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**The constant Other: Brazilian domestic
workers and the role of “care work” in
everyday life**

M. A. Thesis

Bárbara Amaral dos Santos

Osiris Number: 3832732

July/2012

Main supervisor: Dr. Sandra Ponzanesi – Universiteit Utrecht

Support supervisor: Dr. Capitolina Diaz – Universidad de Oviedo



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Abstract

Working daily inside middle-class and, mostly, white families' houses, domestic workers constantly face the social and economic inequalities embedded in their lives and routines. Moreover, the gender role of women who work as domestic workers still positions them as the main actors in charge of activities in their own household. The research aims, thus, at analyzing how domestic workers in Brazil perceive care work both as a paid job and as a family duty. Paid domestic work is a legacy from the slavery system that lasted throughout the Brazilian colonial era. Therefore, the various intersections of gender, class and race, informed by coloniality, are intrinsically linked to this professional occupation, as well as to the low social status that it entails. Through the lenses of the decolonial approach and using as analytical tools the conceptions *the home* and *the street* of Roberto Da Matta (1987, 1994), I analyse domestic workers' own perceptions of their professional field. This investigation highlights through their narratives new elements to conceptualize domestic work and to offer new views on unpaid domestic duties. The thesis draws its conclusions from in-depth interviews and participant observation with 10 female domestic workers in Brasilia-DF/Brazil.

Key words: domestic work, gender, race, feminism, discrimination, modernity/coloniality/decoloniality project

Resumen

Por el hecho de trabajar todos los días en casas de gente de clase media y, predominantemente, en casas de familias blancas, las trabajadoras domésticas son confrontadas constantemente con las desigualdades sociales y económicas inherentes a sus realidades y rutinas. Aunado a eso, el papel de género de las mujeres que están ocupadas en el servicio doméstico aún les coloca como las principales actrices encargadas de las actividades de su propio hogar. Por lo tanto, la presente investigación tiene como objetivo analizar de qué manera las trabajadoras domésticas brasileñas perciben las tareas domésticas como una ocupación remunerada y como un deber familiar. El trabajo doméstico remunerado en Brasil es un legado del sistema de la esclavitud, que se prolongó por toda la época colonial en el país. Por consiguiente, las diversas intersecciones de género, clase y raza que son fundamentadas por la colonialidad, están intrínsecamente conectadas a esta actividad profesional, así como el bajo estatus social que ello conlleva. Por medio del enfoque decolonial y haciendo uso de las concepciones de la casa y la calle de Roberto Da Matta (1987, 1994) como herramientas de análisis, se investiga las percepciones sobre la labor doméstica remunerada desde la perspectiva de las propias trabajadoras domésticas. Este trabajo resalta nuevos elementos surgidos de los relatos de las trabajadoras con el fin de ofrecer una nueva mirada al trabajo doméstico como una ocupación profesional y como una actividad no remunerada ejercida en el propio hogar. La tesis formula sus conclusiones a partir de entrevistas en profundidad y observación participante realizadas con 10 trabajadoras domésticas en Brasilia-DF/Brasil.

Palabras-clave: Trabajo doméstico, género, raza, feminismo, discriminación, proyecto modernidad/colonialidad/decolonialidad

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Introduction

*“You know when a person is still a kid and someone asks her ‘what will you be when you grow up?’. The person answers: ‘soap opera artist, nurse, ballerina’. No one answers ‘Ah, I wanted to be a domestic worker’, because this is not a desire that a person has. It is like a fate indeed” (Quote of the personage Roxane from the movie *Domésticas*, 2001)¹.*

Rubbing (someone else’s) floors, washing dishes (that she did not use), making beds (in which she did not sleep), cleaning bathrooms (that are not her own), cooking (to eat only the leftovers), ironing (clothes that she cannot afford buying), tidying up (not her) living-room, taking care of (other people’s) kids (while hers are at a day care). Those are daily tasks that 7,2 million Brazilian women perform². Nonetheless, as the quotation above illustrates, although a great number of Brazilian women are domestic workers, it is rarely a girl’s dream to become one. The present research investigates the several factors behind why little girls do not dream about becoming domestic workers, though many find in the paid domestic work field a way to survive.

Paid domestic work is a legacy from the slavery system that lasted throughout the Brazilian colonial era and still bears the negative connotation related to serving activities. Most importantly, the intersection of colonial/modern categories permeates this professional niche, which sustains its low status and relies on social inequalities founded upon hierarchical

¹ Free translation from Portuguese: “Que nem quando uma pessoa é pequena, a pessoa pergunta assim ‘que que você vai ser quando crescer?’ A pessoa responde: ‘artista de novela, enfermeira, bailarina’. Nenhuma pessoa responde ‘ai, eu queria ser empregada doméstica’. Porque isso daí não é um desejo que a pessoa tem. É uma sina mesmo”. Quote extracted from: “*Domésticas*, (2001), Film, Directed by Fernando Meirelles e Nando Olival, [DVD], Brazil: O2 Filmes

² According to IPEA (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada). Available at http://ipea.gov.br/portal/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9262. Accessed on June 24, 2012.

arrangements based on gender, social class and race. Therefore, the large group of domestic workers in Brazil is constituted mainly by non-white, poor women, who are, more often than not, rural-urban migrants.

Domestic work still holds the particularity of being the only profession that has not yet achieved full legal rights under Brazilian labour laws, in spite of the fact that there are many other examples of socially and economically marginal jobs tied to the country's colonial heritage. I am particularly interested in how domestic workers uniquely perceive their own work roles, and the 'double-shift' that many domestic workers experience. In a first instance, domestic work is a profession, which takes place in someone else's house. This paradoxically immerses the employee within the employer's family dynamics while concomitantly leading to her segregation due to social, economic, political and, more importantly, gendered and racial boundaries. The complex, ambivalent (Brites, 2007; Goldstein, 2003) relations domestic workers have with their employers, along with their lack of Brazilian legal protections puts them in an uncertain social location.

Given the traditionally low social value placed on domestic work, and the hierarchies which reinforce this segregation, what effect does employment as a domestic worker have on each woman's perception of herself and her labor activities? In other words, what are the categories used by these women to describe their everyday journey, one that simultaneously reinforces a subaltern social position and provides the resources that allow them to strive for better life conditions? To what extent do domestic workers accept, oppose, or pragmatically manipulate these dominant views; when and how do they successfully exert agency, or by contrast, accept the traditional views of a social system still informed by coloniality as well as class, gender and racial hierarchies?

Another specificity at the core of domestic labour is the fact that paid domestic work does not prevent these professionals from being housewives, mothers, or simply, women. On

the contrary, the constructed gender social roles that establish that household tasks are women's responsibilities also apply for those who perform them as paid jobs. Therefore, both as women and as domestic workers, domestic workers often experience a double-shift that entails performing similar tasks twice a day. Thus the second question raised in this research paper refers to the perception domestic workers have on the duties that are performed in different spaces, and more specifically, how similar or different they are. What is at the core of the differentiation they make between these two apparently similar works? If unpaid domestic labour is historically regarded as a social burden, how is it seen through the eyes of those who provide it as a source of income? Is it possible to trace a distinct discursive pattern from their perspectives? If so, on what grounds is this distinction based?

Both questions refer to experiences that only women invested in paid domestic work could indeed offer a firmly grounded reply. For that reason, the research is founded upon the narratives of 10 domestic workers that were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted in Brasília-DF/Brazil. In addition to interviews, participant observation was carried out during a day in order to offer a more comprehensive account of their daily lives. The timeframe for the participant observation was from the moment they got off work to the moment they came back in the following day. Moreover, my position of middle-class and white woman, whose family currently hires a domestic worker, required a constant reflexion on my situatedness, which was carried out throughout the theoretical and methodological choices, and, most importantly, during the research encounter between the respondents and myself.

In order to outline the singularities of the researched group, I begin the discussion taking into account that domestic work is culturally instituted as a *locus of women* and it has been historically located outside of the mercantile circuit. Therefore, in the first chapter, I bring forth the discussions between public and private spheres (Pateman, 1983 and Okin,

1998) to provide a better understanding of how the establishment of social roles based on gender assigned women the domestic work's responsibilities. The consequences of this theoretical and political dichotomy to the establishment of the sexual labour division (Hirata and Kergoat, 2007) are highlighted connecting it with the emergence of the so-called women's double-shift. Moreover, elements of the debate on the occupation of international migrant women (Anderson, 2002; Hochschild, 2002) in paid domestic work will be provided, with a particular focus on issues related to the intersection of gender, race and nationality within the "commodification of care" and the ambivalent relations. Finally, the present demographic and legal elements that outline the current arrangements of paid domestic work in Brazil will be considered.

The field of paid domestic work in Brazil continues to be overrepresented by low skilled, non-white, poor and internal migrant women. Thus, the historical processes that have led to the creation and the establishment of this specific professional category are essential to this investigation. Therefore, in the second chapter, I describe the colonial dynamics that categorized and marginalized the main human groups which domestic workers are part of: former black slaves, poor Brazilians and Northeastern migrants. The history of the construction of Brasília and the occupation of its neighbour state Goiás are also illustrated in order to provide a more comprehensive context for the specific focus of this research, which is on domestic workers who work in Brasília-DF. Moreover, I offer elements to indicate how the notion of race was constructed in Brazilian imaginary. Finally, I outline in the last section the transition of domestic slavery work to domestic free work, pointing out its implications related to racial, gendered and social class configurations of current paid domestic work.

The third chapter of this investigation is dedicated to outline the theoretical framework that is guiding the research questions and their outcomes. The social marginalization and invisibility that domestic workers undergo up to today is intrinsically related to the creation of

human categories and its subsequent hierarchisation occurred through the colonial encounter and sustained by Western knowledge hegemony. Through the lenses of the *decolonial* approach (Mignolo, 2009) and the modernity/coloniality/decoloniality (MCD) project (Escobar, 2007), domestic work will be analysed according to its colonial and after colonial dimensions. The MCD project is a critical analytical tool that considers that the current political, social and economic configuration of former European colonies in Latin America were formed by the colonial situation and are sustained by the so-called *coloniality*. In addition, considering that paid domestic work field is formed by the intersection of the colonial categories such as gender, race and social class, it is essential to mention that this investigation applies intersectionality. To elucidate what the application of intersectional thinking entails, I will explain it accordingly black feminists such as Crenshaw (1989) and Collins (2002). Finally, I shed a light on the analytical dichotomy of the Brazilian anthropologist Roberto Da Matta: *the home* and *the street*. Both notions are used to make sense of the different social spaces in which paid and unpaid domestic duties are performed: domestic worker's employers' house and domestic worker's own house.

In chapter four, the methodology of the research is detailed. I assert the feminist perspective of the present research (Hesse-Biber, 2007; Gross & DeVault, 2007) that is not only present throughout the written text and in the methodological choices, but that indeed guided the conduction of semi-structured and open-ended interview and the participant observation. By not losing sight of the decolonial approach, which needed to be considered when selecting the research methods, I present the Extended Case Method (Burawoy, 1998; 2009), that entails a *reflexive* model of science and also the Feminist Standpoint Theory (Harding, 1986; Haraway, 1988, Hartsock, 1983), which is one of the most used methods in feminist research. Moreover, I describe how the fieldwork was conducted stating my position in the research and also the strength and pitfalls of the chosen methods. At the end of the

chapter, I offer an overview of the respondent's characteristics, followed by a detailed account of each of them.

Finally, the last chapter is dedicated to exploring the respondents' inputs in relation to the research questions. The first part is dedicated to bring forth some elements surrounding the respondents' perception on their work, involving issues such as: what drove them to become domestic workers, how they perceive the low social value related to their profession and to which extent their narratives converges or withdraw from the hegemonic discourse based on *coloniality*. The analysis is based predominately on the dichotomy *the home* and *the street*, which is used as the main analytical category to describe the similarities and differences between the performance of paid and unpaid domestic duties. The detailed outcomes of the full research and the final conclusions are also provided in this chapter.

Chapter 1

Domestic work

The dynamics of the domestic work in Brazil is undoubtedly based on the specificities of its colonial background. The categories of gender and race, created within the colonial context, play an important role in the arrangements of domestic work. The colonial and after colonial situation shaped the social structures by both the imposition of a Western rationality and the counter-force operated by other rationalities that exist in non-Western populations (mainly indigenous population and enslaved Africans). Nonetheless, the Western mind frame was, and remains, dominant. In the context of the domestic work, this means that both in modern Western countries and in Brazil, family duties and house activities have been historically assigned to women. The idea that those were innate responsibilities of women rendered domestic and care tasks a non-work status.

Therefore, even though Brazilian history bear its own specificities in terms of whom and where domestic work has been performed, the similarities with Western discourses described above justify bringing forth some important initial debates in feminist scholarship. As such, I will resort mainly to the elaboration of the British feminist and political theorist, Carole Pateman and the liberal political feminist philosopher from the U.S., Susan Okin, to start the conceptualization of the domestic work. Although I am aware of the criticism made to liberal feminists that they base their theories from the standpoint of white, middle-class women, I am convinced that their take on the deconstruction of public versus private sphere is valuable to understand the connection between gender roles and domestic duties.

Moreover, I will bring forth some of the current discussions present in feminist debates surrounding the field of domestic work, specifically those that explore the strategy of

middle-class professional women to delegate household responsibilities to poorer women. Likewise, within the context of globalization and increasing social and economic inequalities among countries, domestic work is also portrayed as an attractive field for migrant women. In the final part, I will offer a picture of how paid domestic work field is currently organised in Brazil.

1.1 Domestic work within the sexual labour division

Domestic work can be generally understood as tasks and duties related to the private sphere, which have been historically related to women's social role. According to Carole Pateman (1983: 124), this relation is connected to the rise of a patriarchal ideology, founded on the claim that "women's natural function of child-bearing prescribes their domestic and subordinate place in the order of things." Therefore, in a patriarchal and capitalist logic of sexual labour division, domestic work is socially regarded as an intrinsic feminine role – devoid of economic value - and it refers to a series of activities that are directed towards care and reproduction of human life.

The public sphere, on the other hand, combines ideals of rationality, power and masculinity, which confer greater social, political and economic value to it. Activities performed in the public sphere are considered as productive work, that is, economically valued. Therefore, there is an overvaluation of the public over the private sphere, which is connected to the binary relation that correlates feminine-nature-private and masculine-culture-public. For that reason, when dealing with domestic work within a feminist perspective, one must outline the discussions that were the foundation of various old and recent feminist theories: the issue of the dichotomy of the public and private sphere. This debate has been

central to feminist theory and the struggle of feminist movements for more than two centuries (Pateman 1983).

The conceptions of public and private spheres as independent domains have been crucial to political Western thought, especially to liberal theories (Okin, 1998). Pointing to Locke's *Second Treatise* as the theoretical basis to this division, Pateman (1983) criticizes the fact that Locke and his commentators overlook the sexual segregation intrinsic to the artificial separation between the family and the political. Therefore, feminist critiques pointed out the dualism public/private as a patriarchal character of liberalism, thus calling for the abolition of this dichotomy.

Claiming to advocate in favour of egalitarianism and individualism, the liberal doctrine, in theory, differs itself from patriarchalism. However, from its very beginning, liberalism clearly stated who was entitled to enjoy the status of individual/subject/citizen. Not only Locke, but also other intellectuals such as Rousseau and Hegel argued for the subordination of the wife to her husband due to their 'natural' differences. Men's wills should prevail in household decisions and, at the same time, the participation of women in the public sphere was unacceptable (Pateman, 1983; Okin, 1998). The legacy left to political theories by these authors established a strict division between the public and private spheres. Although contemporary liberal theorists have been trying to incorporate women in their texts, the primordial opposition domestic/non-domestic is still not contested by most of the contemporary political theorists (Okin, 1998).

The maintenance of this artificial separation sustains the sexual labour division as a natural process, which assigns to women the household responsibilities (Okin, 1998). The slogan of the second wave feminist movement, "the personal is political", thus emerged as a protest against liberal traditional ideology. Moreover, Okin (1998) defends that the definition

of the concept of gender itself is a social construct that directly affects the maintenance of the dichotomy between public and private. Provided that gender is a social construction that goes beyond biologic determination, and that power, politics and economic practices are intimately connected to domestic structures, the connection between gender and the above-mentioned dichotomy stands out as evident. In the same way, questioning these positions entail addressing the concept of gender.

Contemporary feminists have relied on “organic theories” to sharply criticized this binary division or this dualism that connects female to nature and male to culture,. This is a way to make visible its inconsistencies, which in turn enables its deconstruction. Therefore, in this thesis, the concept of private and public spheres will be used not to establish boundaries between them, but rather as an attempt to highlight the consequences that this ideological division has in terms of gender roles.

As Western societies and former colonies have been guided by values and underpinnings of a liberal-capitalist system, which works in the bases of obtaining benefits, the hierachical division between the private sphere and the private sphere have culminated in the social invisibility of domestic work. In this sense, labour is conceptualized as a practice aimed at production, hence performed in/for the public sphere. Inside households, activities are performed in order to sustain and nourish human life, which confers them their reproductive character, that is, non-productive and not contemplated within the concept of labour. The definition of domestic work as labour thus is already an attempt, initiated by feminist theories from the 1970s, to grant visibility and also adequate status to it. Paid domestic work in Brazil was only legally considered a job between the years of 1972-73, even though it was always a widespread practice in country³.

³ The judicial born of the domestic worker occurred through the 5.859/1972 Law, regulated by the enactment 71.885/1973 (Mori et al, 2011:21).

Moreover, unpaid domestic work performed by housewives or by professional women, including domestic workers, during what is supposed to be their free time is not even considered when it comes to economic accounts. As the feminist Spanish economist Cristina Carrasco (2001) points out, the range of activities that ensure the production and reproduction of physical, material, emotional and even intellectual conditions for the existence of humankind has always been considered an externality of the economic system. Due to all the factors indicated above, social and economic invisibility are still elements that constitute reproductive work performed inside the so-called private sphere.

1.2 Paid domestic work: choice or lack of choice?

The need to work outside the household environment and gain greater economic independence. - once a survival matter only for poor women - now also affects middle-class women. What could be seen as an emancipatory unfolding for the latter group, provided that they earn the possibility of economic independence and professional development, more often than not also had a strong setback: the significant increase of female participation in the labour markets created a “double shift”. Now, besides their full-time jobs, professional women remain the major responsible of cleaning the house, taking care of the kids, cooking, etc.

As the time to perform unpaid responsibilities decreased immensely, the burden they represented progressively increased. This led to a change in society that was not followed by equivalent politics of conciliation (Carrasco, 2001). Consequently, middle-class women saw in the delegation of some services as a way to ease the encumbrance of the double working

shift⁴. Consequently, this led to what Bridget Anderson (2002) calls “commodification of the domestic labour”, which means, ultimately, transforming the work related to reproduction of life into services and goods that can be bought or sold.

This shift of domestic responsibilities from one woman to another demonstrates that the changes in the labour market did not create a substantial transformation of gender roles, neither a feminist turn on how professional careers are structured, since male patterns of production still persist. Arlie Russell Hochschild (2002:20) relates sexual domestic labour division and the feminization of migration to a broader patriarchal capitalist economic system that, by creating and reproducing socioeconomic inequalities, transform “both first and third world women [into] small players in a larger economic game whose rules they have not written”.

Drawing more specifically upon the globalization effects on domestic labour, Anderson (2002) and Hochschild (2002) analyse the peculiarities of the phenomenon of outsourcing domestic work to a paid worker. Paid domestic positions in middle-to-upper-class Western European households are mainly occupied by migrant women. Therefore, axes of race, class and nationalities are embedded in the relationships between the female employer and the female employee. Outlined by ambivalent affections, these relationships render paid domestic work characteristics that distinguish it from other sources of income. Although workers do not earn any additional stipend for the amount of emotions they put in their jobs, they are expected, especially when dealing with children or the elderly, to actually engage emotionally with them. Dedicating time and care to others rather than to their own family and

⁴ The figure of the domestic servant existed already for many centuries in Europe and the many changing connotations that this type of work received along history may coincide or not with the contemporary domestic work. However, since the focus of this thesis is not on the historical connotation of the domestic work in Europe, I will not address this issue in this text. See: Raffaella Sarti, "Who are Servants? Defining Domestic Service in Western Europe (16th - 21st Centuries)". In: S. Pasleau and I. Schopp (eds.), with R. Sarti, *Proceedings of the "Servant Project"*, Liege: 5 vols., vol. 2, 2005.

kids, in addition to the distance from their countries or hometowns leads to domestic workers experiencing what Hochschild calls 'care drain' (2002).

The attraction to this occupational field in spite of the emotional pain caused by this care drain is mostly related to economic imperatives. Wages of domestic workers are, although low for local standards, very high in contrast to the average income of countries in development, where maids, nannies and care takers come from. Nonetheless, as it will be clearer in the following sections, when analysing more specifically the Brazilian context of paid domestic work, the understanding of the situation solely in economic terms fails to account for the status implication behind the reasons why employing a domestic work is such a popular practice (Anderson, 2002). Migrant cleaners and caretakers are not only employed when the employer has professional responsibilities outside the house. In some cases, they are hired in order to render comfort and leisure to their middle-class female employer. In one hand, this practice renders status for the employer-family, whilst expresses the low value attributed to domestic work itself (Anderson, 2002).

Influential feminist scholars who deal with the issue of paid domestic work are mostly concerned with contemporary capitalist settings, which generate a feminine migrant flow from developing countries to wealthy Western ones. Migrant women find in the field of domestic work the easiest way to be incorporated in the labour market, even though a good deal of them are highly educated. Thus, feminine migration entails a double shift of resources from South to North, related to the drain of care and to the drain of brains. Within Brazilian social sciences field, scholarly debates revolve mainly around two dimensions. The first dimension relates to the working conditions of domestic labour (Melo, 1998, 2002), its low social value, legal discrimination and colonial heritage. The second dimension, in turn, when not embedded in broader discussion on the role of women in the labour market, relates to the

strategies of middle class women's to delegating domestic responsibilities to other women (Hirata & Kergoat, 2007).

The authors referred to in this section describe mainly the dynamics of this professional field in relation to recent globalization settings and the consequences of international migration. However, the Brazilian context differs greatly as domestic workers are mainly internal migrants and it can not be explained as a direct outcome of globalization, nor of the entrance of middle-class women in the labour market. The review on the mainstream feminist literature on domestic labour is, thus, not just anecdotal. Rather, it relates to the fact that the issues of ambivalent emotional relationship, the "commodification of domestic labour" and the "care drain" are also present on the arrangements of current domestic work in Brazil.

The overview of the discussions over the dichotomy between the public and private sphere offered some basic instruments to grasp the patriarchal ideology that is behind the whole conception and connotations of domestic work. The sexual division of labour based on strict gender roles assigned women major responsibilities of taking care of household activities. These social and economically devalued duties performed by some women not only in their houses, but in someone else's as well. In other words, by taking domestic labour as a both a private and professional responsibility, domestic workers end up facing a double social invisibility.

In addition to gender roles, the field of domestic work is also a professional area that absorbs female workers who are not part of privileged socioeconomic groups. In Brazil, it is an occupation that has its roots in the colonial past, representing a space occupied first by slaves and then by poor workers. The high social inequality that has accompanied Brazil since its construction as a nation-state naturalized the servant position of non-white poor

uneducated women. In Chapter 2 of this research, I will describe the Brazilian history to provide a better understanding of how the society was socially and racially hierarchically structured and what was the role of internal migration to it. Before doing so, I will present in the next section some elementary information on the current arrangements of domestic work in Brazil.

1.3 Domestic work in Brazil

According to Brazilian legislation, domestic workers are the ones who provide non-profit services on a continuous basis to a person or family in a residential context⁵. Those could be: cook, housekeeper, nanny, laundress, cleaner, guard, chauffeur, gardener, elderly caretaker, etc. Since 93,2 percent of all domestic workers are women (PNAD, 2006), I will not consider men in my analysis. Moreover, this research will be focused on domestic workers who are commonly called “maids” and perform all types of services inside someone else’s house: to clean, to rub floors, to serve, to tidy up, to iron, to do the dishes and the laundry, to take care of babies and the elderly. Nonetheless, I will stick to the general term “domestic worker”, in respect to how women, who are politically involved with the struggle of rights and recognition of this professional career, prefer to be called. The two major categories that will be encompassed in what I am calling “domestic workers”, are the *mensalistas* and the *diaristas*.

Diaristas is the category that defines women who get paid per day worked and that usually work in different houses throughout the week, whereas *mensalistas* are full-time workers that get paid monthly and might sleep (or not) in the house where they work. The difference between these two categories will be better examined in the analytical chapter.

5 “Art. 1. Ao empregado doméstico, assim considerado aquele que presta serviços de natureza contínua e de finalidade não lucrativa à pessoa ou à família no âmbito residencial destas, aplica-se o disposto nesta lei”. Law 5.859/1972. Brazil, 1972.

However, it is essential to already mention that the fact that *diaristas* usually do not work more than 2 days a week in the same house, which legally does not constitute in a “continuous basis” service and thus excludes them from be protected by the rights granted for the category of domestic workers. This highlights the precariousness character of this field of work, which is expressed not only economically and socially, but also in the Brazilian legal apparatus.

While it is commonly agreed that equal rights do not necessarily assure equal conditions or are automatically translated into social equality, discrimination in legal terms can be regarded as an institutionalization of inequality. It does not only maintain and perpetuate, but also reaffirms and warrants an unequal and unjust *status quo*. The article 7 of the Brazilian Federal Constitution that refers to urban and rural worker’s rights is the manifestation of how domestic work is valued in Brazilian society. The content of the sole paragraph excludes the domestic workers from some of the labour common rights;

“Article 7. The following are rights of urban and rural workers, among others that aim to improve their social conditions (...)

Sole paragraph – The category of domestic servants is ensured of the rights set forth in items IV (minimum wage), VI (irreducibility of the wages), VIII (year-end one-salary bonus), XV (paid weekly leave), XVII (annual vacation with remuneration at least one third higher than the normal salary), XVIII (maternity leave), XIX (paternity leave), XXI (advance notice of dismissal) and XXIV (retirement pension), as well as of integrations in the social security system.”⁶

In the article “Urban and Domestic Workers: The Federal Constitution and its Asymmetry”, Mattos (2009) discusses some of the possible reasons why domestic workers have been given less rights relative to other urban workers. Far from taking any feminist or gender sensitive standpoints, he nonetheless provides two explanations to such asymmetries:

⁶ Brazil, 1988.

the incompatibility of domestic work with the meaning given by the article 7 of the charter to the term 'work' and the cost of hiring a domestic worker.

Mattos (2009) explains that the understanding of work in the text of the article 7 of the Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988 is connected to the idea of the alienation of the workforce, which, in short, is the exchange of labour to the universal commodity, money. Within a feminist perspective, this is an androcentric conception of work, which reinforces the invisibility of unpaid domestic labour. Nonetheless, domestic workers are inserted in the labour market and do sell their workforce in exchange of money. The difference thus is constituted in the lack of surplus generation on the performance of domestic duties, although paid (Mattos, 2009). The second reason he gives for the asymmetry is the cost of hiring a domestic worker. Since her wage is usually paid by another wage, the granting of new rights increases the cost of hiring, which has a considerable impact on the employer's budget. The reasons presented by the author are intended to justify the discrimination of domestic workers in the basis of Brazilian legislation. His arguments, however, are based on moral, economic and social assumptions informed by modern, capitalist, thus, colonial values, widespread in political mainstream discourse. This demonstrates the difficulty entailed in the struggle of domestic workers for equal rights and recognition of the category⁷.

Domestic activities in Brazil still bear a social devalued stigma, as the literature mentioned above also indicates. Performing similar activities in their jobs and at their own houses creates a double load of domestic responsibility, which increases the social exclusion of women who are inserted in the occupational field of domestic work. Nonetheless, their social devaluation cannot be fully explained by the gender bias that permeates domestic

7 As I write those lines, the enlargement of Domestic Workers rights is been highly discussed in Brazil and the law project (PLS 678/2011) that provides unrestricted unemployment insurance for those dismissed without and good and sufficient cause has already been directed to the Chamber of Deputies to be submitted to vote. See: http://www.cfemea.org.br/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3690:7-a-11-de-maio-de-2012&catid=384:a-semana-no-congresso&Itemid=175#CD (accessed in May, 12, 2012).

activities. Moreover, maintaining the focus on migration and globalization issues, as European and U.S. scholars frequently have done, also fails to cover the Brazilian matter of paid domestic work. It is thus necessary to explore Brazilian social and political context, as well as to consider the various intersections of gender, race, class and geographic origin that often outline the stereotypical image of domestic workers.

As mentioned before, the social category of domestic worker can be found in the Brazilian Federal Constitution. However, in spite of its legal recognition, it is evident from its text that its social value is smaller when compared to other professions. The class of domestic workers have a statute of their own, which is discriminated in terms of rights in comparison with other jobs positions. Since hiring a domestic worker is a widespread practice in Brazilian middle-to-upper class and also due to the lack of formal education requirements to perform domestic tasks, 16,5 percent of all economically active women in Brazil execute paid domestic services (PNAD 2006). The precariousness of their labour conditions is illustrated by the fact that the average income of domestic workers is still less than the minimum income established by the Government. Additionally, more than 70 percent of the workers still do not have their job legally registered, which makes it even more difficult if one needs to claim for her rights.⁸

The indicators of paid domestic work's statistics also manifest the long lasting racial discrimination that exists in the country. For instance, 21,7 percent of economically active black women in Brazil work as domestic workers in contrast to 12,6 percent of white women, which points to a predominance of black or *pardas*⁹ workers in the field. Meanwhile, the lower number of black women working on a formal basis relative to the white ones indicates that racial issues also have impact on their working conditions.

⁸ Brazil - Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicilio 2006 (PNAD – 2006) – (National Survey by Household Sample)

⁹ The racial self-identification used by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) has five categories according to skin colour: white, black, yellow, indigenous and pardo/parda. The latter is to identify someone who is racially mixed, a mulatto.

In this chapter, the artificial division between public and private sphere were indicated as powerful ideological tools that have been used to justify a lower social position of women in the world. Incorporated within the dynamics of the private sphere, the field of paid domestic work, as presented, might operate in compliance with, not only a gender hierarchy, but indeed with a social inequality based on race, ethnicity, social class and migration background. The next chapter will be devoted to describing the historical process that has occurred in Brazil that led to the emergence of this group of women who dedicate their lives to take care of other people's houses and families, pointing to the various social exclusions that accompanied them throughout history.

Chapter 2

A brief introduction to Brazilian history: the importance of internal migration and racial issues

Groups that live in the margins of society usually occupy low-paid job positions that are not socially prestigious. Accordingly, domestic work in Brazil is the main field that absorbs women who are inscribed in subaltern groups. They are non-white poor female workers that, in addition, carry in their accents and ways of being that distinguish them from their family employers. In most cases in Brazil, these contrasts are highly linked to the migration background of domestic workers, who move from rural areas to the city.

Brazil has an internal migration dynamics. Unlike in Northern countries, where foreigners supply the demand for low skilled labour; in Brazil, lower-paid positions are usually filled by national citizens. Traditionally, internal migrants come from poor areas in the country, in the search for better life conditions in the great urban centres. The Northeastern part of Brazil has long performed the function of being this labour reservoir. Consequently, its migrants are, the main subjects of association between ethnic/geographic group and cheap labour. More common than not, they are also racially marked.

Moreover, in the context of domestic work within the area of Brasília and its surroundings, in which this thesis is focused, it is essential to consider the rural-urban migrants that come from not only the Northeast, but also the ones from Brasília's neighbouring state, Goiás. Considering that the current arrangements of the domestic work in the country and, especially in Brasília, are shaped by the historical process of internal

migration; I will offer a quick overview of the demographic occupation's history in Brazil¹⁰, linking it to racial issues.

2.1 Brazil and the Northeastern migrant

Brazil is today formed by 26 states and the Federal District. These are grouped in 5 main regions: North, Northeast, Central-West, Southeast and South. The Northeastern coast was the first to be explored and occupied by Portuguese invasion, that arrived in Brazilian lands on 22 April 1500. Since colonial times in Brazil, its demographic distribution was shaped by the economic strength of a particular area, according to the author Paulo César Gonçalves (2006:23). In this sense, the sugarcane cultivation during the XVI and XVII was responsible for populating the Northeastern coast of Brazil. In a first moment, the area was mainly constituted by Portuguese colonizers and by the enslaved indigenous population that survived wars provoked by the colonizers' attempts of establishing occupation in indigenous lands and also epidemics and diseases brought by the Portuguese invasion¹¹. Still on the XVI century, with the substantial decrease of the indigenous population, the expansion of sugar plantations and the good relation of the Portuguese kingdom with traders involved in slave markets in Africa, arrived in Brazil enslaved Africans (Goés, 2006).

Mineral extraction became the basis of the colony's economy in the XVIII century, which encouraged the intensive internal migration to some areas of today is Minas Gerais, Goiás and Mato Grosso (Gonçalves, 2006). Alongside the mining, Gonçalves (2006) points out the importance of the development of food production and livestock in the area and its

10 For more on Brazilian socioeconomic history, see: Celso Furtado. *Formação Econômica do Brasil*. Ed. Fundo de Cultura, 1961; Caio Prado Jr.. *Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo*. São Paulo, Editora. Brasiliense, 23ª edição, 1994; Sérgio Buarque de Holanda. *Raízes do Brasil*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1998.

11 For more information on indigenous slavery see: Ramos, Andre. *A escravidão do indígena, entre o mito e novas perspectivas de debates*. In: *Revista de Estudos e Pesquisas, FUNAI, Brasília*, v.1, n.1, p.241-265, jul. 2004

surroundings. It increased agricultural and commercial activities that supported the substantial population growth.

Celso Furtado (1961) affirms that many slaves were displaced from Northeast to the mining areas. Moreover, the social scientist regards the mining economy period as the one that opened a new European migration cycle. Considering that before that the Portuguese kingdom needed to offer its population in Europe financial incentives to populate the “new land”, this new cycle was the first spontaneous flow of Portuguese population to Brazil.

The production of sugar regained economic power in the end of the XVIII century, which not only renewed the Northeastern production, but also led to the emergence of new production areas that up to now are the economic and cultural centres of Brazil: Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo (Gonçalves, 2006). In the second half of the XIX century, according to the author, internal population displacements increased –of slaves and free workers-, causing major changes in the demographic distribution of the country. The impoverishment of the sugar plantation in Northeast and the extended drought season in the area occurred between 1877-1880, according to Caio Prado Junior (1994), played an important role in this process. Both events generated a constant emigration flow from the highly populated Northeastern area to the North and Centre-South, in the search for a better life. The Brazilian historian indicates that the rubber extraction in the Amazon Vale, the cacao production in progress in the South of Bahia and, the economic growth in São Paulo (due to the coffee production) were the main economic areas that absorbed the Northeastern labour force.

The importance of Northeastern populations displacement in this period is overlooked by in the Brazilian historiography, according to Gonçalves (2006) - who studied extensively the transference of migrant *Cearenses*¹² to the coffee economy in São Paulo. He indicates that

¹² Cearenses are the population of the Northeastern state of Ceará.

most of the studies were much more concerned with the European immigration that arrived in Brazil in the XIX century. In my perspective, this is a reflexion of the social invisibility that this internal migrant group experience up to present time.

The eminent end of slavery and the growth of coffee production gave rise to the project of resorting to European migrants to meet the demand of work in the coffee farms that were mainly maintained by slave labour. Therefore, a great number of Europeans migrants¹³¹⁴ coming from Portugal, Germany, Spain and, especially from Italy arrived in Brazil in the XIX century and in the beginning of the XX century. The project was not only reasoned on the fallacious idea that after the abolition of slavery there would be no sufficient workers, but also on the superiority of Europeans, who were regarded as more suitable for maintaining the high production (Domingues, 2002).

The transition from slavery to free work left aside the national poor free worker, since the preference was given to the European migrant. The negligence of the agrarian and political elite in regards to the national workforce and the rejection of their lifestyle, assigned the Northeastern migrants precarious positions within the formation of the free labour market (Gonçalves, 2006). The difficulties of incorporating the national workforce did not hang upon the lack of free workers, but actually on the major project of whiten the Brazilian population (Domingues, 2002).

In the period after independence (1822), there was an anxious search for defining the nation and “the Brazilian subject” that remained present in the concerns of the elite even after the establishment of the Republic (1889) (Gonçalvez, 2006). Informed by racist ideas founded upon the scientific racist theories from authors such as Arthur de Gobineau, which pointed to

13 Important to mention that The Netherlands occupied the Northeran state of Pernambuco from 1630-1654. See: Gesteira, H. M. O Recife holandês: história natural e colonização neerlandesa (1624/1654). In: Revista da Sociedade Brasileira de História da Ciência, Rio de Janeiro, v. 2, n. 1, p. 6-21, 2004.

14 The Japanese migration also played an important role in the occupation of the state of São Paulo. However, since the reason behind the migration was not exactly the same as it was for European migrants, I will not focus on this issue. See: Saito, Hiroshi. A presença japonesa no Brasil. São Paulo, T.A. Queiroz/Edusp, 1980

the intellectual and moral superiority of white people, Brazilian elite saw in the European migration a possibility to concretize their “civilizing” plans. As stated by Gonçalves (2006), the discourse of those who defended the foreigner migration to the country was based on the exaltation of white migrants, linking their presence to times of progress. Black people were regarded as unsuitable for the free work, due to their passivity and belonging to an “inferior race”. In addition, the indiscipline and laziness were considered characteristics of national citizens, regarding the fact that they carried in their blood the “racial inferiority”.

According to Santos (2011), the lack of Portuguese women in colonial times and the objective of “purifying” the “lost souls” by the Catholic Church legitimised the continuous rape of black and indigenous women. The long process of miscegenation, based on the colonial violence, constituted the portrait of the Brazilian population, in which black and *mestiços/mestiças*¹⁵ occupied low socioeconomic positions. Since the literature points out that the Northeastern migrants were *mestiços/mestiças* (Gonçalves, 2006), the racial issue is undoubtedly the founding element supporting the ongoing discrimination of this Brazilian group.

The colonial history and the slavery period, thus, left Brazil a heritage of social inequality that is highly supported on the ideology of white supremacy. The foreigner immigrants had a large participation in the wealthy and dynamic economic zones in the XIX and early XX centuries: São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro (Birchal, 2004). Meanwhile, the public policies based on scientific racism and on the *ideologia da vadiagem*¹⁶, and the investments in foreigner labour lead to the marginalization of the former slaves and non-slaves nationals from the most productive sectors (Andrews, 1991). They were then assimilated in less economic affluent areas in the country or lived on the basis of the subsistence economy in the

15 Mestiços/mestiças are the ones who are not white, nor black, nor indigenous. They are descendants of a mixture of race.

16 Ideologia da vadiagem is “a firm and unshakable belief in the innate laziness and irresponsibility of the black and racially mixed Brazilian masses” (Andrews, 1991:48).

countryside (ibidem, 1991). In a long term, this has had a very concrete impact in the immense socioeconomic gap based on a structural racism that is still ongoing in contemporary Brazil. The matters of racism and race self-identification in the country will be further addressed in the last section of this chapter.

The dynamics above mentioned were catalyzed by the process of rural-urban migration occurred in the first half of the XX century due to major changes in the country's urban structures and the establishment of a technological infrastructure of production (Braga, 2006). The economic boom in the coffee production in São Paulo and the period of industrialization that started in the 1930s, which instituted the areas of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro as the strong economic centres of the country, initiated the progressive transformation in Brazilian society. The country based on rural economy was converted to a predominantly urban society. The *Plano de Metas de Desenvolvimento* (target plan of development) of the president Juscelino Kubitechek's government (1956 – 1961) represented the culmination of this process. Throughout this period, the most expressive rural exodus occurred from the Northeastern to the Southeastern areas of the country (Pereira and Tuma Filho, 2012). The intraregional rural-urban migration was also very common. In 1960, the urban population overcame the number of rural inhabitants (Brito, 2006). Although the volume of emigrants increased and decreased, depending on the decade and on the state, the Northeast remains as a sender pole until the 1990s, whereas the Centre-West, where Brasília is situated, only increased its attraction capacity (Baeninger, 2000).

2.2 Goiás

On the flipside of the national trend, during the 1950s, the states of Paraná and Goiás increased the number of rural-rural migrants attracted by the agricultural frontier (Braga,

2006). In fact, the state of Goiás remained predominantly rural until the 1970s¹⁷. Its first occupation was through the gold mining mentioned in the beginning of this chapter. However, the mining activities did not last long and its habitants survived throughout the centuries with subsistence agriculture and livestock (Campos, 1998). The political and economic irrelevance of this state's area, added to its large extension and its relative distance from Brazil's national authorities led to the appropriation of the land through its use, not through titles. Until 1950, the area was mainly occupied by the livestock farmers that owned 28,4% of the territory and by poor migrants who started to arrive from Minas Gerais in the early 1930s (Campos, 1998).

The value of Goiás' land, according to Campos (1998) only started to be appreciated between the 1940s and 1950s, mainly due to the start of Brasília's construction that resulted in the construction of roads that gave access to different parts of the country. The nearest state to the national capital to-be attracted many politically influent men who with land's acquisition titles, most of the times illegal ones expelled many of the families who already lived and produced in the area (Campos, 1998). In the end of the 1950s, with the support of the government, few landlords, evicting smallholders, occupied large tracts of land. That left the poor rural population only the prospect of migrating to the city (ibidem, 1998).

This phenomenon of gentrification is observed up until today. The volume of migration from Goiás to Brasília is one of the most expressive recently. According to Boccucci and Leony (2000), the states of Goiás and Minas Gerais, together with the Northeastern states are the main sender poles of migrants to the new Capital. This is in fact the product of a continuing pattern instead of a change in the region. In the years of the construction of Brasília, the Northeastern migrants represented more than 40% of the overall population. In this sense, it can be argued that Brasilia, in addition to representing the

17 According to IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics)'s data, in 1970, 57, 83% of the domiciles in Goiás were located in rural areas.

aspirations of a new, modern model of society to be built from scratch, also kicks off from the same original contradictions that characterized the construction of the country as whole.

Consequently, instead of counterbalancing the inequalities generated by original vices of race, class and gender inequalities, it ended up exacerbating and concentrating those into a unique space. Thus, Brasilia comes out as the crossroads where all the above-mentioned tensions converge in space and time, making it one of the most interesting places in the country to explore the dynamics of domestic work in their various dimensions.

2.3 Brasília – the inversion of a utopia

Brasilia is situated inside one of 27 Brazilian Federative Units called Federal District (*Distrito Federal-DF*)¹⁸. It is the third and current capital of Brazil, was planned and completely built from the very beginning in the inside of the country. Inaugurated in 1960, within 3 years and 10 months after the beginning of its construction, the city was conceived to be the catalyst element to achieve economic and social development for the historically forgotten and mostly underdeveloped Brazilian inland, symbolising thus the efforts supposedly made towards socioeconomic equality. Idealised by the urban planner Lúcio Costa and the architect Oscar Niemayer, Brasília's architecture was based on a modernist-zoning scheme, which was inspired by the manifesto of the *Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM) (Holston, 1989). The modernist project of the CIAM was politicized and drawn upon a social architecture that should serve collectivity. Supported mainly by the ideas of *The Athens Charter*, written in 1943 by the Swiss architect Le

18 Although Federal District would be the strictly correct denomination for the area investigated, the simultaneous planning and creation of both ended up to mix the definition not only in daily life conversation, but also in academic works. Therefore, although imprecise, it is not wrong to refer to "Brasília" in a broader sense. Therefore, in this research, I will usually use the term Plano Piloto, when referring specifically to the administrative region 1 of the Federal District, which is Brasília.

Corbusier, Brasília was planned to be a city in which there would be mutually exclusive sectors based on urban functions such as housing, work, recreation and circulation (id, 1989:32). Same height, similar appearance buildings arranged in superblocks of dwelling units - planned to be occupied by all social classes - surrounded by vast green fields indicate the architectural efforts to eliminate social-spatial stratification. This space, entitled *Plano Piloto*, follows the utopia of the Master Plan of Brasília based on the idea that “the unequal distribution of advantage due to differences in class, race, employment, wealth, and family would have little place or efficacy in organizing urban life.” (id, 1989:79).

Nonetheless, since the sole function of the city was administration, whoever was not a member of the bureaucracy was not entitled the same access to the full public domain. According to Holston (1989), the mass of workers who came to Brasília to work in construction lived in settlements supposed to be temporary, since the Government’s plan was not to incorporate that underprivileged population in the city, imagining that the majority would go back to their origin cities after the inauguration. Therefore, the idea of class-harmony cohabiting was mainly predicted to the different positions occupied within the administration.

The working-construction population, however, demanded fiercely, through rebellions and illegal land occupation, their right to be incorporated in the city’s plan. This unforeseen situation lead to the creation of a legal periphery, organized in satellites-cities (*ciudades satélites*), which contradicted the utopia Brasília’s idealisation was based upon. The planners thus had to succumb to a design of social stratification that meets what they wanted to abolish, leaving the *Plano Piloto* reserved almost exclusively for bureaucrats (Holston, 1989).

The zoning scheme of Brasília provides it with its characteristic of working city, since the majority of work is concentrated in *Plano Piloto*. Holston (1989) describes that both the

residential areas within *Plano Piloto* and the satellite-cities work as dormitory-cities. The segregation between working and living place played an important role in the increase of social inequality over the years. The *Brasiliense*'s wide avenues were projected to the exclusive use of automobiles, the great symbol of consume and modernity of the XX century. Depending almost sole on automobiles, most of inhabitants of *Plano Piloto* drive cars, whilst the population in the periphery needs to rely on the exorbitantly expensive and inefficient public transportation to commute to work. Hence this results in disadvantages for lower classes in many ways, such as enhances the difficulty to find and keep jobs and prevents them to interact with the urban public spaces of Brasília.

The ultimate outcome is reflected nowadays in the strict physical segregation, emphasized by the long distances between centre and periphery, distinguishing Brasília from other Brazilian metropolis, in which the massive social segmentation is visibly present and located not only in its surroundings but also within the city. The current demography of Brasília indicates that the great majority of its population lives in the periphery; in 2010 only 8,17% of the population of Distrito Federal lived in *Plano Piloto*¹⁹. Moreover, a UN-Habitat report of 2010²⁰ points Brasília as the 16th most unequal city of the world. All that was mentioned above reveals that, unfortunately, the modernist social project proved to be highly inefficient. It transformed Brasília not in a model to be followed by the country, as originally planned, but into the exacerbation of Brazilian social inequality - hidden behind the beautiful Niemeyer's modernist concrete buildings in the fantasy island of the *Plano Piloto*.

The close connection established in Brazil as a whole between socioeconomic inequality and racial issues is also reflected in the racial demography distribution of the *Distrito Federal*. It is not mere coincidence that the *ciudades satélites* that suffer the most with

19 Distrito Federal – Anuário Estatístico do Distrito Federal, ano-base 2010.

20 UN-Habitat (2010). State of the World's Cities 2010/2011: Bridging the Urban Divide.

the lack of access to public services such as public health and education are also the ones with a greater concentration of black population.²¹ The modern Brasília thus is also mirrored on persistent national reality based on racial categories constructed by the colonial encounter and maintained by white Brazilian elites that hierarchised human beings by their skin colour.

2.4 Talking about race in Brazil

“Para os americanos branco é branco,

preto é preto (e a mulata não é a tal)

Bicha é bicha, macho é macho

Mulher é mulher e dinheiro é dinheiro

E assim ganham-se, barganham-se, perdem-se

Concedem-se, conquistam-se direitos

Enquanto aqui embaixo a indefinição é o regime

E dançamos com uma graça cujo segredo nem eu mesmo sei

Entre a delícia e a desgraça

Entre o monstruoso e o sublime” (Caetano Veloso, *Americanos*)²²

The uncertainty applied to social categories described in the quote of Caetano Veloso is something often debated when discussing about Brazilian national identity. The exaltation of race miscegenation that culminated on the myth of racial democracy, frequently related to Gilberto Freyre’s ideas ([1933] 2002) and the conception of a country formed by miscibility and hybridization²³ “carnivalizes” its social relations, turning racial and social division lines invisible in the country (Sodré, 2010). The attempt to dig into the uniqueness of the Brazilian

21 Information of the Mapa Racial do DF, Marcel Santa’na. Available at <http://www.secom.unb.br/unbclipping2/cpmod.php?id=22838>, accessed in 11 July, 2012.

22 Free translation: For Americans white is white, black is black (and mulatto does not exist). Fag is fag, ‘macho’ is ‘macho’, woman is woman and money is money. In this way, rights are gained, bargained, lost, granted and conquered. Meanwhile, down here, the uncertainty is the regime. So we dance with a grace, which secret even I do not know; between delight and misery, amongst the monstrous and the sublime.

23 Hybridization in biological terms means the crossbreed of different species. It is a common word within Latin America social sciences that refers metaphorically and ironically to the myth that believes in the emergence of an unique human being, the result of the colonial encounter that is neither black, nor white, nor indigenous, but the result of the miscegenation of the “three races”.

identity, driven by the modern anxious of building a nation and created by an opposition with other countries where racial segregation was official (such as the United States and South Africa) silenced for years the social discrimination and ongoing racism. Influenced by its colonial heritage, Brazilian elites follow Eurocentric values, which according to Sodr  (2010) maintain as hegemonic the anthropologic paradigm of whiteness. The Non-white – which implies in 45% of the whole Brazilian population - not fitting these established patterns, marked by social or phenotypic difference is assimilated only partially in society. The black population represents 70% among the 10% poorer and 8% within the 1% richest²⁴.

The violence against the black population in the world happened not only physically through African tribes' assault, kidnapping, enslavement, physical abuses, mistreat, rape and murder. In fact, the creation of the category of race itself, which classifies humans in different hierarchical groups according to skin colour and physical features, was probably the major symbolic violence of the Western world towards non-white, non-Christian populations. According to the Peruvian sociologist An bal Quijano (2000), it was the colonial situation that created the idea of race that he argues to be one of the most powerful tools of domination. The constructions on racial differences created a hierarchical classification based on the assumption of white supremacy.

In Brazil, specifically, the Portuguese colonial violence, guided by a political and economic interest, was legitimised and naturalised by the Catholic Church that rendered its white believers the “divine” right to save the “lost souls” no matter to which cost (Santos, 2011). Furthermore, the enslaved black population did not come from only one place in - what we know today as - Africa, and they also belonged to different tribes (Santos, 2011). Ultimately, that means that the category of race concealed the cultural diversity within the

24 I am considering the official designation of black population, which entails the ones who self-identify as black or pardos/pardas. The data above was extracted from: Secretaria Especial de Pol ticas de Promo o da Igualdade Racial (Seppir) et al. 1a Confer ncia Nacional de Pol ticas de Promo o da Igualdade Racial: Texto-base. Bras lia, Governo Federal, March, 2005

population brought to the country to work as slaves. The process of ethnical dis-identification, according to the sociologist Marcio André dos Santos (2011), had its beginning right in the moment of the Africans' transportation, in which the colonizers would gather in the same ship people from different ethnicities, sharing in common nothing more than the color of their skin. This process was thus intensified by the forced miscegenation occurred mainly through black and indigenous women's rape, the assignment of a catholic name to the enslaved and the imposition of a European language as the main means of communication.

The official abolition of slavery in the country was a long process and, what it might seem as a paradox, many who defended it were also the perpetrators of the whitening ideology (Hofbauer, 2003:79). This ideology was widespread among Brazilian political and intellectual elite in the XIX century. The ones struggling for the abolition preached that the intention of modernizing the country did not go along with the idea of maintaining slavery. As already clarified previously, the attraction of European workforce was the solution that the Brazilian elite offered to solve the supposedly lack of workers with the end of slavery. Considering the great number of former slaves and also of free workers (who were mostly non-white), the whitening ideology was, as a matter of fact, one of the elements supporting the importation of European labour. The Brazilian elite believed that white workforce was more productive than a black one, connecting the idea of becoming a whiter nation to socioeconomic progress, since black and *mestiços/mestiças* were regarded as racially inferior. Nevertheless, although the whitening ideology shared with the racist theorists the premise of the white supremacy, the latter condemned miscegenation, whereas the former considered it as a mean to eliminate the "black race".

Moreover, the anthropologist Andreas Hofbauer (2003:76) also points out that the "innate" or biological conception of race much present in scientific racist theories was not hegemonic in Brazil as a whole. He explains that in several reports of Europeans that visited

the country in the XIX century expressed their surprise with the malleable and ambiguous way that the Brazilian society categorized races. The definition of a racial identity referred more to a “perception of colour” (or of “phenotype”), in which power relations, such as status and money on specific social contexts, also play important role, apart from a person’s appearance. Analysing specifically the role of the whitening theory to the construction and durability of racism in Brazil, Hofbauer (2003) clarifies that “colour perception” relied also on the co-relation of freedom and morality with white; slavery and immorality with black. Therefore, depending on the circumstances and on political and social interests, taking also into account that racial identification was used as an inclusion and exclusion tool, people with a dark skin could also be accepted as white²⁵ (Hofbauer, 2003). It is worth to note that the racial Brazilian dynamics of previous centuries, as highlights Hofbauer (2003), should not be understood as an evidence of an alleged enhancement of social mobility, but rather of the ideal of whiteness, that combine high social status with the white race.

On the beginning of the last century, under the strong influence of the Brazilian modernist movement²⁶, the myth of the racial democracy has risen. It referred to the exaltation of the “three races” miscegenation that is the constitution of what it came to be “the Brazilian”. Although the racial democracy myth is commonly related to Gilberto Freyre’s book *The masters and The Slaves*, published in 1933²⁷, Maria José Campos (2007) contends that the myth was present in the idealization of a nation and of a Brazilian identity already in

25 Andreas Hofbauer (2003:77) elucidates his argument with a report of the German painter Johan Moritz Rugendas (1835:22), who noted that the laws excluding mix race people from occupying civil and ecclesiastical positions were “ineffective”. In Brazil, according to the painter, these rules constantly circumvented, since any shade of a lighter skin, could already be accepted as white.

26 The modernist movement in Brazil was a cultural, artistic and literary tendency that began in the 1920s and had as its constant theme the singularities of Brazil, the portrait of the Brazilian society, in essence, the search for the nations’ identity. For its relation to the racial democracy myth see Maria José Campos. Versões modernistas da democracia racial em movimento: - estudo sobre as trajetórias e as obras de Menotti Del Picchia e Cassiano Ricardo até 1945. (PhD thesis in Social Anthropology) - Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2007. Available at: <<http://www.teses.usp.br/teses/disponiveis/8/8134/tde-19032008-104427/>>. Accessed in 15-05-2012

27 In *The Master and The Slaves* (1933), Gilberto Freyre intends to offer a new perspective on the formation of Brazilian society that considers the influence of the white, black and indigenous people. He highlights mostly the importance of the black population’s culture to the institution of the nation. Although in some parts of the book he reports the cruelty of the relations between the Masters/Mistresses and the slaves, the book tends to direct the reader to grasp the miscegenation dynamics as a harmonic process.

the 1920s among the modernist writers. She also argues that it relates to the elite's project for racial relations back then. Santos (2011:4) goes further and explains that the large amount of black and mix raced Brazilian population - that would not simply be "diluted in white blood" - drove elites bring about a "new solution" for the "issue of the blacks". This solution entailed the acclamation of our mix-raced background and the propagation of the idea that in a country formed by miscegenation, there is no space for racial discrimination. As stated by Santos (2011:5), the appreciation of "the Brazilian" as a *mestiço/mestiça* in artistic, literary, cultural and political manifestations as a form of nationalism regarded as an anti-nationalist stance to point out the existence of racism as an every day phenomenon within black population's lives.

Since the 1930s, black movements already pointed to social disadvantages that inflicted mainly the "coloured population". However, throughout the decades, they still remained with the great challenge of fighting against the unspeakable and officially absent racism (Alberti and Pereira, 2005). It was not until the late 1980s that the struggles of black movements for the official recognition of racism in the country and also for an appreciation of cultural expressions of the African descendants were acknowledged. Gathered with official discourses of international organizations and bilateral cooperation agencies, the demands of the black movements were reflected on the Federal Constitution of 1988 and on *Lei Caó* (7.716 law) of 1989 that established racism as a non-bailable crime (Santos, 2011). Moreover, in 1995, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the nation's President at that time, officially recognized the existence of racism and the fallacy of the racial democracy's myth.

One of the strategies now used to uncover social inequalities founded upon racial issues is to essentialise the classification of black and white, gathering within the black population also the mixed raced, the officially called *pardas/pardos* (Hofbauer, 2003). Antônio Sérgio Guimarães (1995:43) defends the "racializing discourse" also as an autodefense resource to restore the dignity, the self-reliance and the ethnic sentiment of the

afro-descendent population (Hofbauer, 2003:65). Racial categories in Brazil now are a political matter. Racial identities thus became political identities that are used as strategic tools to expose the inequalities and oppressions suffered up to nowadays by the black population (Oliveira, 2004). The term “black” is being re-signified and is now used not only by those political engaged with the struggles of the Brazilian afro-descendants, but also by black population as a whole. The self-awareness that social inequalities are founded upon racial discrimination and the appreciation of black culture is driving more and more people to self-identify as black or as *parda/pardo*.

The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) makes a difference between *preta* and *negra*. The self-identification works according to which skin colour the person declares to have. Therefore, if a person is *preta*, that refers strictly to a black colour of skin and *parda* to a brown skin. *A população negra* (black population) is the racial category that refers to people who have African ancestry, which gathers who self-identity as black or as *parda* (Oliveira, 2004). For that reason, in this investigation, the word *parda* necessary refers to a person of African descendent.

If race is a defining trait as far as the debate around national identity in Brazil is concerned, it should also be added that gender dimensions are indissociable from this narrative. By adding the gender dimension to what has been said so far, it is possible to identify that black women have historically played a very specific role in the construction of the country as such. This particularity is special for its double, apparent contradictory, dimension of structural importance and social invisibility. The following section intends to shed light on this particular cleavage in Brazil.

2.5 Black women: the transition from slavery to the domestic work

Social inequality in Brazil is reflective of racial issues. Their repercussions to the paid domestic work field can be traced back to slavery and the colonial mode of production, in which black women used to be maids, cooks, nannies, wet-nurses, housekeepers, laundresses and seamstresses in the house of white and free families. As Carvalho highlights (2003:46), the problem of the feminine domestic work is inseparable of the notion of slavery itself. Graham (1992) states that in the year of 1872, in the capital of the Brazilian empire, Rio de Janeiro, 87% of the female slaves were domestic servants. According to Carvalho's (2003) study on former slave women's situation in the Brazilian city of Recife, the search for domestic work within urban families was the main motivation that free black women had to move into the city.

Del Priore (1988) affirms that slavery always coexisted alongside domestic work even among poor families, who despite economic difficulties, owned domestic slaves. Once the traffic of slaves was prohibited in 1850, the prices of domestic slaves increased, transforming them into a luxury commodity that provided social and economic status to white wealthy families who could afford to buy and maintain them (Martins, 2002). Thus, employing a domestic worker was (and still is) used to differentiate middle from lower classes. Goldstein (2003) explains that the perceived need of employing a domestic worker is up to now a class marker for Brazilian middle class.

As Freyre illustrated in his famous book *Casa Grande & Senzala* (2003 [1933]), women slaves were mainly responsible for household services. Indeed, he describes the role of domestic women slaves as their master's mistress, holding the role of sexual initiator of white boys or as *amas-de-leite* ("milk nannies"), who were responsible for nurturing babies, situation that did not change much after legal abolition of slavery. Paid domestic work hence

reproduces a range of slave relationships. On top of that, it is inserted in a history-myth narrative that was created in an effort of building the idea of Brazil as a State-Nation.

Therefore, in order to grasp the social dynamics in which domestic labour is inserted in Brazilian context, one must go back to some ideas raised at very beginning of this chapter: the outline of social and cultural elements that are used to describe Brazilian social relations. In Brazil, there is a persistent interpretation that relations between black and white people, rich and poor are complementary and harmonious, which features as a special and unique way of dealing with such diversity. According to Bernadino-Costa (2007:8), the domestic work – featured in slavery or in free times – has been widely used as an example of this peculiar character of Brazilian social relations. To support his statement, the author draws on how these relations were outlined and construct in Gilberto Freyre’s writings. The latter’s ideas enable us to learn and comprehend one idealized story on domestic workers and also on sexual and racial division of work and on (Bernadino-Costa, 2007).

Committed to the project of creating the idea of nation, Freyre goes back to colonial times, as mentioned earlier, and not only describes, but interprets the social interactions occurred between the big house (*casa-grande*) and the slave hut (*senzala*). Integrated hierarchically in the big house and the slave hut, masters and slaves complemented themselves (Bernadino-Costa, 2007). Freyre (2003 [1993]) reports the proximity of black slaves to the everyday of white families and how they intimately connected themselves through the continuous and common sexual relations established between white males and their female slaves; or/and as a result of the fact that several slaves kids grew up inside the big house among the white kids, who were all raised and breastfed by a black women. In this sense, he argues that this proximity ended up developing emotional involvement and feelings of intimacy, which led to the uniqueness “softness” of Brazilian slavery.

On the other hand, using the example of wet-nurses, Carvalho (2003) has another view

on the proximity between white families and their slaves. She explains that wet-nurses occupied a privileged position among domestic slaves and, together with butlers and other captives who lived together with their masters, used to have a significant influence on the life of the white family. She adds that wet-nurses, not unusually, benefited from this power to achieve their emancipation. Nevertheless, the idealized figure of the wet nurse is, according to Carvalho (2003:64), part of a masculine and a patriarchal mythology, inasmuch as, although beloved, the wet nurse is seen and treated solely as an object. Affective bonds were not an impediment to the selling or abandon of old aged black female slaves. In addition, from the slave's perspective, to nurse her mistress' kids meant also spending less time caring for her own children.

Freyre's take on Brazil's slavery is then rather romanticized and it eases the cruelty of the colonial system. Thus, it is one of the main targets of criticism once one has the intention to reveal the racist dimension that plagues daily the black Brazilian community and to struggle against it. Based on social and racial antagonism, the relation between masters/mistresses and slaves was hierarchical structured. Notwithstanding its perverse aspect, the affective dimension of this relationship developed on the daily intimacy described by Carvalho (2003) and Freyre (2003 [1933]) cannot be dismissed, although permeated by a paternalistic bias.

Goldstein (2003:74), who conducted an ethnographic investigation with a domestic worker in Rio de Janeiro, affirms that she agrees that these relationships beard peculiarities and that those are reflected on current paid domestic work dynamics. The ambiguities present within employers and domestic workers relationships are, therefore, the contemporary expression of old servitude:

“These relationships of servitude stemming from Brazil's period of slavery, their racialised aspects, and the discourses they inspire work in the current context to solidify a particular form

of domination by the middle and upper classes” (Goldstein, 2003: 73).

Brites (2007) points to a great deal of affection created by these specificities, which, however, does not preclude hierarchy in these relations. Indeed, she argues that the current configuration of paid domestic labour maintains a hierarchical system, which is reinforced by ambiguous affections shared between domestic workers and the family they work for.

Negotiations of non-wage payments in trade for services not contractually agreed, the share of gossips between employer and employee and the exchange of affection with the children and also with female bosses are common elements of the dynamics of Brazilian paid domestic work. The clear demarcation between boss and subordinate, on one side, and affections, on the other, build the daily contact between middle-class women and domestic workers.

Complicity and antagonism go hand in hand.

The high level of social and economic inequality between low and middle-classes in Brazil is pointed out by Melo (2002) as a reason why assigning domestic activities to someone else is still such a common practice. Another important issue to be considered when analysing paid domestic work in Brazil is that, whereas it still bears the stigma of social exclusion, it can be also a possibility for economic emancipation of even more excluded groups in society, such as rural-urban migrants. Working in the field of domestic work is one of the few possibilities of income for female rural-urban migrants, which usually have lower formal education and no professional experience in the labour market (Melo, 1998).

So far, this work has been dedicated to present the problems and complexities revolving around the issue of domestic work in its various, historical, economic, political and social dimensions. More specifically, it has chosen to understand all these in their connection with the gender and race specificities pertaining to the realm of domestic workers in Brazil. The risk of losing oneself in the numerous spatial-temporal realms dealt with here is evident. It is for this reason that the next chapter will be dedicated to offering a common logical thread to

what has been said up to this point. I believe that three are the main signposts that should be set in order to connect the so far apparent loose ends of this work. They relate, first, to the notion that the construction of the Brazilian nation-state is strictly connected to attempts to modernize the country on the grounds of a western, liberal, male-based set of assumptions, which in turn cannot be dissociated from colonial endeavours. Second, to the distinction made by the Brazilian anthropologist Roberto da Matta between the “*casa*” (home) and the “*rua*” street, two of the main realms between which, today, these workers move along their daily lives.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

3.1. Decolonial approach and interseccionalidad

The phenomenon of the paid domestic work, as I have already described in the previous section, draws on the various women who live out of it many of the categories and dynamics constructed, shaped and continuously reaffirmed by the colonial situation Brazil was built upon. Hierarchies based on gender, race and class are constantly reinforced by this so common and widespread practice of transferring one's own domestic duties to a much poorer woman. Therefore, although many working rights have been achieved by this professional category, such as the right for minimum wage and the right to retire, the overall framework points to a long lasting precariousness of the profession, indicating still many similarities with servitude dynamics. As it was discussed in the previous chapter, the current situation of this particular category of workers bear resemblance, in many levels, with a long-established set of practices and institutions that are deeply ingrained in national societies. Additionally, these practices are rooted so deeply that it is hard to tell the specific source for these inequalities, especially in relation to contemporary phenomena that often times see the perpetrator and the object of inequalities in the same body. For that reason, in order to encompass the various founding elements of this phenomenon that find expression in a variety of forms today, I will resort to the decolonial perspective, since it takes into consideration essential premises that comprehends concomitantly a point of departure for

these complexities - the colonial heritage - and the current manifestation of these arrangements in the field of paid domestic work in Brazil.

The intellectual framework of the decolonial approach departs from the assumption that the end of colonialism and the subsequent formation of independent nation-states did not substantially change the international division of labour between centres and peripheries, neither the ethnic and racial hierarchy of populations that were established during several centuries of European colonial expansion (Castro-Gómez & Grosfoguel, 2007). In fact, this novel perspective is a critical analysis of modernity created by a group of scholars inspired geopolitically in Latin America known as Latin American Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality project (MCD from now on), which among its contributors there is Annibal Quijano, Enrique Dussel, Walter Mignolo.

According to Escobar (2007:1), the MCD refers to “the very possibility of talking about ‘worlds and knowledges otherwise’”, a way of thinking and investigating non-Western realities, which challenges the universalist take of liberalism, Christianity, Marxism and other great modernist narratives. Quijano (1992), Dussel (2000) and Escobar (2007) affirm that modernity is a metanarrative, which beginning can be traced back to the European invasion of America.

“The conquest and colonization of America is the formative moment in the creation of Europe’s Other (...) the point of origin of the capitalist world system, enabled by gold and silver from America; the origin of Europe’s own concept of modernity with the Conquest and colonization, Latin America and the Caribbean emerged as ‘the first periphery’ of European Modernity” (Escobar, 2003:37)

MCD program draws upon the concept of modernity/coloniality, as interconnected and inseparable terms that refer to modernity. Colonialism was instituted through the establishment of a direct political, social and cultural domination. In spite of the fact that

physical and official control of colonized American lands were put to an end long ago, Western mastery of knowledge and representation, which claims to be universal, remained as the hegemonic perspective. The continuity of this Western or Eurocentric scheme of organizing and thinking is called coloniality.

Quijano, (1992) coined the term coloniality of power to refer to the pattern of power Europeans established in the colonies that created a discriminatory scheme that is still in force until today to categorize people according to their “race”, “ethnicity” and “nationality. “The idea of race”, according to Mendonza’s (2010:21) reading of Quijano, was created with the colonial encounter and was used to socially stratify the colonized according to their relation with Christianity, the purity of the blood and the European languages. The totalizing one-way history of civilization within the European paradigm that has been imposed to colonized populations for several centuries, designated as Eurocentrism (Quijano, 1992; Dussel, 2000), disregarded their history and repudiated their epistemology. Furthermore, by aspiring to provide an universal and complete account of the world, Western rationality also naturalized and legitimized colonial social classifications of sexuality, race, class nationality and religion (Mignolo, 2009). These classifications were arranged in power relations and the various social identities were constructed by their association with specific hierarchies, places, social roles, which were in consonance with the social, political and economic terms of the colonial project (Quijano, 2000).

Subjective and intersubjective constructions based on the “idea of race” created binaries-myths to distinguish Europeans of non-Europeans, which were assumed to be a-historic categories of classification, regarded as natural and not imbedded in the history of power: civilization and barbarian, slaves and free workers, pre-modern and modern, developed and underdeveloped (Quijano, 1992; Mendonza, 2010). These codifications of the world work, according to Mendonza (2010), to the establishment and perpetuation of the

power to control resources and their outputs. In order to so, the basic areas of human existence, such as sex, work, collective authority and subjectivity/intersubjectivity were, based on Quijano's intellectual scheme, rearranged according to the "idea of race" (Mendonza, 2010).

This structure of power, or "coloniality of power" in Quijano's terms, is still the benchmark for the establishment of social class and social stratification, and also upon which the international division of labour was based. In this sense, Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel (2007:13) contend that contemporary global capitalism - shaped in a postmodern format - operates in accordance to coloniality and reframes exclusions caused by hierarchies determined by epistemic, spiritual, racial, gender/sexuality differences displayed by modernity. Likewise, the understanding that the current social relations of capital and work were founded upon a racial division of labour is essential to the analysis of paid domestic work in Brazil. The colonial separation of labour related non-paid and forced work with non-Europeans/non-white, meanwhile that paid and free work was assigned to Europeans/white. The white supremacy ideology was also used to divide the type of work that was supposed to be performed by whites and non-whites (Mendonza, 2010). The access to and the availability of work depended not only on a person's determined race/ethnicity but also on her/his gender. Consequently, considered that domestic work was historically a gendered and racialised occupation, one cannot fail to relate it to sexual labour division. Within a feminist perspective, this master research calls for a re-reading of Quijano's coloniality of power in which he considers race to be the overall foundation of all colonial categories.

Mendonza (2010) explains that Quijano holds to the conception that race reorganized the existing gender regimes in societies prior to the arrival of colonizers. The notion of gender becomes then subordinated to the logic of race, which can lead to the naturalization of social gender relations and heterosexuality. This is what Lugones (2007) and Mendonza (2010)'s

critique of Quijano's analysis departs from. They assert that Quijano accepts inadvertently patriarchal, Eurocentric and heterosexual premises when he takes gender and sexuality for granted by presuming that they are structuring elements of all societies. Historicizing gender formation and heterosexualism, Lugones (2007) resorts to the work of the Nigerian feminist, Oyéronké Oyewùmí, and the indigenous US feminist Paula Allen Gunn to demonstrate that the modern relations of gender and heteronormativity were, alongside race, structuring elements that gendered and racialised the colonized societies. Oyéronké Oyewùmí and Paula Allen Gunn's researches respectively on the Yoruba society and North-American tribes indicate the existence of social configurations that were not organized by any similar principle that remounted to Western gender categories. The division of labour and the access to public and symbolic power did not depend on a person's sex before the contact with the colonizers. Colonialism hence reinvented women in consonance with discriminatory Western codes and principles of gender, as the same time as it racialised them (Mendonza, 2010). In this sense, the notion that "the imposition of the gender system was as constitutive of the coloniality of power as the coloniality of power was constitutive of it" (Lugones, 2007:202) is the premise that permeates the work of feminist intellectuals who work within MDC perspective and that will also orientate this present research: the modern/colonial gender system.

"The sense is that the reduction of gender to the private, to control over sex and its resources and products is a matter of ideology, of the cognitive production of modernity that has understood race as gendered and gender as raced in particularly differential ways for Europeans/whites and colonized/non-white peoples. Race is no more mythical and fictional than gender—both are powerful fictions". (Lugones, 2007:202)

Both authors bring forward the idea that the patriarchal coloniality established complicity between colonized and colonizer men, which prevented the former to establish strong bonds of solidarity with non-European women. Following the same rationality of

domination, the imposition of the categories of race and gender not only created a separation between men and women in the periphery but also between women from the centre and from the periphery. According to Mendonza (2010), it took too long to white Western women or white women from Third World countries to recognize the intersectionality of race and gender in the processes of colonization and capitalist domination, which situates non-white women in a subaltern position within the global capitalist system, as the ultimate Others.

Shedding light on the various colonial categories that portrayed domestic workers as Others or subalterns, this research will also rely on intersectional thinking. Intersectionality is a feminist tool of research that is applied based on the recognition of differences among women and it was first outlined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) as an attempt to deal with struggles and experiences of black women in a feminist and anti-racist perspective (Davis, 2008: 68). According to Davis (2008), it is the main theoretical concern of contemporary feminist scholarship. Other black feminist, Patricia Collins (2002), argues that power relations in society are arranged in an intersecting system of oppression, which she denominates the *matrix of domination*. She considers that the different social established categories, such as race, gender, social class, sexuality, ethnicity, age and citizenship status are embedded in an socio-political structure, which is organized through power relations.

Although these social categories affect axes of power, it is important to stress, in accordance to postmodern and postcolonial feminists' and queer intellectuals' (Phoenix, 2006; Mohanty, 1984; Butler, 1989) take on intersectionality, power must be understood through the lenses of a Foucauldian understanding, that is, power as enabling and progressively framing rather than merely oppressing (Davis, 2008). Furthermore, Yuval-Davis (2006) adds to the discussion that social divisions are not only implicated in macro axes of social power or are only reflected in social institutions, yet influence people's daily lives. Thus, intersectionality is an indispensable tool once I intend to investigate also how the positions in

relation to gender, race, social class and geographic origin affect the process of subjectification of domestic workers.

Intersections of categories that Otherize the domestic workers, gather with modernity/coloniality perspective can help me bring to surface the underlying discriminatory mechanisms that hold this whole system together. Through their own voices, I intend to offer another take on the practice, which can be done by the recognition of the perspective of modernity/coloniality as problematic and by challenging its alleged universalism. Unveiling the roots of colonial oppression that obliterate ways of understanding and acting in the world otherwise calls for the understanding of Mignolo's (2009) terms of geo- and body-politics of knowledge, colonial difference and border thinking.

Modernity created the illusion that knowledge is objective and universal and that is necessary that all regions of the world "rise" to the epistemology of modernity²⁸. Geo- and body-politics of knowledge points to a recognition that knowledge is always situated and is never universal. This is not a novel idea, especially among feminist scholars that could easily connect this term with Donna Haraway's (1988) conception of "situated knowledges". Mignolo's term however attempts to highlight that the colonial difference created specific knowledges that were incorporated in colonized subjects. Despite the duality created between the colonized and the subaltern by global coloniality, it would be wrong to assume that there was/is no space for resistance. This resistance is usually enacted by subalterns who, in a dialogical process that combines both the colonial set of ideas and their situatedness, create other knowledges that at the same time that refers to coloniality, subverts it. This is what Mignolo (2003) defines as border thinking, which defines the colonial subject as always situated somewhere in-between the world of the colonizer and the realm of the colonized.

28 Mignolo in interview to Catherine Walsh (2003). WALSH, Catherine (2003) "Las Geopolíticas del Conocimiento y Colonialidad del Poder – Entrevista a Walter Mignolo". In: *Polis: Revista On-line de la Universidad Bolivariana de Chile*, Volumen 1, número 4

The border thinking or border epistemologies entail the very possibility of talking about “world and knowlegdes otherwise”. It is the need to create narratives based on modern/colonial readings oriented towards the pursuit of a distinct logic (Escobar, 2007:179). Considering that domestic workers are Others, “as women, as racially marked, as excluded, as poor”, their identities are constructed by the hegemonic system, although positioned outside it (Escobar, 2007:186). This is one of the puzzles that inspire this research. I would like to examine the fluid process of the construction of these identities. In which circumstances do domestic workers acquiesce to these modern/colonial categories and which circumstances do they fall outside this “all-encompassing” framework? In other words, how do domestic workers engage in decoloniality?

Before proceeding to the analysis of these decolonial endeavours, it is relevant to bring up a second, more analytical debate that also shapes the way I will deal with the issue of paid domestic work in Brazil. This relates to the distinction made by Roberto da Matta between the street and the home in Brazil.

3.2. Domestic work within the dichotomy between “the home” and “the street”

The social spaces we inhabit outline our living experiences and even our perceptions of the world. Although each of us in our own social contexts and idiosyncrasies occupy various spaces that are socially constructed, the house and the working place might be where the majority of us spend the most considerable time of our lives. This is not an exception for those who perform domestic work as a paid job. However, the difference lies in the fact that domestic worker’s working place is indeed someone’ else house. In addition to that, for live-in domestic workers, the working place is also the place where they sleep during weekdays.

Therefore, in order to better apprehend how domestic worker's realities move back and forth from "home" to "home", I will resort to Roberto Da Matta's notion of "the home" and "the street", gathering them with Sandra Lauderdale Graham's re-formulation of both notions within the reality of domestic workers in the end of the nineteenth-century. Moreover, I will also make use of Marcus Carvalho's study on female slaves and domestic workers in Recife-PE to illustrate Graham's elucidation.

An element much presented on Graham's (1992) book entitled "House and Street - The Domestic World of Servants and Masters in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro" and in Carvalho's (2003) article "*De Portas Adentro e de Portas afora – trabalho doméstico e escravidão no Recife, 1822 -1850*" is how the dichotomy home/street (*casa/rua*) played an important role on the constitution of the paid domestic work. These analytic categories emerge from the work of the Brazilian anthropologist Roberto Da Matta, especially in the book entitled "*A casa e a rua – espaço, mulher e morte no Brasil*" (1997). Da Matta (1997) attempts to describe the duality between the home (*casa*) and the street (*rua*) as fundamental categories that help making sense of Brazilian society. Differently from what one would first assume when encountering such physically tangible concepts, he affirms that this dichotomy represents not only geographic spaces, but also moral entities, *loci* of social action and institutionalized cultural domains that are not just an object but also an agent of socialization. They constitute, therefore, broad discourses present in Brazilian society that, although entail different dynamics, should be regarded as juxtaposed, rather than antagonistic.

The "home" is a hierarchical and familiar space, in which each member holds a social role and is recognized as a person - valued and judged by her or his own qualities. It delimits a space where harmony should reign over confusion, competition and disorder (Da Matta, 1984). This personalistic and friendly environment is allegedly a space in which even the subaltern or the oppressed, the ones who have no space on the street, can set the rules.

However, this apparently evident opposition may be misleading. With respect to the set of rules and hierarchies applicable to the realm of the home and the streets, Da Matta points that these are not antonyms. Although rules and hierarchies are much more evident at “home”, it is not necessarily true that the realm of the street embodies their absence.

The street may be regarded as the realm where most of the rules are subverted; hierarchies are thereby applied in a different fashion, charged with individualistic and class dimensions hidden under the glaze of objectivity and academic/bureaucratic authority. In the street, the law seems to operate as a dominant class’ punishment tool applied almost exclusively on those who do not belong to upper classes. Consequently, the idea of individuality and citizenship in the street holds on the one hand a negative connotation of invisibility, of being only one more among the mass. On the other hand, the anonymity might also entail the release from the home’s hierarchies and the break of conservative moral codes of conduct.

Although accurate in depicting the social environment, as well as providing the observer with a useful set of tools for analysis, it is arguable that Da Matta takes gender dimensions into account. In his distinction of home and street, the author seems to overlook the role of women. This goes in line with Goldstein (2003) when she contends that women, when on the street, hold a vulnerable position that reflects a subaltern position. Additionally, the realm of the home, notwithstanding its portrayal as explicitly hierarchic with women at its centre (Da Matta, 1997), may reflect a very specific set of circumstances that makes sense only if situated in the broader system of social relations that ultimately renders women to subaltern roles. In other words, having women as central to the home realm, but performing the role of housewife or housemaid, reflects nothing more than a subaltern position when this is understood in relation to the realm of the street.

According to this conception of the street and the home, Carvalho's (2003) analysis comprehends two notions of this duality applied to Brazilian women's situation between the end of XIX century and the beginning of XX. Opposed to the city, which is related to the street, the idea of the home is connected to the rural proprieties. The second notion is more evident: the inside of the house and the streets of the city.

In rural properties, which were still mainly sustained by slave workforce, hierarchies were set and maintained through personal and paternal ties. The constant surveillance of the community, based on a patriarchal code of mores, sustained strictly the subordinate place of women. The city, depicted as a space of sin and freedom in the imaginary of rural areas, attracted female rural-urban migration, as affirms Carvalho (2003). Even though women from all classes occupied an inferior social position in comparison with their male peers, the city offered some possibilities for those that for any reason needed or wanted to subvert the harsh un-written rules of rural patriarchy.

The life in the city, however, was not much easier for women. Although the urban dynamics and the amount of urban inhabitants allowed for a greater physical mobility and the establishment of more individualistic relations, the streets in urban Brazilian centres were occupied by beggars, black people, prostitutes and the unemployed, which rendered a negative connotation as a dangerous space. While the idea of honour of the nineteenth-century prevailed and it was strictly preserved inside the house, to cross its fence meant that one would be exposed to the risk of getting robbed, to the threat of sexual harassment or to any other chaotic situation (Carvalho, 2003). The outside was no place for women and much of a woman's honour was established according to her relation to the street. Carvalho (2003) relates that young women who worked as sellers in the streets were generally associated with prostitution. This dirty, dangerous and promiscuous space was then only occupied by women

due to the lack of option, caused by a precarious socioeconomic situation, or in the search for autonomy, which could cost the woman her honour.

Therefore, the domestic work, figured by scholars as the largest occupational field of women until the early 1900s (Goldstein, 2003), was the best option available for those who wanted to work and maintain their honour. Interestingly, not only enslaved or former slaves occupied domestic work positions, but also white poor women, usually – an to a much lesser extent than black - poor European immigrants. Although black and white women shared this low position within the social structure, as Graham (1992) distinguishes, the status and treatment of white domestic workers were not of servants as it was the case for black workers. In a country living the transition of a slave to free workforce-based economy, the wealthier the employer family, the greater was the demand for a white worker (Carvalho, 2003).

On top of that, the range of activities they were responsible to was not exactly the same. Besides the fact that foreigners also offered services such as teaching children how to write and girls how to become a “lady”, according to European values, it was usually the black workers who were assigned tasks to be performed outside the house (Carvalho, 2003). Among others, to go shopping, to fetch water and to take children to school were duties expected of a servant. All of them were activities that overstepped the physical boundaries of the private property and that required some knowledge of women on how to locate and behave herself in the city and how to deal with money. As discussed before, the patriarchal constraints of the street limited the access of women (Carvalho, 2003).

Nonetheless, making use of the ideas of protection and obedience and connecting them respectively to Da Matta’s home and street, Graham (1992) elucidates another relation possible that the servants established with the home and the streets back then. Protection and obedience refer to the responsibilities of the masters/mistresses in providing the servants

(slaves or free workers) protection, food, clothing and shelter in exchange of obedience and fidelity. The masters/mistresses responsibility, however, implied the control over the subordinate. In this sense, the house could lose its character of a safe place for the servants and become a place of oppression, injustice or punishment. Meanwhile, the street, in which women's honour was challenged, could be sought as a place of greater freedom. Away from the master/mistress surveillance, the servants could experience a more authentic and intimate social world, where they could perform their individuality among equals, according to Bernardino-Costa (2007)'s reading of Graham (1992).

In Carvalho's (2003) study, the servants were depicted as the black women who, most of the times, had no choice but accepting the tasks to be performed outside, distinguishing them from the white domestic workers and allocating them in the lowest position within the domestic work. Graham (1992) however notes that a hierarchical distinction also existed among black servants. The ones who received more trust and affection were the "inside servants", who were at times identified with the family they worked for, since they established such a close relation. However, they were subjected to the master/mistress' psychological and physical control. The other ones, as the servants in Carvalho's (2003) analysis, needed to work outside the house, which could low their social value, but also that could provide them more mobility and broader life experiences.

Graham (1992) elucidation of protection and obedience breaks any remaining duality that could be established between the home and the street, since although socially and hierarchically structured, inside and outside servants built a relation between the home and the street that cannot be simplified terms of what would better or worse. As a matter of fact, set in a multifaceted way, the relation between the home and the street shaped a variety of identities within the occupation of domestic work. Thus, heterogeneity and complexity are more present than absent. Consequently, it is important to consider the several arrangements

of this working field, without neglecting, obviously, the role of gender and racial dimension on this configuration.

This chapter has focused on gathering tools to organize the complex and multi-layered aspects of paid domestic work in Brazil. It has done so mainly by embracing two theoretical strategies that will in turn guide the subsequent sections of this work. First, the ontological and epistemological claims related to the modern/colonial project and their recent connections with debates around the intersectionality inherent to paid domestic work in the country. Second, the analytical dimensions of the *home* and the *street* brought about originally by Roberto da Matta and later developed by Graham, that highlight the grey zones in which domestic workers divide their daily activities and ultimately their lives. The remainder of this work will be based in these distinctions, and in turn will try to elucidate how domestic workers in Brazil engage in their particular life configurations in their everyday displacements.

Chapter 4

Methodology

According to Dezin and Lincoln (2005:1), the academic research endeavour is the ultimate representation of European imperialism and colonialism. It epitomizes the construction of knowledge based on unequal power forces that determine what is the representation of the Other, which relies on a truth supported by a so-called “scientific objectivity”. Although the idea of “positivist objectivity” has already been rejected in fields such as social sciences and gender studies, whatever knowledge that claims the status of scientific (or is inserted inside scientific academy) must be arranged according to a certain format that inevitably follows modern/colonial patterns. In this sense, I must recognize, from this moment on, that the purpose of de-colonizing completely the concept of domestic work and all of the categories of gender, race and social class is unattainable. This research tries to escape from any utopian aspiration, but at the same time, attempts to shape the perceived reality of domestic workers by trying to critically engage with the challenges imposed by the academy and unveil what is behind the mainstream discourse, based on modern rationality.

The MCD project, although still inserted within the realm of strict scientific rules and methodology, works in the direction of using the available theoretical tools to find ways of offering alternative representations of the Others, the subalterns, the minorities. This representation falls, at the same time, within and outside the borders of Western knowledge. For that reason, this research was guided by the decolonial motto *learn to unlearn* (Mignolo,

2008: 290), which translates the effort I made to step away from my pre-established set of logical rational modern framework. This move intends to allow me to provide a better understand about how the causalities and explanatory connections are constructed within the universe of the respondents.

Meeting the perspective of the MCD project, a research that intends to be built upon a feminist slant necessarily entails a critical take and challenge of commonly established hegemonic knowledge. In the words of the sociologist Hesse-Biber (2007:3), editor of the “Handbook of Feminist Research”, “feminist thinking and practice require taking steps from the ‘margins to the center’ while eliminating boundaries that privilege dominant forms of knowledge building, boundaries that mark who can be a knower and what can be known”. Although I will not discuss the full range of feminist theories within the social sciences, my understanding of feminism is reflected on the various methodological choices of this investigation. Ultimately, I understand feminism as project of social justice, meaning that this intellectual work is inseparable from a certain degree of political engagement. Consequently, it aspires to give a proper place to historically relegated mind frames that somehow can be used in the future for concrete action for change.

Moreover, the questions made by a feminist researcher have, at the very core of the study, the lives of women and of other marginalized groups, and it takes various perspectives to negotiate the multiple identities (Hesse-Biber, 2007). Gross & DeVault (2007:175) explain that contemporary feminist scholarship deconstructed the unified notion of “women” as the main subject of feminism. Since women are historically and culturally diverse, gender and sexuality are also multiple, and the intersections of class, race, nation, ability and age add to the identity formation. Consequently, the idea of multiple identities comes up as really important in this research. It is not my intention to treat domestic workers as a homogeneous group of women, whose narratives must be congruent. Rather, I intend to shed light upon how

different identities position them in the world, affecting the account they have over themselves and how their interactions with their environment is established.

This chapter is dedicated to outline the methodological choices made in this chapter. As already mentioned above, the present thesis is based mainly on a feminist perspective combined with the precepts of the modernity/coloniality/decoloniality project. I specifically founded some of my methodological decisions on the Feminist Standpoint Theory that will be further discussed. The investigation gathers methods of inquiry developed and applied by social sciences fields, such as Sociology and Anthropology. Given the complexity of domestic work as an object of inquiry, the fieldwork was composed by two different, but complementary, methods of data collection: semi-structured, open-ended, in-depth interviews and participant observation. To analyse the collected data, I resort to the Extended Case Method (ECM). In the next sections of the chapter, I will elucidate the methodological tools applied and justify their appliance, according to the selected method of analysis and the purposes of the investigation.

4.1 Methodological tools

In order to select these two qualitative research methods – semi-structured in-depth interviews and participant observation - I took into consideration also that the purpose of this research was not only to investigate the social role of domestic worker solely but, in addition, to perceive how this type of job shape their lives as a whole – as women, as mothers, as wives, as housewives. Gross and DeVault (2007:176) point out that semi-structured and open-ended interview are the favourite research methods applied by feminist researchers. Described by Dezin and Lincoln (2005: 642) as a “negotiated text”, interviews are conversations between at least two people (the interviewer and the respondent) that produce knowledge

conditioned by situational interactions. In-depth interviews allowed me to listen to stories, anecdotes and opinions that outlined the personal narratives of the respondents as a whole. They also enabled me to trace how race, gender and social class intersect and build narratives that at times concur with the dominant discourse informed by *coloniality* and times are embedded in the earlier alluded *border thinking*.

The questions that shaped the questionnaire were clustered in four blocks (see annex 2). A group of questions were related to their biography, including childhood and migration issues. Another dealt with their perception on racial identity and discrimination. A third one focused on their daily activities outside the work, from the moment they step in and out from their employer's house. Lastly, a whole block dealt with work matters: their duties, their feelings and perceptions around the professional category, their labour rights, etc.

Taking into account that interviewing is a dialogical process and that I have chosen to apply in-depth interviews, the conversations I had with my respondents did not follow exactly the same sequence of topics mentioned above. They also varied in length and in the complexity that certain issues were addressed. Whenever I felt that a respondent had more to say about a particular matter, I encouraged her to tell me more about that specific topic. If on the one hand, this allowed the respondent to feel more comfortable with the conversation, since she was able to orient the direction of the interaction, on the other, as a researcher, I took the risk not to discuss further some matters, which were more relevant to the objectives of the investigation than others. Nonetheless, positioning myself as someone who was truly interested in their opinions and in learning about their lives in general, it diminished a possible oppressor configuration of an interview based on “who asks/knowledge holder”, “who answers/object to be discovered”, creating thus a more comfortable, safe and intimate space. The way the interviews were conducted will be better described in another section in this chapter.

Considering the important role of social practices and daily activities in one's self-perception, I judged as essential not only to interview my respondents, but also to follow their routine for half a day. That meant to catch the bus with them after a working day, sleep over their houses and come back in the morning to the centre with them. Immersion attempts within academic researches are usually associated with the anthropological investigation tool of ethnography. Nonetheless, one of the requirements for conducting ethnography is to spread one's presence over time and space within the fieldwork, as Burawoy (1998:17) points out. Taking into account that the time spent with the respondents was less than 24 hours and the spaces our encounters took place were mainly the public transports and their houses, I did not perform an ethnography. I did, however, resort to the main techniques present in ethnographic research: participant observation.

The application of participant observation helps the researcher to experience partly the lives of the investigated subjects. There are some subtle elements in attitudes, reactions and activities' performance that might not be present in their narratives, but that are, however, significant to the understanding of people's perception of their social reality. Nonetheless, I acknowledge the fact that my presence disturbed my respondents' routine and might also have induced some behaviour and inhibit others, which by no means invalidates the findings of my research. As a matter of fact, the call for "strong objectivity" and "situated knowledges" within Standpoint theory, as well as the Extended Method Case's requirement for a *reflexive* model of science work upon the premise of the own participation of the observer in the study field and the interaction between researcher and respondent.

The following section in this chapter is devoted to outline some of the main premises, conceptions and employment of the Standpoint theory and the Extended Method Case. Both will be elucidated jointly with the description of how I conducted the fieldwork of the present research. I will also relate the study's contingencies and shortcomings. In the end of the

chapter, I will offer some details of the respondents' profile, which are intrinsically related to the outcomes that will be presented in the next chapter.

4.2 Extended Case Method and Feminist Standpoint Theory

By rejecting positivist objectivity, which entails efforts of disengagement with the environment under scrutiny, Michael Burawoy (1998; 2009), through further developing the Extended Case Method (ECM), champions a *reflexive* model of science. Reflexive models argue in favour of the engagement of the investigator with fieldwork subjects and dynamics. The encounter between an observer and participants must be looked at and analysed as an interchange of knowledges, which demands an acknowledgment of multiple ways of knowing and interacting with the social world. Reflexive science encourages thus the dialogue between researcher and respondents. The recognition of the plurality of knowledges is, in my understanding, consonant with the framework that is outlining this research, the MCD project. The latter seeks to intervene in the “very discursivity of the modern sciences in order to craft another space for the production of knowledge –an ‘other way of thinking’, ‘*un paradigma otro*’, the very possibility of talking about ‘worlds and knowledges otherwise’” (Escobar, 2003:1).

Moreover, reflexive science also involves observation over time and space, and the linking of local processes and extralocal/macroforces. Each of these operations can only be understood through what Burawoy describes as the “expansion of theory itself”(1998:5), which is a dialogue “between successive reconstruction of theory”(2009:XV). Therefore, in the light of the ECM, based on reflexive science, this research took altogether four main methodological steps. The first was the choice of focusing on domestic worker's narratives and social practices as the main source of information. The second was the establishment of a dialogue between the respondents and myself as well as between the various elements that

compose their social reality and me. The third was the analysis of how the dynamics and configuration of their work related/non-related contexts influence their subjectivity. The last step was to explore how the social practices I could observe and the narratives of interviewees were connecting with or resistant to dominant colonial discourses. This procedure provided inputs to the MCD project on how the subalternized knowledges, in this case of domestic workers, are informed by *border thinking*.

The choice of departing from social practices and narratives of domestic workers is grounded on the premise that knowledge is ultimately connected to lived experience. This is in line with the Feminist Standpoint Theory, which was developed in the 1980s by theorists such as Sandra Harding (1986), Donna Haraway (1988) and Nancy Hartsock (1983). It gained broader aspects with the critiques of black feminists such as Patricia Hill Collins (2002) and bell hooks (1992), and it also incorporated the non-western perspectives presented, for example, in Anzaldúa (1987)'s works. Standpoint Theory, by emphasizing the position of agents in the process of knowledge construction, claims that politics and epistemology cannot be separated. Therefore, it is based on a triad of power, knowledge and situatedness (Ramazanogly & Holland, 2002). To state that this research embraces this alleged Feminist Standpoint entails that the narratives of the interviewed domestic workers can only be analysed once the positions these women occupy in society is clear. In other words, it is essential to highlight that they speak from a specific *locus* in regards to their profession and the various intersections of gender, race and social class crosscutting paid domestic labour.

Moreover, Harding(1993)'s concept of *strong objectivity* within social researches implies that the knowledge of the Others are the necessary starting point to any attempt to confer legitimacy to the investigation and to properly understand social dynamics. Consequently, the standpoint of subalterns through their lived/embodied gendered and ethnic-racial experience are key to building knowledge based on feminist inquiry. Informed by this

perspective, the main source of information of this research are domestic workers' experiences, collected through their narratives and daily ordinary activities.

Strong objectivity, however, does not entail a research strategy that could actually deliver truthful accounts of domestic worker's world. According to Donna Haraway (1991), all knowledges are developed in relation to a specific social context. Taking that as a premise, knowledges are partial and located (situated). Applying her concept of *situated knowledges*, I recognize the partiality, the politics and the situatedness of this academic research, which requires from me an explicitly statement of my location within the topic and the subjects under scrutiny. In the following sections of the present chapter, I will describe the methodological choices that come as consequence of the adoption of these premises.

4.3 Methodological choices

I have chosen to interview 10 women who have been working as domestic workers for at least 10 years, taking into account their incorporation of the *habitus* of the profession. According to Bourdieu (1984:170), *habitus* is a system of dispositions shared by a certain group. It is neither determined by structures, nor a product of free will, but the interchange of both, which shapes practices, values and meanings that are constantly created and reproduced without a conscious concentration. Therefore, the amount of years working in this specific type of job can lead to an embodiment of this social law, which is important for the purpose of this research.

I took the decision of limiting my respondents to 10 women, due to time constrains and also because the amount of information collected in a qualitative research that combines semi-structured in-depth interviews and participant observation is adequate to the purpose of this master research. Taking into consideration that, following the ECM (Burawoy, 1998),

this research does not have the intention of providing a representative account of a supposed reality. It is rather mostly interested in expanding the already constructed knowledge on domestic work. Departing from the perspective of women inserted in this professional field, I attempt to offer new inputs to the debate of domestic labour.

Taking into consideration that Brazil is a very large country, I restricted the investigated area only for the region of Brasília-DF and its surroundings. The choice of the city was made due to practical purposes, but also due to the particular way Brasília is geographically organized. I was born and raised in Brasília. Therefore, I am more acquainted with the environment and the dynamics of the city, which facilitated my entrance in the field. In addition, with regards to the paid domestic work, it is also important to consider that being a middle-class and white Brazilian woman, I have always been part of an employer's family. For ten years now, there is a lady, three years older than me, who works in my mother's house, with whom I developed a close and emotional relationship. Our relation follows some common patterns of those described in the first chapter, which frames me also as an element part of this phenomenon, contributing to my approach and behaviour strategies. As a result of that, the communication between the respondents and me flowed more easily, since we share many common meanings related to the micro-cosmos of the domestic work situated in Brasília. Besides having the same mother tongue, this proximity facilitated thus the challenge to identify and extract from their narratives elements that were part of the mainstream discourse and the ones that escape from it.

Although the similarities mentioned above must be taken into consideration, I could not claim that my position in the fieldwork was of an *outsider/within* – of a researcher who shares a common social location with the investigated group (Collins, 1991). Indeed, my situation as a potential employer, as belonging to the middle-class, as white and as someone who is currently living abroad required from me a constant self-reflexion in order to ease the

power relations that are inevitably present in encounters between people whose socioeconomic backgrounds differ so much. According to Gross and DeVault (2007), it is essential to a feminist researcher to maintain a reflexive awareness of the relationships between herself and the respondents, keeping in mind that investigation encounters are shaped by many axes of power.

The other reason why the metropolitan area of Brasília was chosen to be the investigated locale relies on the specificity of its urban design. Brasília's urban configuration follows strict social inequalities patterns. The account offered in the second chapter of this work briefly described Brasília's history. The account was not only incorporated to the text to sustain my city's choice, but also because its understanding is valuable to support other methodological choices.

In comparison to other big metropolis in Brazil, such as Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, the distance between the wealthy centre and the periphery in Brasília contributes to an exclusion of subalterns from the urban life. Moreover, the critical condition of the public transportation is an issue that plays an important role in the daily life of workers who live in the outskirts of the city. The trips are usually very long and the number of buses is insufficient for the demands – which means that is rare to find a free seat in a more than one-hour ride.

My understanding of city goes beyond the idea of a simply inhabited place. In fact, it embraces a perception that urban spaces' arrangement and occupation are an everyday experience that outlines cultural and social interactions and practices. According to the Brazilian geographer Milton Santos (2001:80): “the territory is not a neutral nor a passive actor. It produces a real schizophrenia, since the chosen places welcome and benefit certain

vectors of the dominant rationality, but also allows the emergence of other forms of life”.²⁹

Therefore, the history of Brasília and some accounts on what I experience in the fieldwork might as well offer the reader a greater context in which the domestic workers are physically and emotionally inserted.

4.4 Conducting the fieldwork

Before starting to describe the fieldwork, I must assert here my position. I am a middle-class, white, Brazilian, female young researcher who crossed the physical class borders of my own city, which for many and many years gained existence in my imagination mainly through pictures in the newspapers, TV newscast, and theories in books.³⁰ Moreover, I have lived all my life in the same neighbourhood as my interviewees frequent only to work. Since part of the information gathered in this investigation is either related to the private lives of the interviewed women or to their employers, I had to make sure I could provide a comfortable environment for the research encounter. Thus, in order to protect my respondents’ identities, I ensured them that their actual names would not be revealed in the research. The choice of the pseudonyms was random, but I made sure to use Brazilian names. Additionally, to secure their anonymity behind the stories, I also changed the names of certain towns they mention in their narratives.

The fieldwork was conducted in February and March of 2012. In December, 2011, I talked to a lady who works as a cleaner in the building my mother lives in Brasília, Micheli, and asked her if she knew some of the domestic workers who lived in the building or around. I resorted to her due to the good interpersonal connection we have and because her social

29 Free translation from the Portuguese: “(...) o território não é um dado neutro nem um ator passivo. Produz-se uma verdadeira esquizofrenia, já que os lugares escolhidos acolhem e beneficiam os vetores da racionalidade dominante mas também permitem a emergência de outras formas de vida”.

30 I had been before a few times to neighbourhood towns, however, the fieldwork of the present research was the first time I went all by myself with someone who lives there. Besides of that, it was also the first time I did not go by car.

location resembles domestic worker's social and economic situation. Ultimately, this means that the first social barrier could be diminished, since she would be the one making the first contact and that she could also provide the possible respondents with some of my personal details. This indeed created a safer environment, letting the domestic workers to feel more comfortable to agree/disagree with the research proposal.

I explained her that I intended to make a research on the lives of women who work as domestic workers and made myself clear about my intentions of spending the night over their houses. She replied me a bit worried telling me that she did know some, but that they lived too far and cited some towns known for their high violence rates. I explained to her that the choice I was making was deliberate and that I had no problem of going for a day to some towns where so many people live in. Unfortunately, before the starting day of the field, I had to deal with the pre-conceptions of one of the porters in my buildings and some friends, who showed a lot of concerns related to my security.

The only measure I took to prevent myself of getting afraid - which could compromise my encounter and thus my research findings - and to get rid of any possible fear I might had was to talk openly with my respondents about the place where they lived. I asked them specifically about drug dealing, since I was told that my presence there could be erroneously taken; they could think of me as an undercover police officer. They all told me that they knew well their neighbourhood and that it would be no problem for me to go home with them. Bonds of trust were then established, since I needed to rely on them and they also needed to trust on me to let me stay the night.

The main strategy taken to contact possible respondents was through a network of acquaintances. Micheli was who made the first contact with at least five of the respondents. The other ones were appointed to me by respondents who had already taken part in the

research. By the time I went to talk to her or even call her, they all already knew roughly what my intentions were, which facilitated our connection. I explained them that the research was a final project for the conclusion of a master program and that I was interested in getting to know more about their daily activities.

In an attempt to have a greater diversity within my respondents, I tried to contact some other domestic workers who worked in friend's houses. Some who have worked mainly with black families and some who have had the experience of working in the house of people who escape the heteronormativity. Unfortunately, my attempts were frustrated and I got several negative responses that implied they were ashamed of the condition of their houses and some that stated that their husbands did not agree with receiving a stranger over.

One of the possible research pitfalls was that half of my respondents worked in the same building I lived for many years, which means that I personally knew their employers. Fortunately, our encounters were very honest and they opened up to me. They related including some unpleasant episodes they had to go through with old and current employers. I attribute the easiness of the encounters mostly to the fact that they took place in environments safer and more familiar to them than to me: in the bus stop, inside the bus, in their living room, in their bedroom, in the bakery around the corner of their streets.

Moreover, the combination of the social class distance between the respondents and myself, my willingness to listen to what they had to say and to sleep in their houses created an image of the "good Samaritan" around myself. On the one hand, this opened up a space in which they could feel intimate enough to relate abuses and injustice. On the other hand, I had to remind them over and over of how grateful I was for being able to talk to them, especially for the fact that they were receiving me inside their family's house.

Usually the patterns established for the encounters were the following: first meeting in the bus stop around 16:30³¹; then, taking a most likely full bus in a trip that used to last around one and a half hour to reach its destination. The towns I visited were *Santo Antônio do Descoberto-GO*, *Planaltina-DF*, *Jardim Ingá-G*, *Samambaia-DF* and *Gama-DF*. Arriving there they habitually stopped in a bakery to buy some food for dinner. Then, we would head to their houses. The interviews were recorded with their consent and were conducted in the place of their choice inside the house. At the households, my interaction was not only with them, but also with other family members, which helped me to understand better how the dynamics of their residences was established. I had a bed for myself in most of the cases. The only exception was when I had to sleep with the nine-year-old grandson of one of the respondents, because there were no more beds in the house, neither space for mattresses on the floor. The next day, we would wake up between 04:00 and 5:30 and catch the bus back to Brasília for another one and a half hour. All of what I observed during the fieldwork was extensively described in the form of a memoir. This allowed me to cross and complement information of interviews and participant observation.

Before I left Brasília, I printed handbooks with all the rights and duties of domestic workers and personally handed to them, thanking once more for collaborating in the research. The collaborators of this investigation will be described in the next section. I will provide the reader with some elements of the respondents' profile.

³¹ The time depended on until how late they stayed at work and how early they needed to be back.

4.5 The respondents (the several Marias)

“María no tiene tiempo

de alzar los ojos

rotos de sueño (...)

María sólo trabaja, solo trabaja, sólo trabaja

María sólo trabaja

y su trabajo es ajeno” (María Landó – Susana Baca)³²

Maria is probably the most common name in Brazil. It alludes to the Virgin Mary within the catholic belief. Although for matters of confidentiality, I changed all the real names of the respondents for pseudonyms, I will use in this section the name Maria to represent this group of 10 women who kindly agreed to receive me in their houses and share with me a small part of their lives and reality.

Even though I consider that each Maria had a particular life story that singularize them as independent subjects, for the purpose of an academic work, I needed to find similarities within their trajectory that could somehow relate to greater social, political e economic dynamics forces. Therefore, some of the characteristics about their biography will be here elucidated to support the data analysis that will be carried out in the next chapter.

The issue of geographical place of birth is an important data that might indicate how domestic workers are also part of internal migration working flow in the country. All Marias are Brazilian internal migrants. Five of them were born in small towns of the neighbour state

³² Free translation: Maria has no time/to raise her eyes/exhausted/Maria only works, only works, only works/Maria only works/and her work does not belong to her.

Goiás³³ and the other five come from the Northeast region of Brazil. Northeast is a large Brazilian area, composed by nine states³⁴. However, since the states the respondents came from within Northeast were diverse and that the area is known for being a sender-region in migration settings, I decided to indicate respondent's region of origin rather than state. Nowadays all of them live in small towns in the outskirts of Brasília, situated within the *Distrito Federal* or in the state of *Goiás*, as mentioned previously.

Moreover, in this group of Marias, the rural-urban migration also appeared as an important element shaping their biographies. All of them come from rural areas or very small town that are based on agriculture subsistence. Only one of them had not the experience of working in farms previously from working in other people's households.

Since most of Brazilians still hold up to religious beliefs and considering also the fact that in the narratives, the word "God" appeared frequently, it is also important to mention that only three of them said to be "protestants" and all the other seven declared themselves as catholic. However, one of them also goes to a religious ecumenical centre, which combines catholic rituals with Kardecist Spiritism and Umbanda, which is an afro-descendent Brazilian religion that blends African religions with Catholic and Kardecist beliefs. Their different churches belonging is really not relevant, what it matters for the understanding of their narratives is that they frequently rely to their spiritual believes to justify some of the course that their lives took.

Information over their marital status and with whom they live with is also important to further observations on how the domestic duties are formed at home. In the next table, I separated them by age, since it can have influence on the domestic arrangements.

33 Some of the towns the interviewees were born are now part of a new state called Tocantis, emancipated from Goiás in 1989. However, I took the decision of maintaining the geographical location as Goiás, considering that by the time they lived there, it was still part of the state of Goiás.

34 By indicating the respondent's region of origin rather than the state, it does not entail the assumption of cultural homogeneity among the region's state.

Table 1 – Age and house occupation

Age		Live by herself	Live with a partner	Live with a partner and kids	Live only with her kids	Live in the employer's house
30-39	3	-	-	1	1	1
40-49	4	-	1	1	2	-
50-55	3	2	-	1	-	-
Total	10	2	1	3	3	1

The two women who live by themselves are divorced and have economically independent daughters and sons. The only respondent who does not have kids is the one who still lives in the employer's house. Two of the Marias live with one son/daughter and a partner, but they have more children who do not live with them anymore, since they no longer depend financially on the parents. One of those, apart from living with her husband and a son, she also takes care of her nine year-old grandson, whose parents remain in the their hometown.

Another issue I would like to point out in this section is the low level of formal education in this group of women. It is a characteristic previously elucidated in the first chapter, which points to a convergence of elements present in the Marias group and some of the common patterns of Brazilian domestic work employment in general. I will present this data crossed with racial self-identification.

Table 2 – Race and Formal Educational level³⁵

Years of formal education	Black	Parda	White
Until 4 years	2	-	3
From 4 to 7 years	-	2	2
More than 7 years	-	1	-
total	2	3	5

The elements mentioned above that characterize the group of Marias in this research portrait a bit of who they are. They also support claims that will be made in the following analysis' chapter. To finalize this section, I would like to refer to the fragment of the song from the black Peruvian singer Susana Baca present in the beginning of this section. It summarizes the lives of this group of Marias, which are workers who wake up when it is still dark and arrive home when is already dark, working for living and living for working.

4.6 The background and singularities of each Maria

In the previous section I attempted to briefly gather the similarities among the interviewees. However, since one of the objectives of the present research is to raise opinions and ways of thinking of the respondents on their profession, reporting the life trajectory of each of them is also relevant for the understanding of their standpoint on domestic work. It is equal important to mention here that the information I will provide about them does not

³⁵ The racial self-identification categories refer to a pre-established category used in Brazilian census, which is now pretty used by individuals in an attempt to define oneself racially. In the second chapter of the research, I presented the Brazilian debate over race.

comprehend all the facts they related about their lives, but the ones I judged significant for the purposes of the research³⁶.

Dorli is now 53 years old and was born in the state of Goiás and only went to school for two years of her life. Her mother, a black woman from Northeast, was a single mother who throughout her life worked as a servant³⁷ in exchange of food, shelter and clothing in other people's houses or farms. Dorli began working in other people's house also as a servant, first in her Godmother's house; later by the age of 7, where her mother lived and worked; and then taking care of a baby in a women's house in her hometown. She reported that she was mistreated in the first two places. Before migrating to Brasília, she already had worked as a proper domestic worker, earning her own money. She moved to Brasília when she was 18 years old, in 1976, running away from an abusive ex husband who she was forced to marry when she was 14 years old and was threatening to kill her because of the separation.

She worked as a domestic worker until she got married again. She lived for 6 years working in her own farm with her husband and her fours daughters. Once she separated again, she moved to a religious community³⁸, where she spent 16 years of her life. There she worked part-time cleaning and cooking for a small hotel, school and hospital, in exchange of house, food and clothing. Once she got married again, she went back to her domestic worker life. Now she is divorced, due to another episode of domestic violence, and works as a *mensalista* for 8 years in a same house. She lives by herself in a one-bedroom fully furniture rented house, all her daughters are independent and as an important part of her life, she goes thrice a week to the rituals and celebrations at this religious community. She dreamt to be a singer when she was a kid.

36 Unfortunately, there is valuable information that I needed to cut off. However, the material of the fieldwork can be used in my future researches.

37 I used the denomination of servant to point out that she was not earning money to perform domestic duties, which differentiate her from a domestic worker who get paid per day or per month for the work performed.

38 This religious community is ecumenicist and they perform Catholic, Kardecist, and Umbanda rituals. The community is indeed a small town with a hospital, a hotel, a school, some small shops and residences. Dorli estimates that 150 families live there.

It was in her parent's farm in Goiás, where Marina spent her childhood. She relates that she did not have a very joyful youth, since she always needed to work. She worked doing some household's tasks and by the age of 7 she started to help her mother in the agriculture work. Until she was 10, she walked with her brothers and sisters 7 kilometres everyday to school. She then lived for 3 years in the house of a lady in the town, in order to be closer to the school. She helped with the domestic work, but she says everyone did, so she did not regard that as being a servant. She started working to earn some money when she was 13 years old. She moved to Brasília in 1999 and since 2000 works for her current employers. However, she quitted her job for 6 months a couple years ago and took up a position of milking cows in a small city in Goiás where her sister lives. She returned to Brasília and to her previous work, because she was approved to pursue a bachelor degree in Social Work in one university. She is a white, 30 years-old live-in *mensalista* and is in the last year of her undergraduate studies. As a child, she wanted to become a dentist.

Gloria migrated from a rural area in the Northeast to Brasília in 2002, where she took her first job as a domestic worker. She first moved by herself, through the invitation of a sister-in-law who was already working there, and later the husband and her sons and daughter joined her. Before becoming a domestic worker, besides taking care of the unpaid domestic duties at home, she has spent her whole life working in subsistence agriculture and breaking *babaçu* coconut, which was a small source of income. The money was partly used to buy kerosene, since they did not have any electricity. She got married at the age of 16 and had four kids, who also helped out working in the farm and breaking coconuts. Gloria only studied for two years of her life. Now she lives in a shack³⁹ with her husband, a son and a grandson, whose father went back to Northeast. Only two of her sons live in Brasília and the

³⁹ Shack is being used here to translate what they refer to as "barraco", which usually refers to a poor small house that seems always under construction, with no many windows (or small ones), floors covered with a very cheap material that is usually full of dust and red sand, and walls built up by exposed bricks.

rest of the kids went back to their hometown. She does not pay rent, since she managed to buy illegally the land where she constructed her shack, however she still does not have hot water and need to take shower using buckets. Gloria is a 46 years old black women who works for 8 years as a *mensalista* in her current job and for 4 years she slept in her employers' house. Although she said she did not have time to have dreams as a kid when I first asked, she later told me she would have liked to be a lawyer.

Claudia has two small kids and has been with her partner now for 13 years. They are reforming their shack in the land they live in to become a house. Her parents were both rural workers in the interior of Northeast and while her mother was alive, she only studied. She completed the seventh grade. When she was 13 years old, her mother died and her father remarried within 2 months, therefore she went to Brasília with a cousin looking for jobs. She started working as a *mensalista*, sleeping in the house she worked in. After she met her husband, she decided to become a *diarista*. Nowadays she works in several different houses four or three days a week, depending on how many *diária*⁴⁰s she gets. Claudia pays other women to take care of her two kids while she is working. She is 31 years old, white and dreamt of becoming a teacher when she was little.

Karla has been working for 10 years now as a domestic worker, a profession she started as soon as she arrived in the Capital. Before that, the white 37 years old lady worked her entire life in her single mother's farm in the interior of the Northeast. She lost her mother when she was 15 years old and relates that since then the life has not been easy in the farm. As an older sister, she needed to also take care of her brother and sister. After going through two dry seasons in the area, which affected food plantation; the insistence of her brother to sell their mother's house, because he wanted his part of the heritage; and the illness of one of

40 The literally translation for *diária* is daily. In the domestic work field, the *diaristas* work in the basis of a daily payment, so an employer only contracts the work of a domestic worker for a day. Therefore, some employers might only need a worker for one day a week and in other cases two, or even once every 15 days. It can also happen that an employer contracts in a week one specific worker and in the following another one, which means that the *diaristas* have no stability in their work.

her sons, she surrendered to the repeatedly persistence of her sister to move to Brasília. She also connects her decision of leaving the farm with an advice she received from a shepherd of a protestant church, who told her she should go. Her sister was who helped her and her two sons financially in the beginning. After sale of the farmhouse, she bought a piece of land, where she built first a shack and now she already lives in a house with her sons. She is a *diarista* and apart from working in family houses, she also has a job as a cleaner in a beauty salon. She wished she was a nurse.

The 53 years old *parda* Sueli has bad memories of her childhood, which she spent working in the farm in Goiás. Her father only let her and her siblings work until the second grade, because he wanted everyone to help out in agriculture work. She got married when she was 20 years old and remained working in the farm until her kids grew a bit older, then she moved a small town nearby, so the kids could go to school. It was her decision to insist on her children's education that drove her to take upon domestic worker jobs and that also ended up her marriage, since her ex husband disapproved the idea of her living in the town and not in the farm. First he demanded the divorce and took from her all her furniture, not leaving behind not even her bed and then threatened to kill her with a knife after trying an unsuccessful reconciliation. She then ran away to Brasília in 1999, where an uncle of hers already lived and continued to work as a domestic worker. She has been working for her current employers for 11 years and only since last year, due to her partner's illness, she started to go home everyday, since before that she slept on weekdays in her employers' house. She lives in her own house, which is all renovated, with her current partner and her youngest daughter. Her other kids are all economically independent. She wanted to be journalist as a kid.

The 40 years old white Vilma has one daughter who she left with her mother and sister 12 years ago in the Northeast in order to find a better job in Brasília, pursuing the same

profession she has had since she was 13 years old: domestic worker. She grew up in the farm in the interior of the Northeast and only saw a television in her life for the first time by the age of 16. Vilma went to school only for one year of her life, since she needed to work. Now she has been living in a rented house with her partner, which she has been together for 9 years. Her daughter is 18 and already has two babies, who live with her in a house Vilma bought and furnished in her hometown. She said she has worked as a nanny for many families and does not even remember the name of all the babies. Nowadays she has been working for 3 years taking care of a baby and also cleaning the house and doing the laundry. Apart from there, she sells sofa covers, clothes, quilts and other things to supplement her monthly budget. When she was little, her only dream was to study.

Sara is 45 years old and *parda*. She has three daughters who still live with her and help her with the domestic duties. Taking into consideration that one of them already earns more than her, she also supports the household financially. Sara explains she did not have time to play during her childhood, once she needed to work in her parent's farm in Goiás. From 11 until 13 years old she was a servant at her aunt's house, who did not treat her well. One woman from Brasília went to her town and begged her father to take her to the Capital with her. She moved to Brasília then when she was 15 years old to work as a domestic worker. Sara lived for 10 years with the father of her daughters and then he left her for another woman. She said she lived in a small shack without electricity alone with the 3 kids for 9 months. Over the years she was improving her shack and now her daughter and she live in their own big house. Since she had to raise her daughter alone, she could never sleep over her employer's family, which led her to choose to be a *diarista*. Currently, some weeks she works thrice a week and others five times. She thought about becoming a teacher when she was younger.

Andrea never studied; she enrolled right now in school to be able to accompany two of her daughters to night school, since she said it could be dangerous for them to go by themselves. She was born in a farm in the Northeast and helped out her mother to wash clothes in the river, carrying in her head buddles of clothes. By the age of 11 years old she went to another town to work as a servant in a women's house, she needed to cook and wash everyone's clothes in the river in exchange for food, shelter and clothing. She went back for her parents farm for a while and then when she was 15 years old, she moved to Brasília with her brother, who had already lived there before. Since then she has been working as a domestic worker in Brasília. She is a white 42 years old mother who has always taken care by herself of her kids. Now she works 7 days a week as a *diarista* in different houses. The women, who dreamt of becoming a teacher, has no day-off and live in a rented house.

Ione was born in Goiás. She is 55 years-old, *parda* and has a lot of experience working in farms. She studied until the seventh year, since where she lived there was no school available after this grade. After the studies she went to live in a small town to babysit to help financially her mother. Around the age of 15 she moved to Brasília and shared the paid domestic duties with her sister in an employer's house. Until she got married, she took up some other jobs as domestic worker in the Capital, but then moved again to the farm to build up a family with her husband. She had been married over 24 years of her life; meanwhile her husband, kids and she took care of two productive farms and a butcher shop. She also worked for 4 years as the first lady of the deputy mayor. The divorce however left her with almost nothing from what she had achieved financially in life. For 13 years, she has been fighting through the judicial system to get share of the property she and her ex-husband owned. Ione went back to Brasília after her marriage was over and worked as a domestic worker, as a health agent for 4 years and currently she has taken up the job of elderly care. She works every two days. She dreamt to be an architect or an artist when she was a kid.

The many Marias are women who had worked for their entire life. They went to the Capital of the country in the search of a better life, which indeed they found, financially wise. Some of them seemed happy and others did not. None of them had the chance to pursue their childhood dreams. However, they still they have strength to climb up the full and precarious buses around 6:00 and face their realities every single day.

Chapter 5 –An everyday day life based on domestic work

I wake up at 4:40, I take my shower, get ready and walk to the bus stop. I catch the bus around 5:30, 5:40, there is not a fixed time. It takes around one or one and a half hour, standing, ‘changing the feet, since there is no space for both (laugh), until I arrive at work. (Sueli [1])⁴¹

I myself wake up at 5:40 everyday to go to work. Sometimes I need to wake up even earlier to make them [her kids] breakfast and take them to the house of the lady who takes care of them (...) I brush their teeth, warm up the milk, give them breakfast, get their backpack and take them to the woman. All of that I need to do before 5:50. I catch the bus at 5:50 and arrive at work around 8:00, 8:30, or sometimes at 9:00, because of traffic jams. (Cláudia [2]).

The day of a domestic worker in Brasília usually starts before the sunrise. The domestic duties accompany them from the moment they open their eyes to the moment they sleep. The quotes above, extracted from the interview with Sueli and Cláudia are examples of how the day of a domestic worker in Brasília starts. I began this chapter introducing the quotes, because one of the endeavours of this research is actually to offer a more realistic and tangible portrait of their reality. The generalization and the description in my own words can conceal some important elements for the narrative I intend to draw in this investigation.

This chapter intends to provide some elements that help elucidate how ‘care work’ interferes in the reality of domestic workers in Brasilia, that is, in their daily movement between the *home* and the *street*. Two are the analytical dimensions that outline this attempt. First, the discussion around their perception of domestic work: what does it mean to be a domestic worker in their view? The second analytical strategy draws on the emergence of a particular distinction these women bring up between paid and unpaid labour: what are their distinctive traits? Finally, the last part of the chapter assesses the imbrications between these

⁴¹ All the original quotes in Portuguese are in the Annex 1.

dimensions, shedding light on how domestic work acquires different facets in distinct situations that are, ultimately, interdependent.

5.1. Perspectives on being a domestic worker

The idea that surrounds paid domestic work in Brazil, as mentioned previously in this investigation, still holds on to a negative connotation related to its socioeconomic invisibility, the low social value of manual work, and a certain degree of legal discrimination. an idea that also surrounds preconceived notions on gender, race and social class belonging. This section attempts to point out some elements present on domestic worker's narratives relating to their self-perception of their professional field. I will thus try to outline a conception of the paid domestic work in which their narratives prevail over the dominant discourse on domestic work.

Becoming a domestic worker is something that for many of the respondents was related not with a particular choice among many, but with the lack of options. When I questioned Cláudia the reason why she became a domestic worker after she lost her mother by the age of 13 and moved to Brasília, she replied: "I had no other option. I prepared CVs, but no one ever called me. Then I started doing what I already knew how to do, and continued doing. And it has been working well"[3].

Many of the respondents started to work within the domestic work field even earlier than 13 years old. It was commonly reported that their first experience working inside other family's house started between 9 and 12. They were sent by their parents from the farms to small towns nearby to live with a Godmother⁴² or someone wealthier than their own family. Although they did not perform all the domestic work by themselves, their help was highly

42 It is highly common, especially in small town in Brazil, that families offer a wealthy person in the town the honour to become a Godmother or Godfather of their babies. That is a catholic tradition, in which a person swears in front of God that she/he will take care of that baby if the parents fail to do so.

expected and they performed it in exchange of food, some clothes and a shelter much closer to the school - in comparison to the farms:

I lived with a woman called Joaquina, in the Água Quente to study. And then I would go back to the farm on weekends. I did not enjoy living in the city. This woman's daughter kept telling me that I would not see my mother. (...) I had to work in her house. I was around 10 years old" (Marina)[4]

I went to live in Juazeiro do Norte, in Ceará with the daughter of a woman for whom my mother washed clothes. I went to help her, because she had a bunch of kids as well. I washed the clothes in the river and cooked with her when I was 11 years old. (...) She would give me food and some clothes. I lived inside her house. I stayed there until I was 14 (Andrea [5]).

Consequently, when looking for paid jobs, their circumstance rather than their ability to choose was what established their path. In Sara's words: "I started to work for necessity, I lost my mother when I was still very young and my father did not have conditions to support us" [6] The combination between their gender, race and class positions left these women with no actual choice but the basic fulfilling of short-term needs. In addition to that, a common narrative on why they became domestic workers connects the idea of being suitable/or not for achieving jobs judged as "good", with a high educational level. The lack of opportunities to carry on with their studies left them with no option, but to work, as they say, *na casa dos outros* (in someone else's house):

It (domestic work) was the only I could perform. Not even that I actually knew how to, since I knew how to do it for myself, right? But we never know how to deal with someone else's house. (...) The household duties we are used to do: to clean the house, to do the dishes, to cook. These we know how to do, since we grow up performing these tasks. Then you just need to find out the way other people like it to be done. (Gloria – who until she was 36 years-old worked only in subsistence agriculture [7]).

To become something else, I must have had studied. I like my job, but another job I would prefer doing, I had to have studied. Then, what can one do ? (Sueli [8])

I had never studied, how could I find a good job for me? (Andrea [9])

At the first place, I did not study to have another profession. (Sara [10])

By drawing their narratives around the idea that they have entered this professional field because of their lack of options expresses the low value respondents confer to their work. Added to that, they establish a connection between formal education and appropriate skills for finding a “good job”. This relation can be read with MCD project’s lenses. According to Tlostavona and Mignolo (2009), one of the spheres in which the colonial matrix of power operates is in education, through the control of knowledge and subjectivity that maintains racialised and gendered structures of power. The assessment that some knowledges are more important and essential than others - intellectual Western institutionalized knowledge versus knowledge gained through experience, for example - also shape the code of values within the labour market.

Jobs in which a higher level of formal education is required are usually more social and economically valued. Surely, this logic is not evident and straightforward, with many other reasons related to political and economic interests that can value or devalue a working position. However, it is still true that the majority of the jobs involving mechanic or manual work, the ones that, as pointed out in the second chapter, resembles slaves’ duties, hold on up to a much lower social status in comparison with jobs that require more intellectual work. The narratives of the respondents, thus, by relying on formal education discourse, also comply with a hegemonic discourse that underrates the manual skills necessary to perform the tasks of domestic workers satisfactorily. Additionally, it relates to a naturalization of gender roles, which disassociates domestic work from abilities, once it is perceived as an innate skill.

This fairly realistic assessment of the importance of formal education informs domestic workers of some social strategies that can be used in order to socially promote either

themselves or their kids. Two main evidences can be pointed out: Marina's efforts to continue her studies, which lead her to be accepted in university and to earn a scholarship to study, and the struggle of working mothers to be able to keep their kids studying. Although to some extent all of them strive to offer the kids opportunities that were denied for them (which for those whose kids are already grown ups resulted in positive outcomes), I would like to highlight the efforts of Andrea and Sueli:

I started to go to school this month (...) I only went back (to school), because of Patricia. She failed two years and did not want to go back, because in the morning classes are full of younger kids. Since she is underage, she could not study in the night, so I enrolled myself as well for them to let her study in night shift. (Andrea, who works seven days a week [11])

We had to go to the town to put the kids in school (...) After a while, he (her husband) said he wanted to leave, because the kids needed to help in the farm. But I told him I would not take my kids out of school, therefore he got mad at me and asked for the separation (Sueli [12])

At the same time as their efforts to provide their kids good possibilities to study can be assessed as a tactic to social ascent, the narrative that connects higher levels of formal education with a perspective of having a "good" job can also be read as undermining their own profession. As states Sara, Andrea and Cláudia, who have three daughters⁴³:

I tell my daughter 'study, in order to have a life more...to have a good job and not to end up like me who has to clean other people's bathroom. Study!', I want the best for them (Sara [13])

It's what I tell to the girls, you have to study not to go through what I go through working in other people's house. (Andrea [14]).

I wish my kids had a better future than mine. What I have been through in other people's house, I don't want them to go through the same. Therefore I wanted them to study, to find a job that is not like mine

⁴³ Sara's oldest daughter finished school and works in the administration of a big supermarket chain, the one in the middle was pregnant and abandoned the studies in the middle of high school, the youngest is finishing high school, is enrolled in a professional course and is also doing an internship at the same supermarket her sister works for. Andrea's daughters are younger than Sara's. The three of them are still in school and the oldest is already taking a hairdresser course her mother is paying for her.

(...) I do everything for them to go to school, not to miss one class, to have the proper material. I do everything to buy the material. Sometimes I don't buy a flipflop to have money to buy the notebooks, the backpacks. Because I think that if they study, who knows they will be able to have a better job. (Cláudia [14])

The three quotes evidence the negative perception these women have on their profession. Being a domestic worker thus translates automatically a social place occupied by women who, due to the lack of studies, have absolutely no other option. Sara's words allude to the degrading idea surrounding cleaning jobs, which are related to slavery work, as previously mentioned. On the other hand, Andrea's narrative already signals the relation many of them established between the value of their work and the treatment received inside the employer's house.

Before exploring further the importance of the their work place's dynamics in shaping their perspective of their work, I will briefly indicate other elements present in their narratives that could be also regarded as evidence of this self-awareness of the low social value of domestic work. One of them is the public discourse on domestic workers' rights present in mainstream media, which is the main source of information within their households. It is worth mentioning here that in all of the 10 houses, some more humble than others, there was a big and expensive flat screen television turned on most of the times, which demonstrates in a way the importance of this mean of communication in their lives. The other element is the exchange of information within the domestic workers' informal networks:

Even in right's matters, it is unequal. Right now not that much, it seems to be getting better. Yesterday I was watching the news. Domestic worker now have already social security, but it is still not mandatory. (Sueli [10])

No, I don't understand quite well my rights. I get information from people who started to work before me, then they say which rights we have or not. That's the basis I have. I wish we had unemployment

insurance and other things. We work the amount of years I have worked and leave the job the same way as entered. (Gloria [11])

“Because the domestic’s profession is the worst ever. The person is humiliated everywhere, people think you are nothing, that you have no value” (Karla quoting another domestic worker who was ashamed to assume she was a domestic worker [12])

Although they might not know exactly all the rights they are entitled to, they are aware that they cannot enjoy all labour rights as any other professions, which is another source of devaluation of their profession. In addition to that, as elucidated in the last paragraph, their work environment plays an important role on how they assess the work of domestic workers. Indeed, the lived experience of these women as domestic workers is the most relevant aspect shaping their perceptions on how their job is socially valued. Anecdotes of previous jobs were told to exemplify some striking moments they had been through. Moreover, the report of their discomfort towards some of their current employment’s tacit or explicit rules also influence their self-perception:

I went to work in Guará, the woman there used to humiliate me a lot. A lot. Once I went to a camping place with her and everyone there took their ladies to work. During lunchtime, the accompaniers prepared a separate table and asked me to join them. The woman said “she will only eat after everyone has already eaten”. I lost the appetite, I was upset (...) And in the family I am working for now, we (her and other colleagues) bring food from home, because they say that maids eat too much. They even count how many bananas were taken off the bunch – we cannot eat sweets, nor cakes- I don’t think we deserve that! (...) one day the patroa⁴⁴ (female employer) told me “I am too good, because some of my friends put lockers on their frigdes”. (Ione [13])

I was already mistreated. There are people that think that only because they are paying you, they can do anything with you. For example, they get the rest of the food that was in their plate, put the rests together and make your plate. When I see what they are putting for me to eat, I just don’t eat. There are

⁴⁴ Patroa is the female boss. However, this denomination is mostly used to refer exclusively to female bosses employing domestic workers. It has remnants of a servitude relationship, which involves some level of ownership, rather than only a hierarchical relation based on a labour contract.

others that when you arrive in their houses, they don't offer you not even water. (...) Usually they tell me to have breakfast there, but this one did not give me anything. (...) But this woman, it was already 14:00 and I haven't finished the work and I was hungry. When she arrived to have lunch, she started to tell me off, telling me that the yogurt was for her son. Then I told her I was hungry and she said "but maids do not feel hungry" (Cláudia, who works as a diarista in many different houses [19])

Maids there are only allowed to stay inside the kitchen and in the living room, I was only allowed to enter where the bedrooms are after a year. (Andrea [20])

There were some days that I had to go down from that building five or six times. More than once she asked me to go to the bakery, I went. When I came back, opened the door, she said "oh, I forgot, I was going to ask you to go to the pharmacy". Taking into account that the pharmacy is nearby the bakery! "Go back and go to the pharmacy". I went. When I got back, she said "Ah, you have to go to the butcher shop to buy meat for Poly". Poly was the dog! (Karla [21])

All of the components elucidated up to now converge the respondents' narratives with the hegemonic discourse on domestic labour based on coloniality, that regards paid domestic work as a minor job performed by people who are not fully entitled to be treated as full human beings. The quotes above highlight the low social value of domestic labour expressed not only in the unequal laws of the State, but also in the employer-employee relations still based on servitude codes. Thus far, the narratives presented social realities of Brazilian domestic workers that have been greatly denounced in the literature on domestic work (Azerêdo, 1989; Brites, 2007; Kofes, 1994; Melo, 1998; 2002;). However, this research is particularly interested in what other elements are considered by domestic workers themselves when describing their profession.

At first, when facing questions about their profession and what being domestic workers meant for them, the interviewed women made sure to highlight their consciousness about the social stigma surrounding their job. In the following, they contrast the negative aspect of the profession with their positive input. A certain degree of resistance hence can be

identified in this recognition, a movement that can be regarded both as an act of identity creation and discursive resistance. In their own words:

To tell you the truth, I do not have much to complain about. Up to now I have dealt with great people. I am not ashamed to say I am a domestic worker (...) I am proud of what I do. It's with that job, with that profession that I feed my kids. (Karla [23])

I think like this: I should be thankful to God to have that job for myself, in which I am working and I have enough money to survive (...) I like what I do, there is a lot of people who have prejudice against persons who work in family's houses, maybe due to the treatment, but anyhow it is just like any other job. (Sueli [24])

For me it is just as any other job, because you work to survive. Whenever I go, if someone asks, I say I am a domestic worker. I am not ashamed. Shame is to steal. We do not steal, so for me there is no difference at all. It is just as any other job. (Cláudia [25])

I think we are very undervalued. We work as everyone else, just like anyone who work in an office and we have no rights! (...) I like what I do, if I didn't, I would come from work angry. It should be horrible spending the whole day doing something you don't like. (...) I know a lot of people who go to work complaining, come back complaining, because they do not like their jobs. They work only for the money! (Gloria [26])

I like it, even though we are very humiliated, I like my job, especially dealing with people, elderly in my case. I like what I do. I do it for love. (Ione [27])

There are a lot of people who wanted to have the life I do. Working, living, working even in someone else's house. (Vilma [28])

I like it, it's the profession I have, that supports me, my house, my home, my family. (Sara [29])

By recognizing the presence of a hegemonic discourse, they put themselves against any kind of shameful framing that could come from performing alleged low-valued jobs. They assert the importance of their job for them and for their families at the same time as they emphasise the professional nature of their work. This positive statement on their profession

must be taken into account as an important element in their narratives. However considering that the low value of the profession is so evidently perceived, it is essential to analyse further the factors that could be motivating them to have a positive take on their work.

I guess there are still a lot of discrimination against domestic workers. At the university, for some people I tell them what I do. I am not ashamed of it, however, there are some people that when I tell them I am a domestic worker, they stop speaking to me. They don't speak to you and begin to treat you with indifference. (Marina [30])

Although Marina claimed lack of shame for her job, she was the only one who did not state that she liked her profession. She added in the interview that domestic work for her only “means a temporary service in order for me to find something better later on”[31]. She is 30 years old, the youngest among the respondents, the only one who has no kids. The fact that she is already in the last year of her bachelor degree indicates that she has concrete perspectives of being able to find another type of job. She was indeed who had the most negative stand on her current work. The other nine women’s narratives on their future were connected either to the hope they pin on their kid’s better future or to abstract life’s project more related to their desires rather than to aims of a concrete plan. Therefore, their positivity might be regarded as a result of their resignation. Andrea’s quote elucidates it well:

I don't think it's bad, I am used to it. I have to like it, it's from there that I take off money to support me. If I want it or not, I have to like it. I like what I do. (...) How I see my future? Working, working, working... (Andrea [32])

This idea of resignation can entail a negative interpretation and a notion of passivity. However, I am referring here to the resignation in relation to social hegemonic patterns that devalue their current work. In this sense, resignation should not be read as a passive acquiescence of a possible fate. On the contrary, it is rather a brave self-strategy, found in the

border of hegemonic knowledge that challenges the dominant negative notion on domestic work and that allows each of them to face the barriers of discrimination and enjoy their lives.

Their perspective on paid domestic labour also connects to their life trajectory. If for Marina, domestic work is a temporary job that permits her to earn money and time to achieve another position; for others, it denotes the highest location they can reach within their social possibilities. In this regard, contrasting to Marina's negative stand on her job, among the others, Glória and Karla were the ones who demonstrated a greater satisfaction towards their work both in the interviews and with the attitude while talking to me about their profession. Coincidentally, they were the ones who arrived in Brasília most recently and that had never worked as domestic workers before migrating.

Glória says clearly that she arrives home from work happy, because she is doing something she likes to do, criticizing people who arrive from work angry everyday. When I asked if she liked her job, she answered enthusiastically "yes". In addition, when I asked what she did not like in her work, she said "almost nothing". Karla also had a very positive stand on domestic work. She said she likes almost everything in her job and when I posed the same question about what she did not like in her work, she said "to tell you honestly, I have nothing to complain about"[32].

The positive and optimistic aspects of their narratives are associated with the fact that they have found in domestic work a way to work themselves up in the socioeconomic strata. Ultimately, domestic work was not the only option they had in life. It was, rather, the best one among a set of other possibilities. Before migrating to Brasília, they all lived in farms or very small and poor towns. For instance, Karla related that sometimes there was nothing left to eat and each of her two kids needed to share one egg in the morning and one egg in the afternoon not to starve. Some of them also reported that they only starting living in a house with

electricity energy when they migrated to Brasília. The narratives on their lives before the migration are rough:

In the farm there were lots of hills. It was too much of a suffering, we suffered a lot. I work a lot today, but still I don't complain, because I suffered too much before in the farm. There were bugs beating you, a lot of sun. We used to crush sugarcane and also used to make flour. (Sueli [34])

When we lived in the farms, it was very bad, we had almost nothing. (Vilma [35])

My childhood was very hard, I used to work in my parent's farm carrying buckets of water in the head and washing the clothes in the river in the sun. (Andrea [36])

My whole childhood was in the farm. I only worked, had not chance to play. Around 9, 10 years old I already need to wash my siblings' diapers in the river. (Sara[37]).

I used to work in the farm with agriculture. My ex-husband used to travel to purchase cattle and I used to stay all alone managing the whole farm. Everyone used to say I worked too much. It was a lot of pain in my life, a lot of suffer. (Ione [38])

Moreover, moneywise:

The difference from here to my place is that there, in order to anyone be able to earn a minimum wage, it's necessary to be graduated or to work for the government. The advantage is that I am sort of illiterate and I earn as much as someone who had studied (Gloria [39])

There is no job there. Domestic workers there earn maximum 60 reais/ monthly⁴⁵. (Vilma [40])

Interestingly, even though many of them came to Brasília due to their connections to relatives that have migrated previously, they created themselves this other opportunity for their lives. By embracing another life possibility, they demonstrated an active attitude and a refusal to face their previous socioeconomic situation. In this sense, migrating to the city entails an emancipatory endeavour.

⁴⁵ R\$ 60 reais corresponds to roughly US \$30. The minimum wage in Brazil by the time the interviews were conducted was R\$ 622 (US \$305). All of my respondents earned more than the minimum wage, even the ones who worked as diaristas.

In addition to that, the rural area, resembling Da Matta's notion of *the house*, still holds on to a conservative and moralistic social space. Pre-established social roles and familial ties create, on the one hand, a harmonic reality. Living under subsistence agriculture demands a collective arrangement of the work, since each person's work affects the harvest. On the other hand, hierarchies are established according to patriarchal values that ascribe women subaltern positions. The report of how the sexual labour division was established before and after the migration in Gloria's house elucidates the statement above:

If he (her husband) arrives earlier and the dishes or the house are dirty, he cleans. But that only started after we moved here. It was only then that he started to understand that side of us. Because before, in the farm, he did not do anything (...) When he would arrive home from the fields, he did not do anything, he thought that was only my duty (...) We thought that it (the fact that he did not help her before) was normal. We were born trapped there, never had step our feet out of there, so we thought it was normal. We have the same duties, I don't have the duty to things for him. Firstly, everyone here works, everybody has their own money, everybody supports her/himself, so everyone has the responsibility to do their own things. His work clothes covered in mud, he has to wash himself. I am not going to wash them for him. (Gloria [41])

Bearing resemblance to Da Matta's concept of *the street*, the city constitutes a social space in which control and hierarchy are set in another way, through more impersonal ties. The city is characterized by movement and chaos. In addition, individuality is the major element outlining the social space of *the street*. Although this individuality is framed by Da Matta as a negative aspect of *the street*, as demonstrated in the theoretical chapter of this investigation, the intrinsic anonymity of individuality might work towards the interests of those who are most affected by moral codes: women. For instance, some of them reported to have gone to the city to runaway from violent husbands:

They married me to him when I was 14 years old and he was 27. He used to beat me. He beat me for jealousy. Once I went to school and forgot to put the petticoat under my skirt and he beat me. "If you

leave the house, I will kill you". The guy used to sleep with a machete under his pillow. I separated him and went after my mother. (...) I was working in Arraias, I was earning a lot of money and I was beloved there. I was 16. But then my ex husband came back looking for me and then I had to move to Brasília. (Dorli [42])

He said he wanted to leave (to go back to the farm), but I told him I would not take my kids out of school, therefore he got mad at me and asked for the separation. He took almost everything back to the farm, left me not even bed to sleep on. Then I said "I have my whole life, I have courage to work and I have worked my whole life". And then later he came willing to win me back and I did not want him anymore, then he said he was going to kill me. He got the knife and I ran to my mother's house and never came back. Luckily none of the kids were at home. After that I went to Brasília. (Sueli [43])

For my respondents, the migration to the city, depending solely on them, represented an individual possibility to rise socially, an achievement that was only possible through working in someone's house. As a consequence, domestic work also brought along the possibility of economic and personal independence. Likewise, since most of the women I interviewed already have been through separation processes or are single mothers, moving to the city also represented a way of building a safe and highly feminine universe.

On that account, the term 'resignation' I used in previous paragraphs refers to what they acknowledge that is socially expected and it can be replaced now for the word 'realisation', meaning that their positive stand on their work is related to their self-realisation. Even though they acknowledge the low social value of their jobs, they are capable to put into perspective their social and historical process and be glad to have achieved what they had so far in life: "Coming from where I came from, today I consider myself rich" (Karla [44]).

By describing their profession as both degrading and emancipatory, their narratives encompass certain important nuances on the social meaning of domestic labour that must be considered before framing the group of domestic workers solely as another category victim of

the high level of social inequality. Other elements emerged in their narratives, which could be considered ambiguous or contradictory are also important in order to apprehend their own denotation of domestic labour as a profession. If the dynamics of the profession of domestic workers could be summarized in one word, ambiguity would be the most adequate one.

In order to further build my arguments, it is essential to recall the different meanings Da Matta (1997) provides to the conception of person and subject. The former is related to the realm of *the home* - built through personal and sentimental relations. The latter involves the anonymity of the masses, which are subjected to the enforcement of the law in *the street*.

By working inside another person's house, domestic workers also expect to be integrated within the supposedly dynamics of trust, respect and care that surrounds the social space of *the home*. When referring to the good relationships that have been established with current or old *patroas*, they usually allude to the role of "mother" or "daughter", expressing the high level of attachment that can be development between *patroas* and domestic workers:

I found two mothers in Brasilia. (Karla [45])

When she buys something for her, she also buys it for me too. She treats me virtually as if I was her daughter. Since she has no daughter, then she treats me very well. I don't have anything to complain in this sense. (Marina [46])

The ambiguous relations established between employees and employers have already been extensively discussed in the literature on domestic labour (Anderson, 2002; Hochschild, 2002; Brites, 2007). I am more interested here on how their narrative on their willing to be treated as any other employer is crosscut by their willing also to be treated as a person pertaining to the realm of the family⁴⁶. The process of being treated as a "family member" should not be read as an utopian expectation of being incorporated within the family as a

⁴⁶ Without necessarily becoming a full-fledged part of it.

blood relative. It should be actually interpreted through the lenses of *the home*'s dynamics, where a process of personalization takes place within a comfortable and safe environment for everyone who belongs to it:

They were very good to me. I used to eat on the table with them, lunch and dinner. I was not treated as a maid. I sat on the table with them. (Dorli [47])

The people to whom I work for are so nice to me that I have my lunch together with them on the table. As if I was their sister or their daughter. (Sara [48])

The fact that Dorli said that they did not treat her as a maid already implies that being treated as a maid denotes an exclusion from family interactions. Therefore, both Dorli and Sara's narratives denote that they assess as a positive attitude from the employers the inclusion of domestic workers within family rituals. Following the same line of reasoning, Vilma also judged her employers as being "good" or "bad" to her in accordance with how much she felt integrated within the intimate personal circle of *the home*:

In the beginning I was too good for them (the employers). But now they became mean to me, so when they ask for something, I say no. In the beginning, they used to give me gifts on Christmas and New Year. They used to give me things recognizing my work, right? They used to please me a lot. This year I was shocked. There was a room there full of Christmas gifts and they did not even tell me "take this one, Vilma, it's for you". Being incapable to recognize what we do? (Vilma [49])

Vilma stated in her interview that her employer family pays all her rights. Moreover, since the kid she takes care for started to go to school, she reduced her working shift, which did not affect her salary. Therefore, taking both facts into consideration, the statement above elucidates that her notion of recognition and what it takes to an employer to be "a good one" goes much beyond the professional boundaries. Although the account here on Vilma's case is the one in which this antagonism is most evident, the connection between the idea of the

“good employer” to her/his capacity of integrating the employee within the realm of *the home* is highly common. The respondents did value the employers who respect their rights, however, when describing a good or a bad employer, the emphasis was given to their feeling of being or not “treated as a family member”.

Their stress on how good *professionals* they are - offering me many evidences such as the fact that they were never fired from any job or the amount of years they have been working in the same place – also entails their willing to be recognized as workers.

If I do a bad job, they will not want me anymore. I do such a good work that all the places I work for now, I have been working for them for 2 years in one place, 3 years in another and 8 months in another. I was never fired from any job. Sometimes I don't go anymore, because people leave town or travel and when they come back, they don't need a diarista, they prefer to hire a mensalista.(Cláudia, who works as a *diarista* [50]).

Furthermore, in many occasions they drew attention to the fact that they would like to be seen and treated as any other worker, who benefits from formal labour rules:

I wish I had the same rights of someone who works in an office. Time to arrive and time to leave. People charge us more of our arrival time “you arrived late!”, but we never have a fixed time to leave. (Glória [50])

The choice to become a *diarista*, for instance, has been one of the strategies used to approach a higher level of professionalization of paid domestic labour. Moreover, by choosing when and where to work, being a *diarista* has also operated as a tool for having more control of their lives. Since they earn by the day worked, they are merely service providers that do not maintain a constant relation with the family they work for and that have more say on setting the working rules. Some of *diaristas* not even see their employers, they only pick up the apartment keys with the porter of the building and get their money from the

table before leaving. Nonetheless, informality might work as an advantage or a pitfall depending on the circumstances:

This one time, I had dysentery and they did not believe I was sick. I said “you believe it if you want to, because there is nothing I can do”. I stayed three days at home. I did not go to work for three days and at the end of the month I have less money. My bills could not be paid. (Andrea [49])

The thing of being a diarista is that you do not have time to go home. I have already worked 8 months as a mensalista, I worked three times a week and the woman registered me, but I did not like it. I do not like to have a specific time to leave. What I like is to finish my work and leave as soon as possible. (Cláudia [50])

Although specific labour laws supposedly protect *mensalistas*, the lack of a formal contract stating their duties and schedule manifests the high degree of informality still present in their work. Interestingly, their narratives indicate that they make use of these fluid arrangements of the domestic work field to subvert some of the rules and get more benefits. The malleability of orally established agreements, gathered with the ambivalent feelings established between domestic workers and their employer families give rise to specific strategies of negotiating their working conditions:

I arrive around 7:30/8:00, but there was not something we discussed, it was something I imposed myself. In order for me to arrive there by the time to prepare breakfast, around 6:15, I need to leave here at 5:00 (...) I told myself I would not mistreat myself and my grandson for the sake of the others who are still laying in their beds. I do need the job, but we need to respect our limits. So I started to leave home at 6:00 and they did not say anything, but I was the one who decided that (...) They hired a girl to iron the clothes, because I told them my back was hurting too much and I could not do it. (Glória [51])

Francisca called me many times telling me that João (her son) was sad and wanted me to go back to work there. Then I got accepted in college and told her “Ok, I will come back, but I got accepted in college, so it could be hard, because I will have to study and sometime would be hard to finish the

whole work. There will be days that I will have to tell you that I will do the work afterwards, due to some college essay. Is it ok like this?" And they said: "Yes". (Marina [52]).

In sum, at the same time that the formalization of a profession brings along a series of hard earned rights, it also entails a de-personalization of the relations that may undermine advantages mutually agreed through informal arrangements. The research conducted by Jurema Brites (2008) with domestic workers also points out that the particularities and ambiguities within the Brazilian paid domestic work were regarded by the workers themselves as assets of their jobs. She states that for her respondents, the formalized labour relations were too harsh and impersonal, which prevent a series of negotiations with employers that meets their demands. Thus, domestic workers are not just negatively affected by the ambiguity that is established as a consequence of working in the realm of someone else's *home*.

On the contrary, the ambiguity can be strategically internalized and put to use in order to promote a less unequal overall set of rules. However, it is important to highlight that these endeavours may not bear the fruits these workers expect, leading to an even more undermining set of conditions for their work. This hybrid social contract that is, at the same time, formal and informal, brings two conflicting processes for the respondents' perception of their role in the realm of their work environment: the process of becoming a family member, in the already discussed sense, and the process of becoming a full employee, enjoying full pre-established rights and duties as any other profession. Consequently, their aspirations run in between becoming a person (part of the family) and acquiring the traits of full-fledged subjects pertaining to the realm of the *street*.

I wish they would treat us well, respecting our rights and see us as human beings and not as different.

(Ione[53])

I wish they would treat us as people, as someone from their family. We have to eat only after the food is already cold (...) All that lows our self-steam, because up to today I had only one patroa that treated me as a real person. (Dorli [54])

Given that both processes are still incomplete, their workplace often represents a hostile environment, in which they feel “less of a person”, as stated Dorli and Ione more than once in the interviews. In the next section I will describe their everyday process of transitioning between their feminine universe and the hostile world of the workplace, an activity that could be, at a first moment, regarded as trivial, but in fact shows the important link connecting the two *houses* they inhabit.

5.2 Between two houses and two buses

Although the reality of domestic workers in Brasilia is heavily connected to the realms of gender and race, class is also a poignant factor contributing to their self-perceptions. In this sense, the geographic disposition of the city, shaped by these dynamics, also allow me to bring several of these dimensions to surface. By describing my experience of following the respondents’ journey, giving emphasis to the public transportation, I attempt to provide some elements that will add to my arguments on which are *the home* and *the street* of those who perform care work in someone else’s house. In other words: how their lives can be split into two greater social spaces and how the social dynamics present in both spaces shape their perception of the domestic work or of them as person or subjects.

The working shift of my respondents usually ends between 16:00 and 18:00. While many executives enjoy their after-work happy hours dressed in their uniform suits, the subjects of this research changed their clothes before leaving work⁴⁷, tidy up the hair, put

⁴⁷ It is important to mention that none of them had to wear proper uniforms at work.

some make-up on and some of them even take showers at work. The ritual of dressing nicely to go home diverges from jobs in which the working clothes represent a high social location. To undress the clothing that are dirty on the knees from bending down to clean floors, wet from doing the dishes or sweaty is not only a matter of hygiene for these women - considering the fact that many men in the bus were clearly coming from construction work and did not bother to change clothes.

The social invisibility of domestic workers' labour also reaches their process of understanding themselves as only partial-person, as expressed in their own narratives elucidated in the previous section. Thus, to change clothes relates, in my reading, to a process of *re-personalizing*⁴⁸ their selves, becoming recognized as a full-person. This process begins, however, before reaching their final destiny, that is, home. It starts from the moment they step out their employer's house, by meeting the porters and cleaners of the building, with whom they establish more horizontal relationships. In many occasions during the interviews, the respondents made reference to their friendship with the porters of the building they work at. Vilma, for example, got married to a porter of a building she used to work at. In addition, I could observe the dynamics between building's employees and domestic workers while I was waiting for them to leave their employer's apartment. Moreover, I would also like to argue that the routine involving public transportation can also constitute an element of this *re-personalizing* process.

As it was elucidated in the second chapter, Brasília is a city in which its centre is vulgarly called "fantasy island", since all poor neighbourhoods are situated in its outskirts, quite some kilometres away. The nearest town I visited was 25 kilometres away from *Plano Piloto*. *Jardim Ingá-GO* and *Santo Antônio do Descoberto-GO*, towns that are already beyond

⁴⁸ The word person is being used instead of subject, as I will elucidate later, because the notion of subject entails the idea of citizenship that has not a positive connotation in Brazilian imaginary, in which dominant classes are "supra-citizens".

the border of the Distrito Federal are situated 47 kilometres away from downtown Brasilia. The life of those who live in the *ciudades satélites* depend on the precarious public transportation of the Distrito Federal.

The waiting time in the bus stop is not necessarily long. It is, however, unpredictable, because the bus schedule is not posted anywhere. Daily experience thus informs passengers if their bus runs between every 10 or 15 minutes, if two buses for the same destination stop at the same time in the same bus stop or even if it is worth it waiting longer to catch a less full one. In most cases, the approximately one and a half hours ride home required most the respondents (and myself) to stand all along the journey, or as Sueli said “changing feet, since there is no space for both”. The precarious situation of the public transportation in Distrito Federal refer both to the mechanical and physical conditions of the buses, often breaking down the road, and insufficient in number, forcing passengers to fill buses to a point that not even one more body could fit inside.

The account on public transportation becomes essential, since it occupies at least 3,5 hours of domestic workers’ time in Brasília. The everyday routine that they experience with a large amount of people coming, going, waiting in the bus stop and the rubbing of strange bodies inside the bus goes in line with Da Matta’s notion of the *street*. The *street* is the external world measured by conflicts and competition – the body struggle to manage to go inside the bus first, showing the lack of respect for queues’ rules, for example - in which individuality entails the cruelty of anonymity (Da Matta, 1984). In the street, a person becomes a subject; only a part of a faceless crowd.

Nonetheless, the dynamics of the public transportation can also cross these boundaries of the individuality described above. The allowance of this fine line trespass, however, must be carefully analysed according to the social, economic and cultural context that it takes

place. Therefore, it is essential to mention that the situation I am describing relates to a low class group. In addition to that, a great part of the passengers takes the same bus at the same hour everyday, which is the case of the domestic workers investigated here.

The environment of public transportation I witnessed involves frequently the partaking of experiences that refers directly to the social class, gender and race belonging of that group of passengers: “I see many maids complaining about their *patroas*” (Vilma [55]). The process of exchanging stories or simply listening to someone else’s story on the situation of the buses and on money, family and jobs’ issues represent the portrait of their living experiences. The self-identification with expressions of common realities can work as an element of cohesion within a social group.

In addition to that, I noticed that the minimum break of the expected flow of events immediately creates momentary bonds between those people who are sharing the same physical space. Simply to illustrate my statement: in one early morning ride, in which some passengers were sleeping and the atmosphere was very calm and silent, the abrupt break of the bus driver, who was trying to prevent the run over of a family that was crossing a very busy highway created a big fuss inside the bus. All of a sudden, people started talking to each other about their perception of the situation, which lead to further conversation on different topics.

The rapid suspension of individualism, giving raise to a self-identification as a member of a group, consequently, contradicts the founding elements present in Da Matta’s description of *the street*. Nevertheless, I contend that, due to its social class homogeneity, the situation inside the bus creates a micro-cosmos that allows, for some moments, that specific social group to escape from the anonymity of being only random unrelated citizens.

Therefore, within the context of same social class encounter, the process of *re-personalizing* begins for the subjects inquired, which will achieve its culmination only inside their houses.

The incomplete processes of becoming a family member and an employee within the realm of another person's home - mentioned in the previous section - gathered with the re-personalizing progression - clarified in this section – are the founding elements of the differentiation pointed out by respondents between paid and unpaid domestic labour.

Therefore, in the next section, the analysis will be focused on their perception of equal tasks performed in different social spaces.

5.3 Conceptions on (un)paid domestic duties

When I arrive from work I pick up the kids in the women's house. Then I go home, I clean the bathroom, I mop the floor, I cook diner, I bath the kids. Twice a week I wash the clothes, on Saturday and on Wednesday. So when I have to do it, while the bucket is filling with water, I come here and do the dishes, while I put the clothes in the bucket then I start cleaning the house while I scrub the clothes. Then I will cook diner, while I am twisting the clothes. After I twist the clothes, I put them on the clothesline, come here, shower and feed the kids. Then I am dead! Some days I lay down in this sofa and when my husband realises, it is already 2 am and I am still here sleeping. (Cláudia [56])

After a long working shift and after facing the not so much enjoyable bus ride, domestic workers arrive home and dive into another domestic work shift, the one they need to perform for themselves and for their families. Taken into consideration that activities such as cooking, cleaning, doing the dishes and washing the clothes - as elucidated in the quote above - correspond also to the expected tasks of a domestic worker; one could argue that domestic workers are the ideal model of the so-called feminine double-shift, or in Hochschild's (1989) words "women's double day".

The notion of the feminine double-shift entails both a paid work shift within the labour market and the unpaid domestic duties performed during what was supposed to be worker's free time. Many feminist authors argue that the persistent unequal sexual division of domestic labour based on the naturalization of gender roles has brought negative consequences in the labour market for women, who still occupy lower paid positions in comparison to their male colleagues (Bruschini and Lombardi, 2000; Hirata and Kergoat, 2007). Therefore, the unpaid domestic work has been portrayed as a burden for professional women (Hochschild, 1989). Cláudia - who lives with her two small kids and a husband who is often travelling - and Andrea - who lives only with her three teenagers daughters – reported the household duties as an unpleasant obligation:

I clean the house, because I have to, right? If I could arrive home and not do anything, I'd prefer, but there is no way. (...) If there was anyone else to do the work for me, I would be glad, but there isn't, so I am obeyed to do it. You have to do it, because there is no one else to do it for you. Obligation, right? We have to handle both. There is our work; if we don't do it well, we get fired. Here is our house, if we don't do it right, people might come into your house and it's stinking. Then you have to do it, whether you are tired or not. It's obligation. (Cláudia [57])

When it concerns to my own stuff, I get lazy. When I realise that they (their daughters) didn't do it, I have to do it. After the shower, I mop the bathroom's floor and already drag the mop to the middle of the house and quickly clean it. But I don't like to do it. (Andrea [58])

Undoubtedly, both paid and unpaid domestic works are intrinsically related to the social gender role of domestic workers, especially when referring to working-mothers. However, Cláudia and Andrea within the respondents' group were the only ones whose opinions towards unpaid domestic duties complied with the literature described above. Therefore, in this section, I will provide some evidences to argue that differently from other female professionals, the unpaid domestic work might not be regarded as a burden for those who also perform it as a paid job. The similarities between paid and unpaid work might give

rise to the emergence of another conception of unpaid domestic work. By resorting once more to the categories of *the home* and *the street*, I will describe how the reality of my respondents fit in both notions and also in which sense the domestic work, within its everyday performances, can gain different shapes in two contrasting spaces.

The social environment in which domestic duties take place and also the time perception that permeates the performance of both influence the conceptions between paid and unpaid domestic work. According to the respondents' narratives, the difference between them does not reside only on the fact that one generates economic profit and the other does not. Indeed, the two distinct dynamics surrounding the employer's home and their own home are suggested to differentiate both duties and to have an impact also on how they are performed.

They are not the same. When I arrive home, I put the chair upside down, throw water... And then I look and think "oh no, I will not clean this house this morning, I will leave it to the afternoon". In our job we cannot do it. In our house is different. I can watch television whenever I want. We do (the domestic duties) when we can, when we are willing to. I have no problem in doing it. I only do it when I want to, because I like it. But just because I want to, I don't like doing anything by imposition. When I want to, I do it, when I don't want to, I just don't do it. (Dorli [59])

It is different because you do not have the obligation to do it. I felt I should help, but it was nothing that I felt like "I need to do it, because I have to, right?" If I could do it, I would, if I couldn't, I would not. (Marina telling how she dealt with unpaid domestic work during the 6 months she lived in her sister's house [60])

My house is my house, I am at home, right? In my house if I can do, I do it, if I cannot take it anymore, I don't do it. But that is not how it is at work. (Sueli [61])

The element that subscribes the unpaid domestic labour mentioned above is its *lack of obligation*. By reporting that unpaid domestic duties are performed according to their free will - in their own way and on their own time –, they are linking them to a lack of surveillance and of time constraints. Since the nature of their paid and unpaid work is the same, their narrative is built upon the contrast between both. Moreover, the emphasis, for example, that Sueli puts in the term “in my house” underlines that we are dealing here with two social environments apart. Therefore, making use of *the street* and *the home* as discursive tools can be elucidative to the understanding of how same tasks entail different meanings.

It is important to highlight that *the home* and *the street* refers not only to physical territories, as elucidated in the third chapter, but indeed to discourses. They are discourses that surround social domains that do not constitute a rigid and simple contrast. They entail actually a structural pair that is not determined by each of the term’s invariable substances, but that is constituted within and constitutive of their own relation’s dynamics (Da Matta, 1997:16). Thus the conception of the unpaid household tasks performed inside the domestic worker’s *home* is only understood when put in contrast with the paid domestic duties enacted inside the employer’s *home*.

When work environment is what is at stake in a discussion, it is highly expected that supervision would be pointed out, since it constitutes one of the basic components of the labour’s sphere. However, the surveillance domestic workers go through in their jobs is not limited to the quality of the activities performed, since their workplace is someone’s house and, as mentioned, one of the characteristics of the *home* is that it is a domain morally controlled. For that reason, domestic worker’s social practices can also be closely watched and controlled. For instance, Ione reported that at her work, her male boss does not leave the kitchen until she is done eating. She interprets that his attitude has two different reasons. First, it is based on his obsess on preventing any sort of waste, so he needs to make sure she has

been eating all the leftovers, not to throw any food away (taking into consideration that she is the last one to eat). She also said he watches her eating to see if she is only eating what is “allowed”, since she said they fired a lady already for eating too much: “they also do not like fat people”. Marina, who still lives in her employers’ house, also described attempts of the bosses to control her life:

I have to inform them when I leave home. They call me on my phone. Sometimes, during my free time, I just go down the building and she (the female boss) are already asking “where are you going to?”. Even on weekends, I have to tell them where I am going to. She does not like that I go out and not tell her where I am going to, in case something happens...(Marina [62])

Although they are not treated as a full-family member, thus a full-person, domestic workers need to comply with the set of values the employer family imposes to their members or to those who are merely part of it, but are not members. When I stated in a previous section that domestic workers are excluded from family dynamics, I do not mean that they are not part of it. “Differently from other modern countries, here in Brazil, the *homes* have servants, in a sense, belong to them” (Da Matta, 1984: 24). Actually, they are hence a constituent element of the realm of *the home* in most all Brazilian middle-class families, however they hold the invisible and non-valued position of the person who is responsible for the manual domestic duty, the same work that for centuries had been performed by slaves, which were considered indeed less-humans.

Recalling as well the study of Graham (1992) described in the chapter 3 of this research, in which she points out the control of the mistress⁴⁹/masters over the lives of black female slaves who lived with them, one cannot fail to trace the position they occupy today back into the arrangements of slavery. Their space within wealthy Brazilian families is so established that in every middle/upper-class house or apartment there is a small room and

⁴⁹ The word ‘mistress’ here is being used as the female form of ‘master’, without any sexual connotation.

bathroom situated usually close to the kitchen, apart from the whole house in an area called *area de serviço* (the service area). In this sense, the vulgarly called *empregadas* (maids) are an element composing someone else's *home*. However this space is not reserved for a person specifically. It is there to anyone who will occupy the position of domestic worker in that house. Therefore, if all members of the family are valued and regarded for their idiosyncrasies, which brings them the notion of being a person - a unique and special human being in that social sphere - domestic workers definitely are not, in this sense, *persons* in those spaces.

It is also essential to mention that not only the spatial divide in the house sets these boundaries between employers and employees. The greater borderline that establishes the hierarchies between them consists in the clothes they wear, on their regional accents that come out their mouth when they speak, on the colour of their skin and their phenotype that contrasts to the usual light skin and Western features of the employers. In sum, the space assigned to domestic workers in middle-class family houses is permeated by the intersection of the colonial categories of gender, race and social class assigned to them:

I don't know if it's because we are black, or because we have low level of education, but what I am telling you that we feel the discrimination (Dorli [63])

There are lots of women, from those very wealthy ones, that when we get inside the elevator, they look at us with distaste on their faces, starring us from the feet up to the head. (Cláudia [64])

Sometime as soon as we say something, they say "oh, she is Northeastern". There are people that correct us. For me that's like a slap on my face. They say in your face "this word is wrong, the correct one is so and so". I feel offended by that. I may not say anything, but I will retain the specific person's attitude (Karla [65])

Paid domestic work must be understood as an everyday practice permeated by surveillance and inequalities in various dimensions: gender, race, social class and migration

background. Moreover, it is also an embodied experience that, through the everyday practice of labour, de-personalizes these workers. In other words, the acts of doing the dishes, cleaning the floors, cooking in someone else's *home* trigger mechanisms that foster the self-representation of domestic workers as less-persons.

On the other hand, the unpaid domestic work is performed in a space founded upon other dimensions, guided by other rules, in which these women occupy different social roles. By being performed in their *home*, where they are “unique and irreplaceable” (Da Matta, 1984: 25), as stated in the beginning of this section, unpaid household duties gain different meaning for domestic workers.

Da Matta's (1984: 27) notion of *the home* entails a pleasant, warm and harmonic space, marked by a supreme personal recognition, which he says that can be considered as a species of supra-citizenship, contrasting terribly with the total absence of recognition in *the street*. However, in *the home*, according to him, there is always a tendency to produce conservative and traditional moral values, that work as a surveillance and which are defended usually by the older members or by men. As I argued in chapter 3, Da Matta's idea of *the home* describes family dynamics in accordance with patriarchal and androcentric values. Remembering the slogan of the second wave of feminism ‘the private is political’ - *the home* is not necessary a safe and comfortable environment for women, it could be actually a site for even greater oppressions than *the street*, due to the public invisibility of those.

Fortunately, *the home* of the women I investigated can be portrayed as even more pleasant than the notion Da Matta attributes to it. This is mainly due to the fact that the universe the respondents were involved was a very feminine one. Moreover, it was a space constructed and maintained almost and exclusively by themselves. However, one must not lose sight from the fact that the group of 10 women I investigated might not be representative

of all domestic workers in Brasília. Therefore, my arguments are drawn specifically on the realities I have witnessed and on the narratives I had the opportunity to listen to. In the group of domestic workers I interviewed, only four of them were living with a male partner and from the other six, only one lived with sons. All the others lived either by themselves or with daughters.

Their own houses are the concrete material symbol of their own struggles in life and also of their economic independence. To go to Brasília, they left behind the life in the rural areas or in the small towns, in which they usually lived in their own family house shared with many people, or already as a domestic worker or a servant inside a wealthier family's house. Arriving in Brasília, they became live-in maids, which offered them at a first moment economic security, especially when their wage was put in comparison with how much they earned before. However, it was still not regarded as emancipation, since they were still living under someone else's roof.

For various reasons – the construction of their own houses, the birth of the kids, the sickness of a husband, the migration of a grandson – they decided not to sleep in their employers' house anymore. The decision was taken by them and when it was not made in a between jobs period, it was not in complete agreement with the employers. However, although they had to sustain their choice, they did not relate a very strong resistance from the employers. Either way, it already demonstrates the imposition of their own will over their lives.

The lives they built in Brasília and the houses they literally constructed or at least organized were all their self-endeavours. Even the ones who live with a male partner enjoy the feeling of achieving specific goals by themselves. Gloria came to Brasília by herself, her husband joined her only 8 months later. She was the one who bought the land where their

house is still under-construction. Sara lived in a very nice and renovated house with her partner, however the house she bought it by herself and before he got sick and lost his job, he used to help her paying the bills.

The space *the home* for my respondents, thus, relates to a less hierarchical environment, in which they are in control over the arrangements and the rules of that domain. It is, however, true that the merely fact that in most houses there is a lack of masculine figure to carry out patriarchal forms of authority, it does not release them from pre-established gender roles. Those roles are ultimately based on coloniality and on androcentric values that impose their power through many others “indirect” ways. Therefore these women are still responsible for the unpaid domestic duties.

The ones who live with a partner, for instance, report that their husbands help sometimes, but they are always in the background of their narratives, which manifests that men maintain the role as a second executer, a helper. Their narratives points out that they still regard the household duties as women’s responsibility. The gender roles are naturalized and unquestioned.

When they say they like doing the domestic work in their house, usually they use terms such as “I am doing it for myself”. To relate its performance to the care of something that is truly theirs might play a role on the re-personalization process mentioned before. By controlling how to perform it and when to do it, the unpaid domestic work thus give them back the status of a person, which is taken out of them inside the employers’ house. As any other profession, the job that provide any sort of wage, can be regarded as economic emancipator, which can also have connections with a social emancipation. Nonetheless, for domestic workers, their job seems to hold this economically emancipatory outcome, but not the social one. Therefore, different from other professions, it is only in their *home* that they

become full persons. Inside their houses, their efforts are printed on the walls, on the food they cook for their family and on the clean clothes. It is thus in this sense that I argue that although the unpaid domestic work occupied most of their free time and it still relates to imposed gender roles, it is not regarded as a such heavy burden and indeed it can entail a different meaning for domestic workers.

Conclusion

This research has presented the complexity of domestic work. As the title illustrates, I have investigated the double significance domestic labour has for women who perform it both as a paid and unpaid activity. Moreover, taking into account the various social connotations that the professional field of domestic work entails, I wanted to evaluate the perceptions female workers themselves hold of domestic work. The combination between Feminist and MCD project/decolonial perspectives allowed this research to encompass various facets embedded in domestic labour. This was, however, only feasible due to the deep understanding of how gender, race and social class intersect each other within domestic workers' lives and established their position in society. The richness of this interdisciplinary work is that it deals with the slavery residues that remain in contemporary arrangements of domestic labour, its gendered dimension and the current structure of this professional field.

The practice of domestic work entails a social invisibility related both to its non-economic character and the conviction that it relates to an innate women's responsibility. These arguments were outlined in the first chapter, which evaluated the dichotomy between public and private spheres. Once domestic work is performed not in one's own house, but indeed in someone else's home, it gains gendered nuances that interact with other axes, such as race, social class and migration background. These are indispensable to the understanding of how paid domestic work is organized and the arrangements it perpetuates.

According to some feminist literature (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2002; Hirata and Kergoat, 2007), contemporary paid domestic work is connected to the settings of globalization and to the feminine double-shift created by the need of middle-class women to conciliate their professional and personal life. However, the Brazilian case, due to its colonial

past, has shown specific dynamics that fail to fit into those arguments. The practice of resorting to other women to perform domestic work was common throughout history, particularly since the arrival of the Portuguese; domestic work was a female slave's duty. Therefore, as the group of domestic workers is mainly comprised of poor, low-skilled, non-white, rural-urban migrant women, the colonial heritage is unquestionable.

Brazilian colonial history, presented in the second chapter, demonstrates how some groups have been marginalized throughout history, based on colour of skin and phenotypes that created racial categories tied to presumed behavioural characteristics used as a discursive tool to justify hierarchies. This was mainly applied to the indigenous population, afrodescendants that were enslaved for many centuries as well as poor rural Brazilians who bore racial markings owing to the inter-ethnic relations within the population. This facilitated the emergence of a hierarchy of jobs in which work previously performed by slaves or free poor workers held the lowest position. Therefore, paid domestic work in Brazil, apart from holding a devalued dimension regarding its gendered aspects, was also historically assigned to excluded groups in society, indicating its low social value.

The decolonial approach and the MCD project thus emerged in my research as a critical theoretical tool to guide my reading of the current elements of paid domestic work. Intersectional thinking clarifies that the various axes of power that allocate women within the paid domestic work field are also used as a way to maintain the gender, racial and economic hierarchy of the broader social system. Da Matta's dichotomy of *the street* versus *the home* provides the analytical categories I employed to examine how identical domestic tasks are regarded by those who perform them within the same day in two different social spaces. In addition, as a singular characteristic of domestic work is that it is performed within someone else's house, the dynamics intrinsic to this social territory also greatly impact domestic workers' perception of their role and social position.

In light of the above-mentioned theories and analytical tools, through the narratives of this group of 10 domestic workers who live in Brasília, together with observations of their social practices, I outlined in the last chapter the outcomes developed through the investigation. The complexities and ambivalences of domestic work shape the perceptions domestic workers have of their own profession. Oscillating between the negative and positive aspects of their jobs, domestic workers endure multiple levels of social discrimination related to their gender, race and social class, but at the same time gain access to a social mobility that can only be achieved through urban employment.

Working inside someone else's house, they function in that social space as secondary elements. Marked by boundaries of race, gender and social class, they are excluded from the intimate circle formed in *the home* that provides each member a *supra-citizenship* status. Therefore they regard themselves as “almost persons” inside their working environment. This is what I pointed out as being the first incomplete process that constitutes their perception as domestic workers. The second is related to the fact that domestic workers still do not enjoy full labour rights as do other professions. In addition, their work place is not guided by the anonymous and formal rules of *the street*, but rather by informal and flexible rules, which as described previously, are also strategically used by the domestic workers themselves. Both elements provide domestic workers the status of “almost employers”. Interestingly, when they report their opinion, they wanted to become both “persons” and “employers”.

When I pointed out in the previous chapter their wish of becoming “persons”, I elucidated how this notion was related to their desire to being treated “as a family member”. At the same time, their narrative on the professionalization of domestic workers was very strong. Domestic workers thus function in an interstitial space in which they are neither subjected to the anonymous laws of *the street*, as described by Roberto Da Matta, nor to the affective space of *the home*.

Their accounts of the differences between paid and unpaid domestic work also related to the differences of the social spaces in which both activities were performed. The dynamics of the sphere of the work is related, as mentioned, to the perception of not being “full persons”, which together with the idea of surveillance outlined the performance of paid activities. On the other hand, their houses, composed of what I called the *feminine universe*, are their own place, in which they are the major character of the play, the indispensable element. Their house is a symbol of economic and personal independence; therefore, their performance of unpaid domestic duties - while not disconnected from feelings of responsibility based on gender roles – contributes to a *re-personalisation*. That eases the burden factor commonly related to unpaid household tasks.

Many elements of paid domestic work reflect its colonial heritage. The dynamics of its performance by women inside middle-to-upper class families position the women in the background of the *home*, in which the room in the service area is more than a physical space: it is a metaphor for domestic workers' situation within the broader social structure. Nonetheless, paid domestic labour in the city also refers to a refuge for rural- urban migrant women to achieve emancipatory economic and personal endeavours that could not be reachable if migrating was not an option.

In this sense, I could conclude that the current social and economic arrangements of society, the precariousness of the educational system, and the persistence of hierarchies based on colonial-era concepts of gender, race and social class – the most highlighted in this work – offer small opportunities for subaltern groups. Nonetheless, as was elucidated through the narratives and lives of the 10 women investigated here, rather than being victims, they function as effective players within this social game. They actively work between the gaps of the social systems and are capable of changing their own living conditions and the future possibilities for their next generation. They speak from the margins or, using the terms of the

decolonial approach, they speak from the borders of the Western knowledge. They state their awareness on how they are socially regarded and valued, but also argue for the recognition of the positive outcomes their profession rendered them so far.

Moreover, my conclusions connect unpaid domestic work with a *re-personalisation* process in the *home* of domestic workers, portraying thus this practice of care (care for the house and for the family) as a cluster of activities that make them feel more human and which personalize their relationship to their environment. Taking that into account, this positive evaluation of unpaid domestic work drawn by domestic workers provides a contrast to the hegemonic discourse that sees in the resort of other women a way of releasing middle-class women's supposed burden. Rendering a high social value to unpaid domestic duties - which no longer would be considered an onus, but instead a pleasant activity - can promote their performance by all members of *the home*, regardless of their gender identity.⁵⁰

If the artificial division of public and private sphere is a powerful ideological tool that has been used to justify a lower social position of women in the world, the field of paid domestic work, as presented, may contribute not only to a gender hierarchy, but also to social inequality based on race and social class. Once the achievement of sexual, racial and social labour division equality becomes a real possibility, paid domestic work will no longer exist. However, up to the last domestic worker in Brazil, efforts must be made to improve their working conditions. I leave the last words of conclusion of this work to Ione:

In what you can do and in what we can do, as domestic workers, I have faith in God that one day the profession of the domestic worker will be extinguished. She is not seen, she is very humiliated. I congratulate the families who give value to people who work

50 This is an interesting insight that I share with Cristina Carrasco (2001). Her great argument is that once the reproduction and care for human life becomes the major goal of society instead of the obtención de beneficios (economic benefits' acquirement) – which she regards to be the ultimate aim of the current capitalist system – domestic work would be overvalued. In this sense, the time spent with care work would be socially considered and would gain more value than the time spent with what are now considered profitable activities. This would drive both men and women to be willing to perform household responsibilities that could culminate in the equality of sexual labor division.

for them, but there are very few. We need to fight for the rights of the domestic workers.

(Ione)⁵¹

51 In Portuguese: “No seu alcance e no nosso, como domésticas, eu tenho fé em Deus que um dia vai ter que eliminar a doméstica. Porque ela não é vista, ela é muito humilhada, muito pisada. E dou parabéns às famílias que dão valor para as pessoas que trabalham com elas. São poucas. Precisamos lutar pelos direitos das domésticas”.

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Annex 1

Quotes in Portuguese

- [1] Eu levanto 4:40, vou tomar banho, me arrumo vou pro ponto de ônibus. Pego o ônibus 5:30, 5:40, não tem hora certa. Demora entre 1:00, 1:30, em pé, trocando com pés, já que não tem espaço pros dois (risos), até chegar no trabalho.
- [2] Eu mesma acordo 5:40 todo dia pra ir trabalhar. As vezes tenho que acordar mais cedo ainda pra fazer o café da manha deles pra levar pra casa da mulher que cuida deles (...)Aí vou escovar os dentes dos dois, esquento o leite, dou café da manha deles. Pego a mochila e levo la na mulher. La eu tenho q fazer tudo isso antes de 5:50. Pego o ônibus 5:50 chego no serviço, 8:00, 8:30, as vezes ate 9:00 por causa de engarrafamento.
- [3] Não tinha outra opção. Eu fazia os currículos, nunca ninguém me chamava, né? Aí eu fui fazer o que sei fazer e fui fazendo. E tá dando certo.
- [4] Eu morei muito tempo com uma senhora que chamava Joaquina, lá em Água Quente, pra estudar. E eu voltava pra fazenda nos finais de semana. Não gostava de morar na cidade. A filha dessa mulher ficava falando que eu não ia não ver a minha mãe. (...)Eu tinha que trabalhar na casa dela. Eu tinha uns 10 anos
- [5] Eu fui morar no Juazeiro do Norte, no Ceará com a filha da mulher q a minha mãe lavava roupa. Pra ajudar ela, q ela tinha um bucado de filho também. Eu lavava roupa e fazia comida mais ela com 11 anos. (...) Ela me dava só comida e alguma roupa que ela me dava. Eu morava na casa dela. Eu fiquei até 14 anos com ela

- [6] Comecei a trabalhar por necessidade mesmo. Comecei muito cedo, perdi minha mãe muito cedo, meu pai nunca teve condições de dar as coisas pra gente.
- [7] Era o único q eu podia fazer. Nem isso na verdade eu sabia fazer, eu sabia fazer pra mim, né? Mas a gente não sabe mexer na casa dos outros. (...) O serviço de casa é o que a gente está acostumada: limpar a casa, lavar a louça, cozinhar. Desde que crescemos já estamos fazendo isso, né? Aí é só descobrir o jeito que as pessoas gostam.
- [8] Porque outra coisa, tinha que ter estudo. Eu gosto do meu trabalho, mas tipo assim, outro serviço que eu gostaria mais de fazer, tinha que ter estudo, aí fazer o que?
- [9] Não tinha estudo, como é q eu ia arrumar um emprego bom pra mim?
- [10] Eu não estudei em primeiro lugar pra ter outra profissão.
- [11] Comecei esse mês na escola.(...) Eu só fui mais por causa da Patrícia. Ela estudava de manhã e não queria ir mais porque ela reprovou 2 anos e os meninos das sala dela são tudo crianças. Como ela é menor de idade, ela não podia estudar à noite, então eu me matriculei também para que eles deixassem ela estudar de noite.
- [12] A gente tinha que sair pra cidade pra poder colocar os meninos no colégio (...) depois de um tempo, ele queria ir embora, dizendo que os meninos tinham que ajudar na fazenda. Eu disse que não ia tirar meus filhos da escola, aí ele implicou e pediu separação.
- [13] Eu falo pras minhas filhas ‘vão estudar, ter uma vida assim mais... ter um bom emprego pra não ficar igual eu, tendo que lavar banheiro dos outros, vão estudar’, eu quero o melhor pra elas.
- [14] É o q eu falo pras meninas, tem q estudar pra vocês não passarem o que eu passo trabalhando na casa dos outros.

[15] Quero que meus filhos tenham um futuro melhor que o meu. O que eu passei na casa das pessoas, eu não quero que meus filhos passem por isso. Por isso que eu queria que eles estudassem, que arrumassem um emprego que não fosse igual o meu (...)Eu faço tudo pra eles irem pra escola, para não faltarem, para terem material. Faço de tudo pra comprar os materiais. Às vezes deixo de comprar um chinelo pra comprar os cadernos, as mochilas deles. Porque eu fico pensando assim que se eles estudarem direitinho, quem sabe não vão ter um emprego melhor.

[16] Porque até em respeito aos direitos. São desiguais. Agora não, parece que já tá melhorando... ontem mesmo eu tava vendo o jornal nacional, empregada domestica já tem o fundo de garantia, não obrigatório.

[17] Não, eu não entendo muito (dos direitos). Mas eu pego (informação) das pessoas que começaram a trabalhar primeiro do que eu, aí eles falam o q a gente tem direito e o que é que não tem. Aí a base q eu tenho é essa. O que eu queria é que a gente tivesse direito ao seguro-desemprego, e em outras coisas, a gente trabalha no tanto de ano igual eu trabalho. Trabalha um tanto de anos e sai do mesmo jeito que entrou.

[18] “Porque a profissão de doméstica é a pior que tem. A pessoa é humilhada em todo canto, as pessoas pensam que a gente não é nada, não tem valor nenhum”.

[19] Ai quando eu fui trabalhar no Guará, a mulher me humilhava muito. MUITO. Eu fui com ela pra passear num acampamento e todo mundo levava suas moças pra trabalhar. Na hora do almoço, as acompanhantes fizeram uma mesa pra almoçar e me chamaram. E a mulher disse “não, ela só vai almoçar depois que todo mundo almoçar.” Aí eu perdi o apetite, fiquei chateada.(...)Com a família mesmo que eu tô trabalhando agora - a gente leva comida de casa, porque eles dizem que empregada come muito, contam quantas bananas tem tiradas – não pode comer doce, bolos – acho

que a gente não merece isso (...) Um dia a patroa disse “eu sou muito boa, porque tem colegas minhas que colocam ate chave na geladeira”.

[20] Eu já fui tratada mal. Tem gente que acha que só porque está pagando uma pessoa, pode fazer de tudo com você. Tipo assim, pegar comida, resto do prato deles, juntava num prato e me davam. Quando eu via o que eles estavam colocando, eu não comia. Tem outras também que você chega na casa delas e elas não oferecem nem água.(...) Geralmente eles mandam eu tomar café da manhã, mas essa aí não deu. (...) Só que essa mulher, já era 2 horas da tarde e eu ainda não tinha terminado a faxina ainda e eu tava com fome. Quando ela chegou pra almoçar, ela ficou brigando, porque não era pra eu tomar Danone pro filho dela. Aí eu disse q eu tava com fome e ela disse “mas empregada não sente fome”.

[21] Empregada lá só pode ficar na cozinha e na sala. Eu só pude entrar pra onde ficam os quartos depois de um ano.

[22] Tinha dia que eu descia cinco ou seis vezes daquele prédio. Tinha dia que ela me pedia para ir na padaria, eu ia. Na hora que eu chegava, que eu abria a porta, ela falava “ah, não, esqueci de pedir pra você passar na farmácia”. Se a farmácia era do lado da padaria! “Volta e vai na farmácia”. Voltava e ia na farmácia. Quando eu voltava, ela dizia “ah, você tem que ir no açougue comprar carne pra Poly. Poly era a cachorra!

[23] Pra te dizer a verdade eu não tenho do que reclamar. Até porque eu tenho pegado pessoas ótimas. Não tenho vergonha de dizer que sou empregada domestica (...) eu tenho orgulho do que eu faço. É com esse trabalho, é com essa profissão, que eu dou comida pros meus filhos.

[24] Eu penso assim: graças à Deus eu tenho aquele serviço pra mim que eu to trabalhando e tenho suficiente pra viver. (...)gosto do q eu faço, tem muita gente que

tem preconceito com pessoas que trabalham em casa de família. Às vezes assim, o modo de tratar, mas enfim, é igual a qualquer outro serviço.

[25] Pra mim é igual outro trabalho qualquer, porque você trabalha pra sobreviver. Eu onde eu chego que me perguntem, eu digo que sou empregada doméstica. Eu não tenho vergonha. Vergonha é roubar. A gente não rouba, então pra mim não tem diferença nenhuma. É igual a qualquer trabalho.

[26] A gente é muito desvalorizado. A gente trabalha normalmente como outros, como quem trabalha em uma firma qualquer e a gente não tem direito a nada ! (...) Se eu não gostasse, eu vinha irritada do serviço, né? Porque passar o dia fazendo uma coisa que a gente não gosta é muito ruim. (...) Eu conheço gente que vai pro serviço, reclamando do serviço, e vem reclamando, é porque não gosta do serviço ! Trabalha pelo dinheiro!

[27] Gosto apesar da gente ser muito humilhada, eu gosto do meu trabalho, principalmente lidar com pessoas, no caso idosos. Eu gosto do que eu faço, eu faço por amor.

[28] Tem muitos aí que queriam tá na vida q eu tô. Trabalhando, vivendo, trabalhando na casa dos outros mesmo.

[29] Eu gosto, né? É a profissão que eu tenho, que sustenta a mim, a minha casa, ao meu lar, a minha família.

[30] Eu acho que tem muito preconceito em relação com a empregada doméstica. Na faculdade, para certas pessoas eu digo o que eu faço. Não tenho vergonha do que eu faço, mas tem certas pessoas que eu falo que eu sou doméstica e param de falar comigo. Não falam, te tratam com indiferença.

[31] Significa só um serviço temporário para que eu consiga algo – algo que eu estou fazendo para poder ter alguma coisa melhor na frente.

- [32] Não acho ruim, não. Eu já acostumei. Eu tenho que gostar, é dali que eu tiro meu sustento. Querendo ou não, tenho que gostar. Eu gosto do que eu faço (...) Como vejo meu futuro? Trabalhando, trabalhando, trabalhando.
- [33] Pra te dizer a verdade, eu não tenho nada do que reclamar.
- [34] A roça era ladeira. Era muito sofrimento, a gente sofria demais, nossa. Eu trabalho muito hoje, mas assim, eu ainda não reclamo, porque eu sofri muito na roça. Aqueles bichos mordendo a gente. Muito sol. A gente moía cana, fazia farinha
- [35] Morar na roça é muito ruim. A gente não tinha quase nada.
- [36] Minha infância era muito difícil, trabalhava na roça dos meus pais carregando água na cabeça, ia lavar roupa no rio debaixo de sol.
- [37] Minha infância inteira foi na roça. Eu só trabalhava, não tive chance de brincar. Com uns 9, 10 anos eu já lavava as fraldas dos meus irmãos no poço.
- [38] Eu trabalhava na roça, com lavoura. Meu ex-marido saía pra comprar gado e eu ficava sozinha dirigindo a roça toda. Todo mundo dizia que eu trabalhava pra caramba. Foi muita dor na minha vida, muito sofrimento.
- [39] A diferença daqui pro meu lugar, lá pra alguém ganhar um salário, é necessário a pessoa ter formado, concursado, pra ganhar um salário. E a vantagem que eu acho é que eu sou tipo analfabeta e ganho igualmente a uma pessoa estudada.
- [40] Lá não tem emprego. Empregada doméstica lá ganha no máximo 60 reais por mês.
- [41] Se ele (seu marido) chegar primeiro, com louça suja, casa suja, ele faz. Agora só depois que a gente mudou pra cá que ele começou a entender esse lado da gente. Porque antes na roça, ele não fazia. (...) Ele quando chegava da roça não ia fazer nada, achava que aquilo ali era direito só meu. (...)A gente achava normal lá que era,

nascemos afogados ali, nunca tínhamos colocado a cabeça pra fora, então achava normal. A gente tem o mesmo dever e eu não tenho o dever de fazer pra ele. Primeiro que todo mundo trabalha, todo mundo tem seu dinheiro, todo mundo se assume, então cada um tem o dever de fazer suas coisas. As roupas deles do trabalho sujas de lamas, ele que lava. Eu não vou lavar pra ele!

[42] Me casaram com ele quando eu tava com 14 anos de idade, e ele tinha 27 anos. Ele andou me espancando. Me espancava por ciúmes. Um dia fui pra escola e esqueci de colocar uma anágua debaixo da saia e ele me bateu. “Se você sair de casa, eu te mato!”. O cara dormia com facão debaixo do travesseiro. Eu separei dele e fui atrás da minha mãe. (...) Eu estava trabalhando em Arraias. Ganhava muito dinheiro. Eu era muito querida lá. E dai o meu ex marido voltou me procurando por mim e eu tive que mudar pra Brasília.

[43] Ele queria ir embora (para a fazenda), (...) eu disse que eu não ia tirar meus filhos da escola. Aí ele implicou e pediu separação, levou as coisas quase tudo pra roça, deixou eu sem cama pra dormir. Ai eu disse “eu tenho toda a vida, eu tenho coragem pra trabalhar e trabalhei a vida toda”. Ai depois ele veio querer voltar comigo e eu não quis, ele falou que ia me matar. Ele pegou a faca e daí eu sai correndo pra casa da minha mãe e nunca mais voltei. Ainda bem q não tinha nenhuma criança em casa. Depois disso fui pra Brasília.

[44] Vindo de onde eu vim, hoje eu me considero rica.

[45] Eu arrumei duas mães aqui em Brasília.

[46] Quando ela vai comprar alguma coisa pra ela, ela acaba comprando pra mim também. Ela me trata praticamente como se eu fosse uma filha. Já que ela não tem filha mulher, então, ela me trata super bem, eu não tenho do que reclamar dessa parte.

[47] Eles eram bons demais pra mim. Eu comia na mesa, junto com eles, no almoço e na janta. Não era tratada que nem empregada, não. Eu sentava a mesa com eles.

[48] O pessoal onde eu trabalho são tão legais comigo que eu almoço na mesa junto com eles, como se eu fosse irmã ou filha deles.

[49] No começo eu era muito boazinha pra eles. Mas agora eles tão ficam ruim pra mim, então quando eles falam alguma coisa, eu falo não. No começo eles me davam presente, no natal, no ano novo, eles me davam coisas, de reconhecimento, ne? Me agradavam demais. Eu fiquei besta esse ano. Lá tem um quarto cheio de presente de natal, ano novo e esse ano eles não tiveram coragem de dizer “Vilma, pega isso aqui pra você”. Não ser capaz de reconhecer o que a gente faz?

[50] Se eu fizer um serviço mal feito, não vão mais me querer. Eu faço tão bem meu trabalho que todos os lugares que eu trabalho hoje, já estou lá há 2 anos em um, 3 anos em outro e 8 meses no outro. Eu nunca fui mandada embora. Às vezes eu paro de ir, porque as pessoas vão embora, ou viajam e quando voltam não precisam mais de diarista e preferem uma mensalista.

[51] Gostaria de ter os mesmo direitos das pessoas que trabalham em uma firma. Horário de entrada, de saída. As pessoas cobram mais do horário que a gente chega. “Você chegou tarde!”, mas daí também a gente nunca tem horário pra sair.

[52] Uma vez deu uma diarreia e elas não acreditaram que eu tava doente. “você acredita se você quiser, eu não posso fazer nada”. Eu fiquei 3 dias em casa, folguei 3 dias. Ai no final do mês eu tenho menos dinheiro. Minhas contas vão pro beleléu.

[53] Porque a questão de ser diarista, você não tem hora pra sair, você não tem hora pra ir embora. Eu já trabalhei 8 meses como mensalista, eu trabalhava 3 dias por semana e a mulher assinava minha carteira, mas eu não gostava. Não gosto de ter

horário pra sair. Eu gosto assim, terminei meu serviço eu quero ir embora o mais rápido possível.

[54] Eu chego 7:30/8:00, mas não foi uma coisa conversada, eu fui quem fiz. (...) Pra eu chegar lá a tempo de passar o café, tinha que sair daqui às 5:00 pra chegar lá 6:15. (...) Aí eu disse a mim mesma “Eu não vou maltratar a mim e ao menino por causa dos outros que tão lá deitados”. Realmente eu to precisando, né? Mas a gente também tem que uma hora dá no limite da gente. Aí eu passei a ir às 6:00 e eles não me reclamaram nada não, mas eu fui eu que fiz. (...) Eles contrataram uma passadeira, porque minhas costas tavam doendo demais e eu disse que não conseguia mais passar.

[55] A Francisca ligava dizendo que o João tava triste, queria que eu voltasse. Aí quando eu passei na faculdade eu disse “ok, eu vou voltar, mas eu passei na faculdade, então pode ser difícil. Eu vou ter que estudar, talvez não vai dá pra fazer o serviço inteiro. Vai ter dia que eu vou ter que falar com você assim ‘olha, eu vou ter q deixar o serviço pra depois, porque hoje eu vou ter que fazer um trabalho’. Pode ser desse jeito?” Eles disseram “Pode”.

[56] Eu queria que eles tratassem bem a gente, respeitassem nossos direitos e vissem a gente como pessoas humanas e não diferenciadas.

[57] Eu gostaria que eles tratassem a gente como alguém da família mesmo. Aí a gente tem que almoçar depois que a comida gelou lá na mesa (...) Isso tudo bate a baixo auto-estima na gente, porque até hoje das minhas patroas que eu já tive que eu fui tratada que nem gente mesmo foi só uma.

[58] O que eu vejo de empregada reclamando das patroas dentro dos ônibus!

[59] Quando eu chego do trabalho, eu pego os meninos na casa da mulher. Quando chego em casa eu vou lavar banheiro, limpar chão, fazer janta, dar banho em menino. Tem duas vezes na semana que eu lavo roupa, no sábado e na quarta. Ai quando eu

chego, eu já boto o tanquinho pra ir enchendo, e venho pra cá lavar a louça, vou colocando a roupa pra bater e vou lavando louça, ai depois eu vou limpando a casa e batendo a roupa, e depois fazendo janta e torcendo a roupa. Depois que eu torço a roupa, coloco no varal, venho pra cá, dou banho neles e janta. Ai já to morta! Ai tem vezes q eu deito nesse sofá, pego no sono que meu marido vê, já é duas horas da manhã e eu ainda to dormindo aqui.

[60] Eu faço faxina em casa porque eu preciso, né? No caso, se fosse pra eu chegar e não fazer nada, eu achava bom, mas não tem como. (...) Se eu tivesse outra pessoa que fizesse pra mim, eu ia achar bom, mas não tem, aí eu sou obrigada a fazer. Tem que fazer. Porque não tem outra pessoa pra fazer. Obrigação, né? A gente tem q dar conta dos dois. Lá é o trabalho da gente, se não fizer direito, aí mandam embora. Aqui é a casa da gente, se eu não fizer direito, ai o pessoal vem na sua casa e está fedendo. Aí tem que fazer, cansada ou não, é obrigação.

[61] Minhas coisas, aí tenho mais preguiça de fazer. Quando eu vejo que elas não fizeram, eu tenho que fazer. Aí depois do banho, eu passo pano no banheiro e já venho com o pano no meio da casa esfregando rápido. Mas eu não gosto de fazer, não.

[62] Não são iguais. Quando chego aqui em casa, viro as cadeiras de perna pro ar, joga água... Aí eu olho assim: “ah não, vou limpar essa casa aqui de manha não, vou deixar pra de tarde. Nos serviço da gente, não. Na casa da gente é diferente. Eu posso assistir televisão, quando quiser. A gente faz no dia que dá, no dia que dá vontade. Não tenho problema de fazer não. Eu só pego se eu to afim de fazer, porque eu gosto. Mas eu só faço no dia q dá vontade de fazer, porque eu to afim de fazer. Não gosto de fazer nada forçado. No dia q eu to vontade de fazer, eu faço, no dia q eu não to afim, não faço.

- [63] É diferente porque você não tem obrigação. Eu sentia que eu deveria ajudar, mas não era aquela coisa “eu tenho q fazer isso, porque eu tenho que fazer, né?” Se desse pra fazer, bem, se não, não.
- [64] A minha casa é minha casa, eu to em casa, ne? Em casa, assim, se eu puder fazer, eu faço, e se eu não estiver agüentando, eu não faço. Mas no trabalho não tem dessa.
- [65] Eu tenho que dizer quando saio de casa. Eles ligam no meu celular. Às vezes quando eu desço aqui na quadra no meu horário livre e ela já diz “ah, você vai pra onde?”. Até final de semana, eu digo que vou em tal lugar. Ela não gosta que eu saia e não diga pra onde vou, porque vai que acontece alguma coisa...
- [66] Porque a gente não sei se é negro, se é de baixa escolaridade, mas eu digo isso assim , pq a gente sente o preconceito
- [67] Tem umas mulheres assim, dessas senhores ricas, que quando a gente entra no elevador, elas ficam olhando com cara de nojo dos pés a cabeça.
- [68] Às vezes assim que a gente fala alguma coisa assim, dizem “ah, é nordestino”. Tem gente que corrige a gente. Eu acho isso um tapa na cara. Falam na sua cara “A palavra está errada, a palavra correta é tal”. Eu me acho ofendida com isso. Posso até não falar nada, mas fico com a pessoa entalada.

Annex 2

Questionnaire

Name:

Age:

Level of education:

Partnership status:

Religion:

Introduction:

We will start the interview now, I have already turned on the recorder, is that OK with you? I would like to make clear once more that your name will be change in order to render anonymity to the information you will be giving to me. In case there is something you do not feel comfortable with, you do not need to talk about it.

Childhood and migration

Taking into consideration that we still do not know each other very well, could you tell me about your life ?

- Where were you born?

- When you were young, what did you dream to be like ?

- Until which age did you go to school? (Did you continue afterwards or never stopped studying?)

- At what age did you start working ?

- Tell me how and why you came to Brasília.

- When you lived with your parents, who used to do the domestic duties?

The role of the interviewee in the family

How many family members do you help financially?

Who lives in your house with you now? Does that person help you paying the bills or doing the household activities?

Racial issues

Do you see/feel any racial discrimination in your work?

Do you see a different treatment between white and black domestic workers?

Have you ever worked in a house of a black family?

If not, would you feel weird by working for a black family?

How do you feel that the racial issues play a whole in your work and where you live? Is it different?

How do you regard yourself? Black, white or *parda*?

Home

Can you describe to me your daily activities? From the moment you wake up until when you go to bed, what do you do ?

- *What time do you wake up?*
- *Do you have breakfast at home?*
- *Do you need to prepare breakfast for someone else?*
- *How long does it take to go from home to work and back?*
- *When you arrive home, what do you do ? Clean, cook, take care of the kids, watch T.V., exercise any other hobbies?*

Do you like performing domestic duties in your house?

In your job you cook, clean (or take care of the elderly or kids) and at home you perform the same activities, do you see any difference? If yes, what is the difference?

Being a domestic worker

Why did you start working in *family-houses*?

Do you like your job?

What are your duties?

What do you like the most about it and what do you hate the most?

Would you mind telling me how much you earn monthly and if you are formally registered?

(In Portuguese: *Você tem carteira assinada?*)

What does it mean to you working as a domestic worker ?

If you could change anything, what would you change in the profession of the domestic workers?

Future

- How do you see your future?

- How would you like your future to be like?

Last question

How different do you picture your life if you had another job that did not involve domestic work? How do you think this could affect your life?