.

Conclusion:

In my final months of research, I still have a large amount of research left to do. In the archives, I need to look through the City Council records for Durban, Ixopo, Pietermaritzburg, Vryheid, and Ladysmith, as well as the Durban Corporation’s Municipal Minutes, and the South African Institute of Race Relations files for KZN. In terms of interviews, I still need to begin the interview process in Vryheid and Ladysmith, as well as follow up with various people who have promised me links to friends and family members in Umbumbulu, Durban, and Empangeni.

The questions that I have yet to answer, or even fully ask, are many. Firstly, is it possible for me to determine whether there was a push for women workers in the home, or was it a general shift due to other factors, such as more jobs opening for men and cheaper wages being offered for women? Secondly, can I create a narrative for a group that spans this time period without speaking to more people in more areas, or is it enough to be open and honest about my limitations and still try to write their history? Thirdly regards my overall argument of trying to trace the fragmentation of the African family is still very much in the beginning stages and has yet to be flushed out. It is a concept that I have been thinking about for quite some time, as it would be a logical step to assume that as more women left the home for work, the family structure would change. The question is how can I trace this change, if at all, and is it possible to do in this format without a much larger study group?

In the end I am attempting to write a fill-in history of a very ordinary group of people who most everyone in KZN, of all racial groups, interacted with through family ties or professional relationships. I am not attempted to write the experience of all domestic workers, however I am attempting to include as many different experiences as possible. By creating a foundational look at this occupation, I hope to move forward post-PhD to explore more specific topics related to domestic workers in other time periods.

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