

**LIVED REALITIES OF DOMESTIC WORKERS WITHIN THE SOUTH AFRICAN  
LABOUR LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT: A QUALITATIVE STUDY**

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The thesis in the form of the Article Method is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Labour Relations Management in the Faculty of Humanities (School of Behavioural Sciences) at the North-West University, Vaal Triangle Campus.

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## DECLARATION

I, Christel Marais, hereby declare that this thesis entitled “Lived realities of domestic workers within the South African labour legislative context: A qualitative study” is my own unaided work and that all the sources I have used or quoted in the thesis have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

“May we be always more grateful for the help of domestic workers and caregivers;

theirs is a precious service.”

(Pope Francis, 2014)

## REMARKS

The reader is reminded of the following:

- This study was conceptualised, conducted and reported in accordance with the guidelines of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, sixth edition. The guidelines are in line with the ethical principles and guidelines of the programme in Labour Relations Management and Industrial Psychology at the North-West University. In addition, the author guidelines of the various accredited journals identified for publication purposes influenced the articles' layout and word count.
- Ethical clearance number: FH-SB-2011-037.
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## SUMMARY

**Title:** Lived realities of domestic workers within the South African labour legislative context:  
A qualitative study

**Keywords:** phenomenology, research protocol, qualitative pilot study, in-depth interview, domestic worker, work-life cycle, poverty, flourishing, reciprocal interrelatedness, positive employment relationship, employee voice, labour legislative awareness, empowerment

Globally the domestic worker sector is characterised by a sense of “voicelessness”—an esoteric silence fuelled by a dire need to survive. South Africa is heralded as a global ambassador for the rights of these women. Significant sectoral reforms in recent years regulate the transactional element of this employment relationship through stipulated minimum wages and employment standards. The relational element of this engagement, however, remains underexplored. A decade of global scholarship detailing the hardships that characterise this sector has helped to uncover the plight of domestic workers. The study provided the participants with an opportunity to express their experiences and feelings, and the documented findings will hopefully stimulate more scholarly debate on this issue. It is hoped that the study will engender more sensitivity towards the needs of this vulnerable group of workers and promote positive employment relations within the South African labour market. The study describes the lived realities of domestic workers within the South African labour legislative context through five separate but interrelated journal articles.

Article 1 provides a detailed “plan of action” that documents the initial considerations and rationale for the study. Guided by existing scholarly discourse, the research questions are highlighted and the proposed research design is presented. Issues related to trustworthiness are debated. This article constitutes the research proposal that was submitted during the initial phase of this research journey.

Article 2 presents a transparent account of the methodological considerations that guided the co-construction of meaning within the South African domestic worker sector.

Situated within the interpretivist paradigm, with phenomenology as theoretical underpinning, purposive respondent-driven self-sampling resulted in the recruitment of 20 female participants. All of them can be described as domestic workers in terms of Sectoral Determination 7. The pilot study indicated the value of using metaphors while exploring tentative topics. An interview guide facilitated the exploration of key concepts during our engagement. Rich, dense descriptive verbatim accounts of participants' lived realities confirmed data saturation. In-depth interviews were transcribed and analysed through an inductive process of data reduction. Emanating themes confirmed that the South African domestic workers sector is far from being voiceless if we are only willing to listen. Making these voices heard constitutes a progressive step in future efforts to empower this neglected sector of the labour market.

In article 3 a life-cycle approach is used to explore participants' lived experiences of their work-life cycle. Each individual progresses through these various phases which are contextualised as a transitional process as a result of their unique circumstances and personal trajectory. Findings confirmed the existence of an institutionalised culture of engagement within the sector perpetuated from one generation to the next. Attempts to exit the sector are unsuccessful due in part to their limited formal education and skills repertoire. The article concludes with the notion that domestic workers are trapped within a never-ending cycle of sectoral engagement, and the possibility of exiting the sector remains "but a dream" for many.

Article 4 focusses on the reciprocal interpersonal relatedness that often develops due to the prolonged engagement within the individualised sectoral employment context. Characterised by caring and connectedness, this mutually dignified treatment not only signals but also enhances human flourishing. Participants' accounts of relational reciprocity are indicative of the enactment of cardinal Ubuntu principles within the employment context. The need for actions that surpass the "letter of the law" in order to enhance flourishing within the South African domestic worker sector is advocated.

Article 5 explores the role that legislative awareness fulfils in the everyday lives of domestic workers. Findings indicated that empowerment was an unknown construct for all participants. The participants had little or no confidence in engaging their employers on employment issues; this was due in part to their limited legislative awareness. Domestic workers should thus take ownership of their own empowerment efforts. This will sanction

their right to assert their expectations of employment standards with confidence and make use of the judicial system to bring about compliant action. The article concluded with the notion that legislative awareness can result in empowered actions through informed employee voices.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
Declaration	i
Remarks	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Summary	iv
List of figures	ix
List of tables	x
List of appendices	xi
List of abbreviations	xii
<b>Chapter 1</b>	
<b>Article 1:</b> Lived realities of domestic workers within the South African labour legislative context: PhD research-in-progress	1
<b>Chapter 2</b>	
<b>Article 2:</b> Methodological reflection on the co-construction of meaning within the South African domestic worker sector: Challenging the notion of “voicelessness”	40
<b>Chapter 3</b>	
<b>Article 3:</b> Future directiveness within the South African domestic workers’ work-life cycle: Considering exit strategies	70
<b>Chapter 4</b>	
<b>Article 4:</b> Affirmation of Ubuntu within a flourishing work relationship as voiced by South African domestic workers: A positive labour perspective	92

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (CONTINUED)

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Chapter 5</b>	
<b>Article 5:</b> Legislative awareness as empowerment tool within the South African domestic worker sector: A qualitative reflection	114
<b>Chapter 6: Conclusions, Limitations, Recommendations and Personal Reflection</b>	
6.1 Introduction	141
6.2 Conclusions emanating from the study	141
6.3 Limitations of the research	144
6.4 Recommendations	145
6.4.1 Recommendations for sectoral role players	145
6.4.2 Recommendations for sectoral scholarship	146
6.5 The 21 <sup>st</sup> participant: A final reflective note	147
References	148

## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>Figure</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Article 1</b>		
Figure 1	Data Analysis in Qualitative Research	16
<b>Chapter 2: Article 2</b>		
Figure 1	Silent Symphony	42
Figure 2	Data Interpretation Process	55
<b>Chapter 3: Article 3</b>		
Figure 1	Domestic Workers' Work-Life Cycle	73

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Page</b>
Table 1	Participant Profile	150
Table 2	Theme 1: Work-Life Cycle	152
Table 3	Theme 2: Flourishing – Positive Employment Relationship Case	166
Table 4	Theme 3: Legislative Awareness as Empowerment Tool within the South African Domestic Worker Sector	173

## LIST OF APPENDICES

<b>Appendix</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Page</b>
Appendix A	Demographic Profile of Participants	149
Appendix B	Overview of Data Analysis and Meaning-Making	151
Appendix C	Proof of Transcription Accuracy	181
Appendix D	Proof of Consensus Conversation	183
Appendix E	Proof of Language Editing	185

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Description</b>
APA	American Psychological Association
DoL	Department of Labour
i.e.	id est. (that is)
ILO	International Labour Organisation
NRF	National Research Foundation
SADSAWU	South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union
SD 7	Sectoral Determination 7
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
UIF	Unemployment Insurance Fund

## Chapter 1

### Article 1

**An earlier version of Article 1 has been presented and published:**

Marais, C., & Van Wyk, C. de W. (2012). *Lived realities of domestic workers within the South African labour legislative context: PhD research-in-progress*. Paper presented at the International Journal of Arts and Sciences Conference, Rome, Italy.

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**Lived Realities of Domestic Workers within the South African Labour Legislative  
Context: PhD Research-in-Progress**

**Abstract**

Domestic work is a global phenomenon. In South Africa it is recognised as one of the oldest and most common forms of labour for black women. Taking into consideration the entrenched socialisation patterns and lack of career choices in this sector, these women have very little personal choice. In order to redress imbalances in their employment relationships, Sectoral Determination 7 was proclaimed in 2002, stipulating minimum wages and employment standards for this sector. This transformative piece of legislation evolved over time, and the full implications are still unknown. This article reflects on the need to interpret the lived realities of domestic workers within the South African labour legislative context. Using the interpretivist paradigm, with phenomenology as the theoretical underpinning, in-depth interviews were conducted with participants to explore their work life cycle, the empowerment consequences of legislation and the building of positive employment relationships within the sector. The recruitment of participants, demarcation of the study, data collection methods used, and the analysis and reporting of data is examined, as well as the role of the researcher. The study provides a voice to the participants which highlights the needs of this vulnerable group of workers and creates an awareness of the need to facilitate effective employment relations within the South African labour market, and may stimulate scholarly debate.

***Keywords:*** domestic workers, workplace realities, positive employment relationship, labour legislative awareness, empowerment

## **Introduction to the Study**

South Africa prides itself on being a country with a very rich historical past, and in which domestic workers played an important role. Thus, the historical realities of the domestic worker sector cannot be ignored. Domestic work, which is deeply entrenched and characterised by decades of unfair and exploitative conduct, has run its own historical course and has been labelled as one of the most neglected sectors of the country's labour force (Cock, 1980; Namukwambi & Shindondola-Mote, 2010; Preston-Whyte, 1982; Tonkin, 2010). Fish (2006, p. 107) extends this notion and even refers to this sector as the "last bastion of apartheid".

With domestic workers characterised by a sense of entrapment or state of dependency, Seedat (2006) argues that female African domestic workers' occupational choices are a manifestation of the socialisation process they were exposed to as young girls (Flood, Hoosain, & Primo, 1997). Consequently, these women instilled their state of deprivation into the next generation. This culminated in women engaging in domestic work because they were taught to take part in domestic activities. Thus, within this context, individuals were born into a particular culture which in turn determined their outlook on the world and how the world perceived them. This further strengthens the notion that, within the domestic worker sector, women have very little personal choice (Mbigi, 2005). This often left these workers exposed to exploitation and placed limitations on their own and their families' lives because of both their circumstances and socialisation (Blackett, 2011; Cock, 1980; Moya, 2007; Schur, 1977; Seedat, 2006).

An employee's work life can thus be seen as a cycle and therefore implies a journey (Järviluoma, Moisala, & Vilkkö, 2003). Although all journeys are unique, they are characterised by similar realities within the domestic worker sector. The domestic worker's work-life is a continuous cycle with each new generation entering the cycle and thus continuing the cycle: breaking this cycle is thus very difficult given the unique circumstances facing those within the sector. Confronted by a scarcity of jobs and a lack of alternative employment, many women are limited in their choice – they can choose either to be unemployed or to be employed as a domestic worker (Harzig, 2006; Meintjies, 1992). These women are therefore largely unable to fulfil their full potential (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2004) and may remain submissive due to various social influences (Akpotor, 2009; Bohler-Muller, 2007; Tredoux, 2006). Thus, according to Schur (1977), women are often enmeshed in a

generalised system of domination where their subordination becomes a central feature of their entire way of life. Women's acceptance of this state has economic, political and social ramifications. This was, and still is, especially relevant in the domestic worker sector due to a lack of choice, prestige and apparent never-ending nature of the cycle. Domestic work is thus not seen as a bridging occupation in South Africa but rather a dead-end job (Delpont, 1994; Makanga, 2010). Personal life experiences therefore directly and indirectly influence the development of constructs that affect individuals' work life identity (Rickwood, Roberts, Batten, Marshall, & Massie, 2004).

To understand the critical need for reform, consideration has to be given to the evolution that has taken place in the domestic sector. As long as the history and the daily realities facing domestic workers are ignored, the full reality of the position of domestic workers in South Africa cannot be understood (Botha, 1993). According to Cock (1980), domestic workers will remain in a legal vacuum until the labour legislation in the sector is changed.

### **Background and Motivation of the Study**

Modern South African society is known for its continuous efforts to ensure equality. Nonetheless, women are still overrepresented in low-level jobs and doing unskilled work for limited remuneration (Kethusegile, Kwaramba, & Lopi, 2000). Although the preamble to the South African Constitution (South Africa, 1996) provides hope for those who have been marginalised by law for decades as a result of the injustices of the past (Fourie & Van Eden, 2010), the question still remains, to what extent have the improved labour laws resulted in tangible improvements for all? (De Lille, 2003, p. 213). It appears that the mere implementation of the Constitution has not empowered the South African domestic worker sector.

Transformation evolves over time. This implies a chain reaction, since one form of change gives rise to the next form of change (Botha, 1993; Meyer, 2002; Mubangizi, 2004). The current situation in the domestic worker sector is due to a culmination of efforts by various role players as a result of the social rationale (Cock, 1980; De Villiers, 1997; Menne, 1986; Mubangizi, 2004; Peat, 2008; Snyder & Tadesse, 1995), the economic rationale (Cock, 1980; Farr, 2003; Gordon, 1973; Harzig, 2006; Kethusegile et al., 2000; Mangqalaza, 2012; Rautenbach, 1999) and the legislative rationale (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2004; Ally, 2008; Brown

& Reynolds, 1994; Crompton, 2008; Department of Labour, 2001a, 2001b, 2002; Flood et al., 1997; Grant, 1997; Kethusegile et al., 2000; Kilowan, 1994; Meintjies, 1992; Mubangizi, 2004; National Manpower Commission, 1991; Van Jaarsveld & Van Eck, 1996) to change the plight of domestic workers.

In 1994 Delpont (p. 180) predicted that the status of domestic workers would change from “the exploited skeleton in the kitchen to that of a valued and protected member of the workforce” within a decade. This optimism is reflected in her statement that “the light at the end of the domestic service tunnel has never shone brighter”. Yet, despite the various changes arising from the 1994 political reform in South Africa, large numbers of women still engage in domestic work due to the multifaceted nature of their daily realities. Legislative reform usually originates from the need for appropriate actions or because of inappropriate past actions. In terms of labour, this refers to the employment relationship that exists between employers and employees. It would be idealistic to assume or even expect them to work spontaneously for the benefit of both parties (Freese & Schalk, 2008; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). This is especially true for the domestic worker sector, given the vast power imbalances that characterise the employment relationship and a history of exploitation. Woolman and Bishop (2007, p. 595) extend this notion by labelling it as an “ineradicable feature of the South African landscape”.

Faced by the fact that the *modus operandi* in the domestic worker sector was such a deeply entrenched part of South African society, government’s reform was aimed at eventual improvement without provoking total resistance to change. The tailor-made Sectoral Determination 7 (South Africa, 2002), heralded as a “legislative victory” by Fish (2006, p. 107), was established to effectively regulate the employment relationship in the domestic worker sector (Department of Labour, 2001a; South Africa, 1997). Definitions of the term “domestic worker” are widely documented in the literature (Basson, Louw, & Strydom, 1993; Dancaster, 2003; Department of Labour, 2002; South Africa, 1997). In this study the definition as set out in Sectoral Determination 7 (South Africa, 2002; Van Niekerk, 2003, pp. 7–9) was used to define participants in the study. According to this definition, the term domestic worker refers to “any domestic worker or independent contractor who performs domestic work in a private household and who receives, or is entitled to receive pay, and includes: a gardener; a person employed by a household as a driver of a motor vehicle; a person who takes care of children, the aged, the sick, the frail or the disabled; and domestic

workers employed or supplied by employment services”. It is further noted that although legislation does not make a distinction based on gender, this research was limited to female domestic workers since recent statistics indicate that 97% of domestic workers are female (ILO, 2013; Stats SA, 2010, 2013).

Although the setting of minimum wages may seem an easy solution to a very complex problem, it should be viewed within a broader context in order to understand the implications. According to Van Niekerk (2003), the sectoral determination provides a safety net, dictating minimum standards of employment specifically in the domestic worker sector. It should, however, be noted that there is no provision which prevents any other conditions of employment being stipulated in a contract of employment by the parties, provided that these provisions are not less favourable than those set by the sectoral determination (South Africa, 2002).

As the objective of any law reform is to bring about dutiful actions which are in line with legislative requirements, this objective in itself implies a process that has to go full circle in order to culminate in compliant actions. The intention of reform can clearly be traced in the literature, but intention in itself is of little or no value, since it does not necessarily result in appropriate action. To reflect on the history of the South African domestic worker sector is to be taught a painful lesson. Legislative reform was therefore inevitably necessary to assist in creating a full awareness of the reality which South African society chose to ignore or suppress for decades.

Domestic workers have long been subjected to adverse conditions in both their work and their private lives (Archer, 2011; Harzig, 2006; Moya, 2007). Admittedly, there are no quick fixes for the wide array of complex and challenging circumstances within this sector. Nevertheless, adopting a forward-looking orientation “suggests that the potential for a more hopeful, productive, and satisfying future can emerge for people who are struggling their way through tough times” (Froman, 2010, p. 60). Positive emotions, it is argued, constitute the dynamic components needed to cope and thrive despite adverse or changing demands of life (Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003).

Humans have an amazing ability to adapt to their ongoing circumstances (Emmons, 2007). Workplace adversity, which is historically well documented in the case of domestic workers, can be viewed as any combination of negative, stressful, traumatic or difficult

situations or episodes of hardship that are encountered within the occupational setting (Jackson, Firtko, & Edenborough, 2007). Positive emotions, however, aid in building physical, intellectual and social resources (Fredrickson, 1998; Mills, Fleck, & Kozikowski, 2013) despite adverse work-life realities. By applying the principles of the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions to this context (Fredrickson, 1998; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002; Fredrickson & Losada, 2005; Fredrickson et al., 2003), positive emotions can over time build, and not only reflect, optimal human functioning through a cyclical process within the work context.

Generativity and behavioural flexibility are the result of an expanded range of thoughts and actions resulting from positive emotions and experiences. As they develop over time, their extent and nature are unique to each individual (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005). Because of the upward spiralling effect of their positive emotions and experiences, individuals are then able to acquire more personal, social and situational resources (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001; Salanova, Schaufeli, Xanthopoulou, & Bakker, 2010). By examining domestic workers' broadened thought-action repertoires, and how these translate into decisions and actions, one may come to an understanding of their capability to cope in their unique daily work-life circumstances. The broaden-and-build theory implies that positive emotions and experiences have the potential to undo the after-effects of negative emotions and experiences, thereby signalling hope for the future. Noting that an isolated positive experience is unlikely to increase employee well-being, the broaden-and-build theory predicts that positive emotions accumulate and compound over time, thereby setting in motion an upward spiral towards well-being (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002). This signals hope for the future.

According to Fredrickson et al. (2003), positive meaning is the most powerful leverage point to cultivate positive emotions. The domestic workers' realisation that their families depend upon them and that the income they generate will secure the future of their households can therefore in itself be viewed as an empowering perception that they should remain in service as domestic workers, despite any hardships or adversity they may encounter in their work context (Dinat & Peberdy, 2007; Harzig, 2006). The development of strong working relationships, keeping the bigger picture in mind and examining individual goals are thus advocated as additional ways for people to find meaning in their work context (Maddi & Khoshaba, 2005). Although individuals have the ability to make choices, the challenge lies in

taking ownership of the outcomes (Zeff, 2007). Despite this, Albertyn (2000) points out that disempowered people are often unaware of and unable to change the conditions which characterise their oppressed state. Maddi and Khoshaba (2005) also warn of the negative consequences that can arise from isolation, powerlessness and threat in the cultivation of thought and action patterns.

Empowerment does not just happen (Tromp, 2008). When considering the unique situation in the domestic worker sector, the initial reaction is to focus on actions employers can take to better the situation, but it should be pointed out that domestic workers, despite the perceived inequitable relationship, should also actively participate in the change process. Their level of awareness will impact on the successful implementation of current legislation and the consequent sense of empowerment. Although awareness can never be taken for granted, the researcher views awareness as a multi-faceted concept affected not only by the here and now but also by the past and, inevitably, by the perceived future. Given the individualised nature of the employment relationship in the domestic worker sector, a multidimensional view of awareness which transcends the mere cognitive nature of awareness is vital. This implies that awareness without appropriate action is in itself an incomplete process (Marais, 2007, 2009).

According to Pieterse (2008, p. 69), empowerment is a “self-evident good that no one in his or her right mind could be against”. Empowerment is not a passive process but rather one that necessitates participation by the various role players. According to Delport (1994), the successful implementation of any possible legislation in the domestic worker sector will depend, to a large extent, on the women of this country. This notion is taken a step further by De Lille (2003), who warns these women not to be complacent but rather to embrace the challenge to take their destinies into their own hands to an ever greater extent. Within this context, empowerment is seen as a dynamic process necessitating engagement by all role players to improve the quality of life for all South Africans (Onyishi & Agbo, 2010; Pieterse, 2008). The question, however, inevitably arises to what extent do domestic workers experience a sense of empowerment within the context of their employment relationship. Albertyn (2000) argues that knowledge and understanding of power relations aid in individuals being empowered and provides them with the capacity to act.

Empowerment as a construct is well documented in the literature (Appelbaum, Hébert, & Leroux, 1999; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Fourie & Van Eden, 2010; Greasley et

al., 2005; Harvey, 2011; Hogan, 2000; Jooste, 2000; Kotze, Menon, & Vos, 2007; Kuokkanen & Leino-Kilpi, 2000; Oladipo, Adenaike, & Ojewumi, 2010; Onyishi & Agbo, 2010; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Rappaport, 1987; Rowlands, 1995; Shields, 1995; Spreitzer, 1995, 1996, 2007; Stander & Rothmann, 2009, 2010; Tromp, 2009; Van Driel, 2004). The literature broadly differentiates between the improvement of conditions for oppressed groups and the social-structural and psychological forms of empowerment.

Power is regarded as one of the entrenched features of the employment relationship in the domestic worker sector (Delpont, 1994; Mahlatji, 2004). The inequitable distribution of power has resulted in domestic workers exhibiting numerous disempowerment characteristics (Albertyn, 2005; Fourie & Van Eden, 2010) due to their historical context within which they have internalised the value system of the institutionalised forms of power. According to Van Driel (2004), power in modern times is seen as an enabling competence which differs from the traditional view of power in relation to dominance. Therefore, to understand the true value of legislative reform, provision must be made for multi-dimensional outcomes, of which empowerment is deemed one of the main achievements.

Arguing that empowerment aims to transform society through the empowerment of individuals, Albertyn's (2000) substantive literature review culminates in the conceptualisation of the three-level classification of empowerment. The micro level in this classification refers to the psychological sense of personal control related to feelings, attitudes and skills. The interface level relates to the interpersonal aspects which affect an individual in terms of participation and action. Finally, the macro level relates to individuals' critical reflection on power relations and their readiness to take action (Albertyn, 2000, 2005). It is argued that empowerment is therefore required at each of these levels to ensure an effective empowerment process. Similarly, according to Spreitzer (2007), the research of the last two decades has advocated the integration of the social-structural and psychological perspectives on empowerment. Thus by perusing a broad view of empowerment within the domestic worker sector, the researcher was able to establish a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon.

Empowerment is both rational and a process with no end, which implies the individuals' capacity, and right to act and influence their daily circumstances (Van Driel, 2004). Since empowerment can mean different things to different people in different circumstances, there is no predetermined outcome but rather an opportunity to reflect on the

outcomes to date. Furthermore, by taking ownership of the empowered role that both employers and domestic workers enjoy because of legislative reform, the role they can and ought to play in this sector may ultimately culminate in a mutually beneficial working relationship. Therefore, in the context of this study, empowerment refers to individuals' perceived and actual ability to influence and control the course of their lives. It is further argued that the empowerment of this sector can noticeably influence the development of the broader South African society given the number of people often dependent on a single domestic worker.

According to Tromp (2008) empowerment is an ongoing process, and the key to its success lies in domestic workers increasingly being able to assess opportunities, information, support or resources. Furthermore, Spreitzer (2007) calls for a broader view of the outcomes of empowerment and proposes that increased empowerment can create a positive spiral that can move a community to action. This implies a complex interplay between "people, things and places" (Atkinson, 2013). Despite the implementation of Sectoral Determination 7, the question arise as to what extent do domestic workers perceive themselves as empowered.

Legislation within the domestic worker sector is viewed as an enabling tool which is available to both employers and domestic workers, "empowering women to make the law relevant in their own lives" (Schuler & Kadirgamar-Rajasingham, 1992, p. 1). Sectoral Determination 7 has assisted in raising awareness beyond mere legislative prescriptions. Actions in this regard refer to the creation of an understanding of the unique needs of women in South Africa within the immediate employment relationship between the employer and the domestic worker and beyond. Changing entrenched patterns of behaviour which have evolved over decades may initially be regarded as attempting the impossible, but it is precisely herein that the challenge lies.

Acknowledging the history of the domestic worker sector as one long riddled with neglect, exploitation and a general undervaluing of the contribution of domestic workers to South African society as a whole, it is essential to appreciate the incorporation of labour legislative reforms within the post-1994 setting in this sector. According to Tonkin (2010, p. 11), against all odds, "domestic workers have entered the corridors of power", but the perceived consequences require the continuation of the "struggle". The setting of minimum wages thus brought about an added dimension to the employer-employee relationship, of which the full impact is still not known. The overall objective of this study was therefore to

interpret the lived realities of domestic workers in the South African labour legislative context.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Objectives**

The general objective of this PhD study was to interpret the lived realities of the domestic worker sector within the South African labour legislative context. To facilitate the attainment of this objective, the following specific objectives were set:

- To analyse from the literature the lived realities of the South African domestic worker sector.
- To articulate the lived experiences of domestic workers within the context of Sectoral Determination 7.
- To ascertain how the inception of Sectoral Determination 7 has transformed the worklife cycle of domestic workers.
- To consider how the inception of labour legislative reform has contributed to the building of positive employment relationships within the domestic worker sector.
- To probe how domestic workers' labour legislative awareness relates to their sense of empowerment within their employment relationship.

### **Research Design**

The study adopted a qualitative exploratory and descriptive research approach to enable the researcher to engage in an in-depth look at the world of the domestic worker as a phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Duberley, Johnson, & Cassell, 2012; Eatough, 2012; Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008), thereby facilitating the assignment of meaning to reality in a systematic manner (Henning, Van Rensburg, & Smit, 2005) and to understand the full complexity of their experiences (Hailu, Mendoza, Lahman, & Richard, 2012; Quinlan, 2011; Rudestam & Newton, 2007).

In view of the fact that methodology refers to a logical and critical discussion of the principles and methods of a subject area, a qualitative research approach provides a source of endless possibilities to learn more about people (Horn, 2009). This enables the researcher to gain access to the embedded processes by focusing on people's everyday lives where decisions are made and enacted, rather than by simply looking at characteristics or the

content (Barbour, 2008). Furthermore, participants' subjective and existing experiences of their lived reality influence their actions – therefore it is necessary to view the world through the eyes of the participants in order to understand their experience of this reality (Cardwell, 2007).

This study is located within the interpretivist paradigm, with phenomenology as the theoretical underpinning. Embarking on a journey of discovery (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) through focused engagement with the literature and the participants, the researcher explored, described and explained the phenomenon through a process of logical reasoning (Babbie, 2010; Cardwell, 2007; Henning et al., 2005; Horn, 2009; Rich, Graham, Taket & Shelley, 2013), and the reasoning itself then became the evidence (Badenhorst, 2008). Therefore a post-positivist, qualitative, explorative phenomenological and appreciative descriptive research design was used for this study.

A critical review of the existing literature guided the overall orientation and direction of this research process. In the academic context “all research is based on previous reflection” (Badenhorst, 2008, pp. 155–156), and thus an engagement with the literature forms a substantial part of post-graduate study (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008; Wilkenson, 2005). An initial review of the literature (Hofstee, 2006; Swetnam, 2003) helped to determine the viability of the proposed research. By applying a carefully planned academic funnel approach to the literature review (Horn, 2009; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008), the researcher was able to filter through diverse data sources to provide a framework for data analysis and control (Denscombe, 2003). Primary and secondary literature sources may include conference proceedings, official publications, research in progress, bibliographies, current awareness publications, newspapers, reference books, text books, scholarly journal articles, interviews with subject specialists, government publications and legislation, web-based literature and others (Babbie, 2010; Jester & Lester, 2005; Mouton, 2008; Ridley, 2008; Rumsey, 2008). Care was therefore taken, through an evaluative synthesis of the literature, to ensure the attainment of the research objectives, thereby bearing witness to the researcher's commitment and interest in the subject (White, 2003).

### **Research Setting and Participant Recruitment**

In order to carrying out a deep analysis, the phenomenon under investigation needs to be placed meaningfully within a specific social environment (Holliday, 2008; Roberts, 2007).

For this purpose, the Emfuleni Local Municipal District was selected as the demarcated area for this study. Emfuleni, together with the Lesedi and Midvaal Local Municipalities, constitutes the greater Sedibeng District ("Municipal Demarcation Board: Emfuleni Local Municipality," 2011). Emfuleni is classified as an Area A in terms of Sectoral Determination 7 by the Demarcation Board, and is thus a municipal district with a high urban population (South Africa, 2002, 2013).

Domestic workers employed in private households within the demarcated area constituted the target population. Due to the individualised nature of the employment relationship that exists between domestic workers and their employers and the sensitive nature of the information sought, the researcher opted not to intrude in private households.

Sampling within the qualitative paradigm aimed to facilitate the recruitment of participants who experienced the phenomenon under investigation and were willing to share their experiences (Bernard, 2013; Kirkevold & Bergland, 2007; Layder, 2013; Maxwell, 2013; Pollo, Graves, & Arfken, 2006; Smith & Eatough, 2008). For the purpose of this study, the following inclusion criteria were set in order to gather information that would best describe the research objectives:

- Participants had to be engaged in domestic work as stipulated in Sectoral Determination 7.
- Participants had to be employed in a private household for more than 24 hours a month.
- Participants' place of employment had to be within the geographic boundaries of the Emfuleni Local Municipal District.

These inclusion criteria narrowed the scope of participant engagement. The aim of this engagement was to facilitate data saturation in order to assign meaning (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Saturation in this context refers to the termination of data collection when the results start to become redundant, provided sufficient data has been collected to represent the depth and breadth of the phenomenon (Caelli, Ray, & Mill, 2003; Pope, Ziebland, & Mays, 2000).

Qualitative sample size is usually small (Punch, 2006), below 30 and non-randomly selected to obtain in-depth descriptions of participants' perspectives and context (Bernard, 2013; Horn, 2009; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008; Smith & Eatough, 2008). A review of qualitative subject-related studies found that sample size varies from as little as two participants to as many as 50 or even more (Brown & Reynolds, 1994; Fish, 2006; Mahlatji, 2004;

Mkandawire-Valhmu, 2010; Namukwambi & Shindondola-Mote, 2010; Oishi, 2003; Phillips, 2011; Seedat, 2006). To obtain a realistic sampling frame (Greenfield, 2002), and guided by the need for data saturation (Oishi, 2003), the researcher aimed at an initial sample size of 16 participants.

A sampling method seeks to maximise the depth and richness of the data generated to address the research purpose (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Purposive sampling is especially relevant in the case of “hard-to-find” populations (Bernard, 2013), and deemed the most appropriate selection strategy for a critical approach to the parameters of the population under investigation (Punch, 2006; Silverman, 2011) while also taking into account the feasibility of access (Maxwell, 2013). Purposive respondent-driven self-sampling was used to illustrate the phenomena under investigation and denoted participants’ willingness to engage with the study (Daniel, 2012; Schensul, 2012; Seale, 2012). Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

### **Data Collection**

Rudestam and Newton (2007) regard observation as the instrument of choice within the qualitative paradigm; however, the individualised nature of the employment relationship within the domestic worker sector required sensitive engagement. Mouton (2001) describes the concept of methodological empathy as the ability to obtain firsthand knowledge from participants without the need to necessarily agree or disagree in order to understand it. Within this phenomenological context, in-depth interviews were considered the most appropriate method of engagement with participating domestic workers. Interviews provide a rich source of information, assist in illuminating misunderstandings and are flexible when something unexpected happens or when further probing is needed (Knapik, 2006; Knox & Burkard, 2009; Qu & Dumay, 2011; Rowley, 2012; White, 2003).

In striving to establish a relationship of trust via good rapport and empathetic listening (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008), a semi-structured interview schedule was used as an enabling tool to facilitate participants’ reflections on their experiences and the implications of these experiences for their lives. Questioning is not a haphazard process (Oishi, 2003) but rather a deliberate engagement linked to the investigative objectives (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Oliver, 2003). The interviews were therefore both open-ended and developmental in nature, guided by broad organisational categories (Maxwell, 2005).

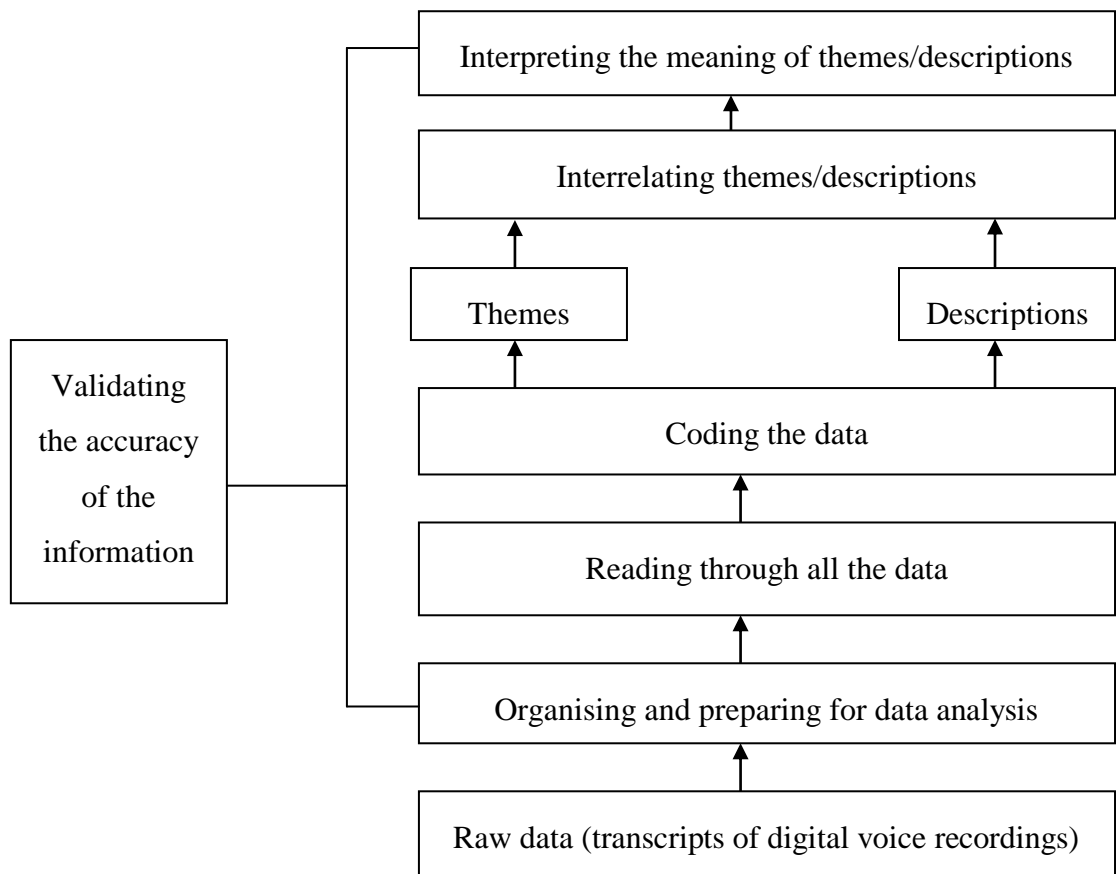
Data recording requires careful engagement with data sources. Creswell (2014) even calls for the use of a protocol in interviewing to streamline data recording while interviewing the participants. In order to ensure effective data transcription, all the interviews were thus recorded on a digital voice recorder (Griffiths, 2007) and preserved in electronic and hard copy format. This was done with the consent of the participants. Written notes were also made by the researcher during the interviews for later consideration. Since the purpose of qualitative interviewing is to describe and interpret experiences (Oishi, 2003), the transcripts reflect the careful and meticulous capturing of what was said by each participant (Nieuwenhuis, 2011b).

### **Data analysis and reporting.**

Qualitative data analysis requires analytical skills and the ability to capture the data in writing, and this can only be done through immersion in the interview text (Henning et al., 2005; Pollo et al., 2006). According to Hofstee (2006), evidence usually manifests in the form of data, yet the data has very little meaning by itself. Data therefore has to be analysed and used to substantiate a point for it to become evidence. The richness of this evidence stems from focusing on the viewpoints of the participants (Horn, 2009; Rivas, 2012; Smith & Eatough, 2012). The process is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

The path to forming ideas starts right at the beginning of the research project and ends with the writing up of the results (Bazeley, 2009, 2013; Spencer, Ritchie, & O'Connor, 2003). The conceptual part of data analysis is a challenge which requires more than mere random division of data into smaller units. By adopting Tesch's eight-step framework for data analysis (Tesch, 1990) in this study, the researcher was able to capture the essence of what was transcribed during her engagement with the participants. A process of data distilling (rather than merely reducing the volume of data) then took place through a methodical, systematic and goal-oriented effort. This culminated in results that others are able to accept as a fair representation of the data. According to Tesch (1990), this requires skill, perception and creative transformation by the researcher. Within the phenomenological context, the focus is therefore on reporting the experiences of the participants. Data is therefore generated with the aim of deriving descriptions and themes as illustrated in Figure 1 below. In this study, the findings are presented in chronological order (Creswell, 2014) of the set objectives.

**Figure 1. Data Analysis in Qualitative Research**



*Figure 1. An interactive approach to qualitative data analysis that facilitates the crystallisation of emerging codes and themes as suggested by J. W. Creswell, 2014, *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods*, 4, p. 197. Copyright 2014 by Sage Publications.*

Meaning was derived by a comparison of the findings with information obtained from the literature. Verbatim quotes were then intertwined with the researcher's interpretation to convey the experiences of the participants and the meaning attached to them. The computer-aided qualitative data analysis software, MAXQDA, was used in the process of data management and analysis (MAXQDA, 1989–2013).

## Strategies Employed to Ensure Quality Data

Corbin and Strauss (2008) stress that research must have substance, provide insight, show sensitivity and be more than a repeat of the same “old stuff” in order to be regarded as being of quality. The pursuit of quality data within the qualitative paradigm requires trustworthiness as norm. Lincoln and Guba (1986) identify credibility, applicability, dependability and confirmability as key criteria for trustworthiness, therefore:

- True value refers to the credibility of qualitative data (as opposed to validity). This is closely linked to the sampling system that was used with the focus on obtaining full and in-depth exploration of the participants’ responses through prolonged engagement. This is further influenced by how convincingly and reflectively the researcher has engaged with the phenomenon under investigation. Critical engagement with, and sourcing of, evidence that might support or contradict the study’s main findings helps to convince the audience that they are sound and based on evidence (Horn, 2009). It can therefore be said that validity, in this context, is associated with a kind of truth that is pluralistic in nature (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).
- Applicability refers to the transferability of qualitative data (as opposed to generalisation). Qualitative research aims to engage in research that probes for deeper understanding of a phenomenon. The aim in this research was therefore to become emerged in participant reality rather than measurable findings (Nieuwenhuis, 2011b). Reflection upon various sources of data in an honest and critical manner in the pursuit of data triangulation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Elder & Paul, 1998) enhances confidence in the outcomes. Qualitative research therefore seeks to provide an understanding from the participants’ perspective rather than generalising findings across a population (Anderson, 2010; Creswell, 2014; Nieuwenhuis, 2011b). This is achieved through thick/dense descriptions (Hammersley, 2008) as a result of data saturation. The focus is therefore on contextualising the findings rather than making broad generalisations within the context (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008).
- Consistency refers to the dependability of qualitative data (as opposed to reliability) which is achieved through a process of open coding while reading and re-reading the interviews in a focussed attempt to identify concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Miles, Hunberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Nieuwenhuis, 2011a; Saldaña, 2013). This process is enhanced through the incorporation of independent coders/auditors thereby confirming consistency in data analysis. These individuals would not be familiar with the researcher or the study and can

thus provide an objective assessment of the project through the various phases (Creswell, 2014).

- Neutrality relates to the confirmability of qualitative data (as opposed to objectivity). This requires the researcher's interaction with the participant to be admitted as part of the data collection process. Although neutrality is important in the qualitative interview, in that the interviewer should not impose beliefs and interpretation on the exchange, the interviewer is engaged in the conversation, not just reading and recording responses (Oishi, 2003). The focus is therefore on the neutrality of the data, which can be validated with the assistance of an independent coder as well as through a literature control, rather than the neutrality of the researcher.

The quality of data in this study required the researcher to apply methodological consistency guided by a clarity of purpose to facilitate the attainment of the set objectives (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). For this purpose and to enhance the outcomes, a pilot study was first carried out to test the methodology, sampling and interview schedule and to guide revisions (Chenail, 2011; Kim, 2010; Maxwell, 2005).

### **Entrée and Establishing Researcher Roles**

Within the qualitative paradigm, the researcher becomes emerged in the research process to such an extent that she is the methodologist-in-action – which means that she must indicate her position in terms of the methodology and method (Barbour, 2008; Berger, 2013; Henning et al., 2005; Nieuwenhuis, 2011b; Roberts, 2007). As phenomenologists, it is very difficult for researchers to stand back and be objective, since they are already part of the process being researched (White, 2003). However, it is thought that the background, knowledge and experience of the researcher may not only enable more sensitive engagement with the data, but could also facilitate the identification of connections that exist between the concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), resulting in a source of passion and commitment (Denscombe, 2003).

Scholarly writing on the topic under investigation ranges from strongly outspoken views with a feminist orientation to researchers playing the racial card as a prerequisite for researcher engagement with and infiltration of the sector in an attempt to gain insight. The South African domestic worker sector employs predominantly African women, even though the stipulations in Sectoral Determination 7 make no distinction based on race or gender. The

researcher therefore undertook to approach the research with an open mind (Denscombe, 2003) untainted by racial or gender biases. The topic under investigation was approached as a journey of discovery that might lead to transformation as meaning was given to what was perceived (Badenhorst, 2008; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008; Pearson & Brew, 2002).

### **Ethical Considerations**

Research is a complex process which involves participation by various stakeholders. Within this context, ethics refers to the moral principles by which researchers conduct themselves during the research engagement (Howitt & Cramer, 2005; Steane, 2004). According to Mouton (2008, p. 239), the search for knowledge and truth is the “epistemic imperative” of science. Furthermore, this moral obligation is neither “optional nor negotiable, but intrinsic to all scientific enquiry”. Ethics therefore needs to be interwoven into each phase of the research process. Barbour (2008) refers to this process as research governance. In this study the following ethical protocols guided the engagement:

- Participation was voluntary, and the participants were assured that they were free to withdraw from the situation at any time (Clark, 2010; Fox & Bayat, 2013; Oliver, 2003; Punch, 2014).
- The participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Oliver, 2003; Steane, 2004).
- The participants were provided with detailed information regarding the objectives and implications of participation which related to their right to know in order to make an informed choice (De Gruchy & Holness, 2007; Miller & Bell, 2002; Oliver, 2003).
- Informed consent was obtained from the participants as a form of respect for their right to have control over their own lives and to have their stories heard (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Miller & Bell, 2002; Oliver, 2003; Rudestam & Newton, 2007; Steane, 2004; Waldrop, 2004).
- All the participants were treated equally, with dignity and worth (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Oliver, 2003; Waldrop, 2004). They were informed that a written summary of the outcome of the study would be made available to them upon completion of the research.
- The researcher aimed at pursuing set research objectives in a truthful, honest and professional manner (Denscombe, 2003; Lichtman, 2014; Tracy, 2010).

- The researcher refrained from theft and fraud within the academic and publishing context (De Gruchy & Holness, 2007; Denscombe, 2010; Hofstee, 2006; Howitt & Cramer, 2005; Swetnam, 2003; Theron, 2012).
- An informal research diary was kept by the researcher reflecting ethical considerations, documentation of access routes and decisions made throughout the research process (Gatrell, 2009; Miller & Bell, 2002).
- The researcher furthermore undertook to abide by the ethical principles and guidelines of the American Psychological Association (2010) and North-West University (2009) to ensure the continuous enhancement of research integrity (Fisher, Wertz, & Goodman, 2009).

### **Expected Contribution of the Study and Concluding Remarks**

The plight of domestic workers cannot be ignored. The need to develop a heightened awareness of the daily realities of domestic workers is well documented. This requires proactive engagement with the phenomenon by the various role players in the sector. The researcher believes that the current study will contribute towards a deeper understanding of the challenges that domestic workers face in their daily work-life.

There is an urgent call in the literature for increased reflection on the role of positive emotions within an ever-widening disciplinary range (Mills et al., 2013; Sabl, 2013). By tapping into the positive emotions and experiences of the participants in the context of their work-life, the individual and collective well-being of people in the sector is highlighted. In addition, the study also examines the empowerment consequences of Sectoral Determination 7, resulting in a contextualisation of the role that labour legislation plays in the awareness and empowerment of domestic workers within their employment relationship.

Guided by the embedded need to make an original contribution to the field of study (Badenhorst, 2008), the researcher hopes to stimulate debate through engagement with scholarly writing through a critical and appreciative approach. This approach constitutes a powerful tool for interlinking constant reflection, comparison and synthesis to bring into existence new ideas or insights in this field (Henning et al., 2005; Horn, 2009; Murray & Moore, 2006). Moreover, this research will culminate in four publishable articles for submission to accredited peer-reviewed journals, which will further enable the research to spill over into the “journey of publication” (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 2007, pp. 81–110). This

in turn could form a point of departure for future independent and collaborative scholarly research efforts (Hartley, 2008; Roberts, 2007; Silverman, 2010; South Africa, 2007). The researcher believes that contributions to the subject field of labour relations may lead to a greater sensitisation of the needs of vulnerable groups of workers in the South African labour market and the ever-present need to facilitate effective employment relations.

Furthermore, the outcomes and relevance of this research will also extend to a broader non-academic audience (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). It is envisaged that through a filter-down effect the empowerment spin-offs of knowledge gained and reported could be used to influence legislation and policies applicable to the domestic worker sector. The participants were given a voice through this research study to express their experiences and opinions, and to raise an awareness of their lived experiences in the labour legislative context of the domestic worker sector (Denscombe, 2003).

As a researcher I have a sincere interest in and passion for the phenomenon under investigation. With regard to the possible negative consequences associated with a high level of personal involvement when choosing a research topic, Rudestam and Newton (2007) point out that this vested interest could nevertheless very well lead to rigour in the field of study, and manifest in heightened engagement which will generate new insights for the researcher as well as for the audience.

### **Chapter Layout**

Attention is again drawn to the fact that this study represents a PhD research project through publication. Each chapter constitutes a separate, but interrelated journal article. The golden thread that runs throughout the entire document are the voiced experiences of domestic workers by means of which the researcher and the participants together co-constructed meaning.

#### **Chapter 1:**

Article 1 will provide an introduction to, background of and motivation for the study, research objectives and design, strategies employed to ensure quality data and ethical considerations.

## Chapter 2:

Article 2 will provide a detailed methodological reflection of the co-construction of meaning within the South African domestic worker sector.

## Chapter 3:

Article 3 will reflect upon the work-life cycle and future directedness of domestic workers within the South African labour context.

## Chapter 4:

Article 4 will explore the potential for employees flourishing within a positive employment relationship between the domestic worker and the employer.

## Chapter 5:

Article 5 will advocate labour legislative awareness as a potential empowerment tool within the South African domestic worker sector.

## Chapter 6:

The overarching conclusions, limitations and recommendations arising from the study will be presented.

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## Chapter 2

### Article 2

#### **This article has been accepted for publication:**

Marais, C., & Van Wyk, C. de W. (2014). Methodological reflection on the co-construction of meaning within the South African domestic worker sector: Challenging the notion of “voicelessness”. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(17), September.

## **Co-Construction of Meaning within the South African Domestic Worker Sector: A Methodological Reflection**

### **Abstract**

Globally the domestic worker sector is characterised by a sense of “voicelessness”. Given the centrality of participant engagement within the interpretivist paradigm, accessing those with firsthand knowledge of the phenomena under investigation proved challenging. This is attributed to the institutionalised nature of the sector and the initial outsider status of the researchers. This article presents a transparent account of the methodological considerations that guided the co-construction of meaning within this context. Two thousand leaflets were distributed. By describing the intended study, inviting participation and providing assurances of confidentiality an initial rapport was established. Purposive, respondent-driven self-sampling resulted in 20 female participants employed as domestic workers. The pilot study indicated the value of using metaphors while exploring tentative topics. An interview guide facilitated the exploration of key concepts during our engagement. In-depth interviews were transcribed and analysed through an inductive process of data reduction. Rich, dense descriptive verbatim accounts of participants’ lived realities confirmed data saturation. Emerging themes confirmed that the South African domestic worker sector is far from being voiceless if we are willing to listen. Making these voices heard constitutes a vital step in future efforts to empower this neglected sector of the labour market.

**Keywords:** phenomenology, research protocol, participant engagement, qualitative pilot study, meaning making, in-depth interview, domestic worker

Participant engagement is crucial in qualitative research. Recognised as important research instruments, individual participants become co-constructors of the creation of meaning. Despite this assigned status, the value of establishing suitable research contacts before the beginning of the actual study is often underestimated in the research process (Witzel & Reiter, 2012). By exploring the lived realities of domestic workers as the overarching objective of this study, we became aware of the unique challenges involved in finding willing participants from this sector of the South African labour force.

Marginalised and undervalued globally (ILO, 2013), the domestic worker sector is characterised by a sense of “voicelessness” among its members. Institutionalised over many decades within the South African context, this voicelessness is keenly portrayed in the artwork of world-renowned artist Mary Sibande (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Silent Symphony**



*Figure 1. A depiction of the institutionalised limitations imposed upon generations of Black South African women who worked as domestic workers inspired by the artist's as well as the country's historical context. Adopted from the artwork entitled “Silent Symphony”, archival print (Edition of 10), 90 x 60 cm (Sibande, 2010). Copyright 2010 by GalleryMOMO.*

Sibande's upbringing was within the context of a family with a generational history of domestic workers. Her alter ego, Sophie-Ntombikayise (see Figure 1), provides a poignant and responsive social commentary on the daily realities faced by thousands of Black women within this work context (Balboa-Pöysti, 2011).

Throughout the ages, women, especially Black women, have suffered from historically entrenched stereotyping and myths (Few, Stephens, & Rouse-Arnett, 2003). Recognising the perceived vulnerability associated with this segment of the South African labour force, the researchers felt that excluding them from their research efforts would mean, "ignoring those whom society needs to understand and serve" (Sieber & Tolich, 2013, pp. 12–14). The research participants therefore were viewed as "historically, culturally and politically constructed entities with diverse identities" (Faircloth, 2012, p. 275). This view thus influenced how we conceived, approached, accessed and engaged with these individuals for data-generation purposes.

Employed within the context of a private household, domestic workers are faced with the complexities associated with an individualised employer-employee relationship characterised by power differentials. This apparent vulnerability and disempowerment associated with their employment relationship influenced our data-gathering efforts even further (Ali & Kelly, 2012, p. 69). While wanting to tell their side of the story, the ever-present fear of losing their job should their employer become aware of their participation in a study of this nature inhibited the target population's readiness to engage. Accessing these silent voices thus proved to be a difficult endeavour.

According to Clark (2010), the development of a positive research relationship is crucial for a successful research engagement. This relationship has the potential to empower participants both at an individual level and at a collective level (Clark, 2010, pp. 404–416) when sharing their lived realities. Moreover, the establishment of a personal connection with potential participants enhances individuals' willingness to share their experiences with the researchers (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This implies the need for crossing the boundaries of engagement that transcend the mere acceptance by conversational partners in order to develop an understanding of their lived realities, which in this study differed markedly from our own worlds (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 75). Dimensions of race, colour, gender, status and power were acknowledged and undoubtedly influenced participant engagement from the first

moment of establishing initial contact and were taken into consideration until the final write-up was concluded (Bloch, 2007; Few et al., 2003; Razon & Ross, 2012).

Awareness linked to a specific phenomenon is the product of contextual factors (Griffin & May, 2012) which implies the need to access those individuals that have firsthand knowledge of the phenomena under investigation. An active partnership of engagement between us, as the driving force of the research effort, and the participants who contributed to the study thus became essential. It was therefore important to understand and account for a number of different aspects that could potentially impede our interaction. With this in mind, we pursued an approach to participant recruitment and engagement whereby domestic workers were treated with courtesy and respect which in turn diluted the relevance of gender, race and social class as dimensions of power (Gillham, 2010). To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, this article will present a detailed and transparent account of considerations and actions taken while engaging with this largely invisible sector (Cock, 2011; Grossman, 2011) of the South African labour market.

## **Method**

The historical roots of qualitative research (Chilisa, 2012; Denscombe, 2011; Eatough, 2012; Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2012; Schwandt, 2003; Smith & Eatough, 2012) bear testimony to the relevance of interpretivism as the chosen paradigm for this study. Research within the interpretivist paradigm aims to understand the complexity of uncovering the meaning associated with the human experience as voiced by participants (Hammond & Wellington, 2013; Loseke, 2013, pp. 22–24). Studying human action as inherently meaningful is therefore directed at understanding and interpreting social actions (Schwandt, 2003, pp. 296–297). The practical implementation of this notion is evident in how participants were identified, approached, recruited, interviewed and understood as detailed below.

### **Sampling**

#### **Initial recruitment efforts: Gaining access.**

Participation is influenced by the recruitment methods used in a research project (Hill & Nutt Williams, 2012). In order to persuade a vulnerable group such as members of the domestic worker sector to participate in the study, the context needed to be carefully considered. Locating and recruiting such individuals often requires some detective work

(Rubin & Rubin, 2012) such as making use of a gatekeeper (Byrne, 2012). Within the domestic worker sector, this gatekeeper is often the employer. Given the sensitive nature of the employment relationship in this sector, we did not make direct contact with any employers nor was any domestic worker approached at her place of employment during this study.

Building rapport starts from the first moment of making contact with the participant. Recognising that domestic workers are connected to a wider society, we opted for a flexible approach to the recruitment efforts. Deschaux-Beaume (2012) describes this as “real-life” recruitment characterised by researcher mobility in contrast to the more traditional recruitment strategies. With the aim of “getting a foot in the door”, 2000 leaflets were handed out over a period of two months. These recruitment letters (Kaiser, 2009) were personally distributed at taxi ranks, on public transport and in passing within the geographically demarcated area of the study. Domestic workers, passengers and members of the public took the leaflets for distribution within their broader social networks.

The leaflets served as an “introductory letter” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) aiming to create a subjective interest in the focus of the study among potential participants. Affording them the option of making an informed choice, volunteers were requested to telephone the researchers in order to indicate their willingness to participate in the study. Englander (2012) alludes to the value of a brief preliminary meeting with the research participant prior to the commencement of the actual interview. The ability to establish, gain and maintain access to participants can affect all stages of the interviewer-interviewee relationship (Punch, 2011). Thus, despite the fact that most telephonic responses related to an urgent need to obtain employment or access legal advice related to labour issues within the sector, potential participants were recruited in this manner. Demographic diversity can also potentially influence participants’ perceptions of the researchers, the development of a trusting relationship and their willingness to participate in the study. Obtaining individuals to participate in the study proved challenging. Participants cited a fear of losing their jobs as the main reason for not participating in the study during the time of the initial telephonic interaction and the actual interview.

### **Participant recruitment.**

The outcome of the research findings is evidently dependent upon those selected as participants (Rowley, 2012; Schutt, 2012). The overarching purpose of recruiting participants is to gather rich information rather than merely recruiting as many participants as possible (Layder, 2013). In terms of the established epistemology of this study, the collaboration between the researcher and those being researched was viewed as a crucial consideration in all sampling decisions (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Curtis & Curtis, 2011; Punch, 2011). As a result, relationships were required that were responsive in nature and allowed for fluidity during participant engagement (Gillham, 2010).

Purposive sampling is especially relevant in the case of “hard-to-find” populations (Bernard, 2013). As sampling method it seeks to maximise the depth and richness of the data generated to address the research purpose (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Purposive, respondent-driven self-sampling was carried out to illustrate the phenomena under investigation. Inclusion criteria reflected the capacity of the participant to inform the research outcome (Quinlan, 2011). This implied membership of the population under investigation (South Africa, 2002), the ability to articulate experiences relating to the phenomena and a willingness to engage with the researchers (Kirkevold & Bergland, 2007). Respondent-driven self-sampling reflected such a willingness to participate in the study (Daniel, 2012; Schensul, 2012; Seale, 2012).

Although there is no universally agreed-upon sample size, according to Mears (2012), sample size is relative to the data being collected. There is growing consensus that 10 to 20 knowledgeable participants are enough to uncover and understand lived realities (Bernard, 2013; Smith & Eatough, 2008). Quinlan (2011) describes a sample size of 20 as substantial. A total of 20 female participants employed as domestic workers, as defined by the legislative stipulations of Sectoral Determination 7 (South Africa, 2002), ultimately took part in the study. Participants ranged in age from 27 to 59 years. The average schooling level reported by participants was grade six, which is equivalent to a primary education. Although at times conversations were perceived as generating less noteworthy content in some cases, this could only be concluded upon closer analysis (Franklin, 2012). Despite the limited formal education among the members of this sector, this did not limit the richness of their shared experiences. The ultimate guide for the sample size, however, was the attainment of data saturation, when no new insights could be gained through continued exploration of the

phenomena. By the 14<sup>th</sup> interview the data saturation point was reached, and an additional two interviews were conducted to reconfirm the notion of data saturation (Quinlan, 2011).

## **Data Collection**

### **Interviewing as a data-gathering instrument.**

In terms of the epistemological approach of this study, interview data represents but one of many possible representations of the world. The meaning is socially constructed through human activity and the agency which creates the social action (Borer & Fontana, 2012; Hammond & Wellington, 2013). Gibson and Brown (2009) describe this process as the creation of an analytically focussed discourse that provides insight into the lived experiences of those being studied. Regarded as an “ancient act”, interviewing entails a meeting between two persons during which information and ideas are exchanged through questions and responses (Janesick, 2010, pp. 45–46). Glesne (2011, pp. 118–120) extends this analogy further by describing interviewing as a complex art of simultaneous happenings focussed on learning through dialogue. Delineated as a “socially grounded information source” (Deschoux-Beaume, 2012, p. 103), this interactive exchange results in communication and the joint construction of meaning about a specific topic which Bloch (2007) argues is a process of data generation rather than data collection.

Interviews as research instruments are regarded as appropriate for engaging with disadvantaged groups (Franklin, 2012) whose voices and experiences have been silenced in the past (Silverman, 2011). In-depth interviews are situated within the semi-structure part of the interview continuum (Franklin, 2012; Smith & Eatough, 2012). They involve a one-on-one interaction between a professional researcher and a consenting research participant (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2013). Mears (2012, pp. 170–171) warns against the assumption that interviewing is easy. Differing from common conversations, in-depth interviews necessitate a purposeful engagement aimed at facilitating “insightful analysis and defensible findings”. Although question-asking is central to any interview (Punch, 2011, p. 151), according to Franklin (2012, p. 191), interviews are “social acts, intersubjective and thereby often unpredictable”. This real-time social interaction provided the researchers with an opportunity to follow up on and probe interesting issues raised while generating rich verbal accounts “without imposing any prior categorisation which might limit the field of enquiry” (Punch, 2011, p. 147). Accessing meaning was central to participant engagement.

For this purpose the interviews were developmental in nature, questions could emerge, and even change as the situation dictated (Lapan et al., 2012). Understanding the phenomena under investigation depended upon this in-depth exploration of participants' personal accounts of their lived realities (Denscombe, 2011, pp. 99–100) and enhanced the overall trustworthiness of the study.

### **Pre-pilot and pilot stage.**

The literature warns against rushing into data collection activities unplanned (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Franklin, 2012; Gillham, 2010; Janesick, 2010). Despite this warning, we found the literature related to conducting a qualitative pilot study to be insufficiently descriptive and non-directional in nature. Dealing with our feelings of self-doubt and uncertainty as emerging qualitative researchers thus proved challenging during this phase. Despite the developmental nature of the chosen methodology, Leedy and Ormrod (2013) emphasise that qualitative research requires substantial preparation and planning. Moreover, Richards and Morse (2013, pp. 133–134) emphasise that interviewing necessitates “extraordinary interpersonal skills, a firm focus on the project’s purposes, and solid theoretical knowledge”. Interviewing as a research instrument therefore requires an awareness of the various sub-phenomena that could affect the outcome (Bloch, 2007). Since social science research is seldom conducted in settings designed for research (Gillham, 2010), consideration had to be given to how the research topic will be embraced by participants (Kim, 2010). For this reason, Gillham calls for a pre-pilot phase during which careful planning shapes the trial run of the project. Glesne (2011, pp. 109–110) describes this pre-pilot stage as a dynamic four-way interplay between the researcher, the tentative topic, the interview questions and the participant.

An initial interview guide was developed and refined by converting the research focus into questions that were meaningful for those being interviewed (Gillham, 2010; Hammond & Wellington, 2013). Questions asked during this guided conversation related to the particular context in which the phenomena were experienced in an adaptive and flexible manner (Englander, 2012; Layder, 2013). The interview guide should not be viewed as a scripted list of questions but rather provided a case-centric adaptive and open format to prompt the exploration of the primary areas of interest of the study (Bloch, 2007; Curtis & Curtis, 2011; Mears, 2012; Rowley, 2012; Smith & Eatough, 2008).

Three one-on-one and one simultaneous (two-on-one) pilot interviews were conducted with five participants in diverse social settings. Each interview was subsequently self-transcribed and analysed by the interviewer prior to conducting the next interview to allow sufficient time for reflection and emerging issues to be fed back into further data-collection efforts (Cresswell, Morrison, Sheikh, Kalra, & Coyne, 2012; Mears, 2012; Silverman, 2011). In addition, the data generated during the pilot study was not discarded for final analysis purposes since the data retained its value within this qualitative research effort (Bazeley, 2013). Although language could be viewed as a potential conversational barrier (Mears, 2012), an initial misinterpretation of one of the questions asked during the second pilot interview alluded to the application value of metaphors during participant engagement which added an additional dimension to this knowledge-creation process. Interviews were conducted in either English or Afrikaans, two of the official languages in South Africa (South Africa, 2012). Interview questioning was initially guided by both “upward and downward laddering” techniques enabling the participants to share their perceptions and accounts of their individual meaning-making processes (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2012, pp. 129–130; Zikmund et al., 2013). Confronted by the ever-present fear of possible job losses, as articulated by the participants, a re-envisioned approach to obtain informed consent was designed (Kaiser, 2009, pp. 9–10). Alleviating uncertainties expressed by participants in relation to the purpose of the research, their role, the consequences of their interaction with the researchers, freedom of choice and ultimately confidentiality became the focus.

The pilot study provided a “dress rehearsal” for the actual study in an “abbreviated form” (Chenail, 2011). It does not claim to solve all problems encountered in the research, but rather provided an effective way of assessing the feasibility of the planned research protocol while contending with the realities faced within the field (Aspers, 2009; Kim, 2010). The pilot study provided an insightful learning experience. This was an empowering, interactive and humbling developmental experience for the authors (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Bazeley, 2013; Bernard, 2013; Pezalla, Pettigrew, & Miller-Day, 2012). These initial interviews represented great leaps forward in terms of the researchers’ ability in skilled engagement (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012). This in turn facilitated the development of an initial understanding of the concepts and theories held by the participants, the meanings they ascribed to them and how this informed their actions (Kociszewski, 2003; Maxwell, 2013).

## **Data Generation**

### **Interview design.**

Data gathering from one person at a time is regarded as a defining characteristic of an in-depth interview (Curtis & Curtis, 2011; Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Hammond & Wellington, 2013; Morehouse, 2012). As a core ingredient of social research, interviews usually occur between two persons (Franklin, 2012). Notwithstanding this notion, the tenure of the interview process is primarily the privilege of the interviewer as research instrument (Pezalla et al., 2012). This reflects an unequal distribution of power within the communicative relationship shaped during the interview (Henning, Van Rensburg, & Smit, 2005). The need for flexibility in the way the interview engagement was structured became evident during the pilot study. This was directly related to the entrenched characteristics of the South African domestic worker sector and the fear of losing their jobs that many participants expressed as a result of their willingness to verbalise their lived realities.

Chilisa (2012, pp. 204, 276–277) debates the relevance of conventional interview methods when exploring postcolonial social environments. Traditionally shaped by individualistic, westernised assumptions, the relevance of “communities’ togetherness, cooperation and connectedness” is devalued. African women, Chilisa further comments, theorise about their lived experiences within a broader sociocultural context shaped by the principle of Ubuntu (being-for-self-and-others) as an expression of their existence in relation to others (Murithi, 2006). Consideration was given to this sense of collectiveness and support among members of the target population while refining the interview format.

Interviews need not just take place on a one-to-one basis. Glesne (2011) alludes to the possibility of one or more interviewers and one or more interviewees participating in an interview. Easterby-Smith et al. (2012) extend this notion by describing group interviews as “loosely structured street conversations”. These conversations generally refer to the researcher working with several individuals simultaneously (Punch, 2011). Data generation takes place from the interaction between participants within this context (Bell, 2010; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Focus group interviews and group interviews are increasingly used interchangeably in literature. A defining characteristic of these methods is that the researcher needs to function more as a moderator or facilitator for the conversation than as an interviewer (Punch, 2011). This elicits a rich and broader range of experiences and

differing opinions on the interview topic constructed through member interaction (Byrne, 2012; Carey & Asbury, 2012). Multiparty interviewing, on the other hand, involves two or more interviewers or two or more interviewees simultaneously (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, pp. 178–180). Multiparty interviews, however, have the potential for confusion and intimidation due to the complicated nature of the interaction. Despite this, such a joint interview can provide important value in its potential for new direction as voiced by those interviewed.

We, however, opted for what we refer to as a simultaneous interview format, in other words, a two-on-one interview. Although more than one participant was present during these interviews, this cannot be classified as a multiple-person or group interview since the focus was not on the interaction between the participants (Beitin, 2012). The interviewer remained the focal point of the communication and participants were interacted with as individuals, and not as a group, in order to explore their individual meaning-making (Denscombe, 2011; Smith & Eatough, 2008). This is evident from the distinct voice of each participant throughout the interview interaction and resultant transcripts.

#### **Interview setting.**

Participant engagement refers to more than the mere facilitation of a question and answer session. The interview setting is often the result of practical considerations rather than analytical (Gibson & Brown, 2009). Convenience, availability and appropriateness are key concerns when setting up an interview (Glesne, 2011). Moreover, the potential impact of the research for both those researched and the researchers themselves was a deciding consideration (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, & Liamputtong, 2007). With this in mind, scheduled interviews accommodated the personal preferences and availability of the participants as far as possible. This implied meeting after working hours, during their day off or alternatively over weekends. Interviews took place in a variety of physical settings; these included the domestic workers' own home or room, coffee shops, restaurants, conference venues and the first author's dining room. Access to relatively quiet environments was prioritised, not only to enhance the digital quality of the data recordings, but also to strengthen rapport-building efforts and reduce any perceived fear of victimisation by their employers. Seating arrangements were informal and the participants were encouraged to adapt them according to their personal preferences. Participants were familiarised with the data-recording equipment prior to the commencement of the interview, in particular with the lapel microphone which was used to amplify the audio quality (Glesne, 2011). In some cases,

a friend—another fellow domestic worker—accompanied the participant to provide moral support but these individuals did not opt to share their meaning-making experiences and thus they were not noted as participants.

### **Interview framework.**

The initial interview interaction established a rapport between the interviewer and interviewee. The purpose and scope of the research was clearly stated and explained. Participants' concerns and questions were addressed prior to obtaining the signed consent forms from them. Data collection began by compiling a written account of participants' demographical information in field notes.

A non-descriptive and developmental interview guide provided a loose structure for questions around the developing themes (Bell, 2010; Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Informed by the pilot study, the use of metaphors facilitated the accessibility and crystallisation of participants' lived realities in an engaging manner (Bazeley, 2013, pp. 117–118; Zikmund et al., 2013). Participants were encouraged to share their life stories without fear of prejudice around the following three broad metaphorical questions:

- If I were a young person sitting at your feet today asking you to tell me about your life as a domestic worker, what would you share with me?
- If you could write a letter to your employer today, what would the contents be?
- If you got on a bus and someone asked you about the labour laws affecting domestic workers in South Africa, what can you tell them?

As a “sensitising framework” the interview guide enhanced thematic engagement with the participants (Witzel & Reiter, 2012). The process of empathetically engaging through ongoing dialogue brought about the co-construction of meaning. Griffin and May (2012) describe this relationship as “intersubjective” in nature. Engagement during the interview was furthermore always courteous and respectful in nature. If requested, questions were re-phrased or explained. Probing facilitated clarification of shared information during the interview (Gillham, 2010). Creswell (2013), however, underlines the value of being a good listener instead of a frequent speaker during an interview. Field notes were drafted shortly after an interview was concluded to ensure continuous engagement. Interviews were characterised by diverse outcomes; in some cases participants entered into the discussion with a predetermined agenda and in other cases establishing rapport proved to be arduous. Despite

this, rich and dense descriptive accounts of their daily realities as domestic workers arose throughout the process of data generation.

A de-briefing conversation concluded each interview, focussing on the participant's feelings and needs that might have arisen as a result of our interaction. The value of their contribution was expressed and their availability for future engagement explored. Although the literature encourages the dissemination of the research findings to participants as an act of courtesy upon completion of the study (Bell, 2010; Kaiser, 2009), several participants declined this offer. On average, the interviews lasted 31 minutes with the shortest being 18 minutes and the longest being 62 minutes.

## **Analysis**

### **Data Analysis**

#### **Preparing raw data for analysis.**

Transcription is a time-consuming process, which needs to take place systematically and consistently. As an important part of the research process and not just a mere technical detail (McLellan, MacQueen, & Neidig, 2003), transcription is largely dependent on the quality of the recorded interview. A naturalised approach to data transcription facilitated a detailed verbatim written account of the shared meaning-making process (Layder, 2013; Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005). Once the transcriptions had been made, they were interrogated for accuracy by listening to the recorded interview again and reading the transcription simultaneously (Tilley, 2003).

#### **Coding data and determining themes.**

Qualitative data is non-numerical in nature and valued for its' richness, depth and complexity (Quinlan, 2011). This implies the needs for generating thick descriptions and analytical induction which stem from an observation and not a pre-established truth or assumption (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Described as a multistep, sense-making endeavour (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch, 2011), the actual coding process forms an integral part of data analysis. Chenail (2012b) describes the value of reading transcripts line by line but cautions against this as a coding strategy. Instead, he advocates the identification of meaningful, undivided units of analysis.

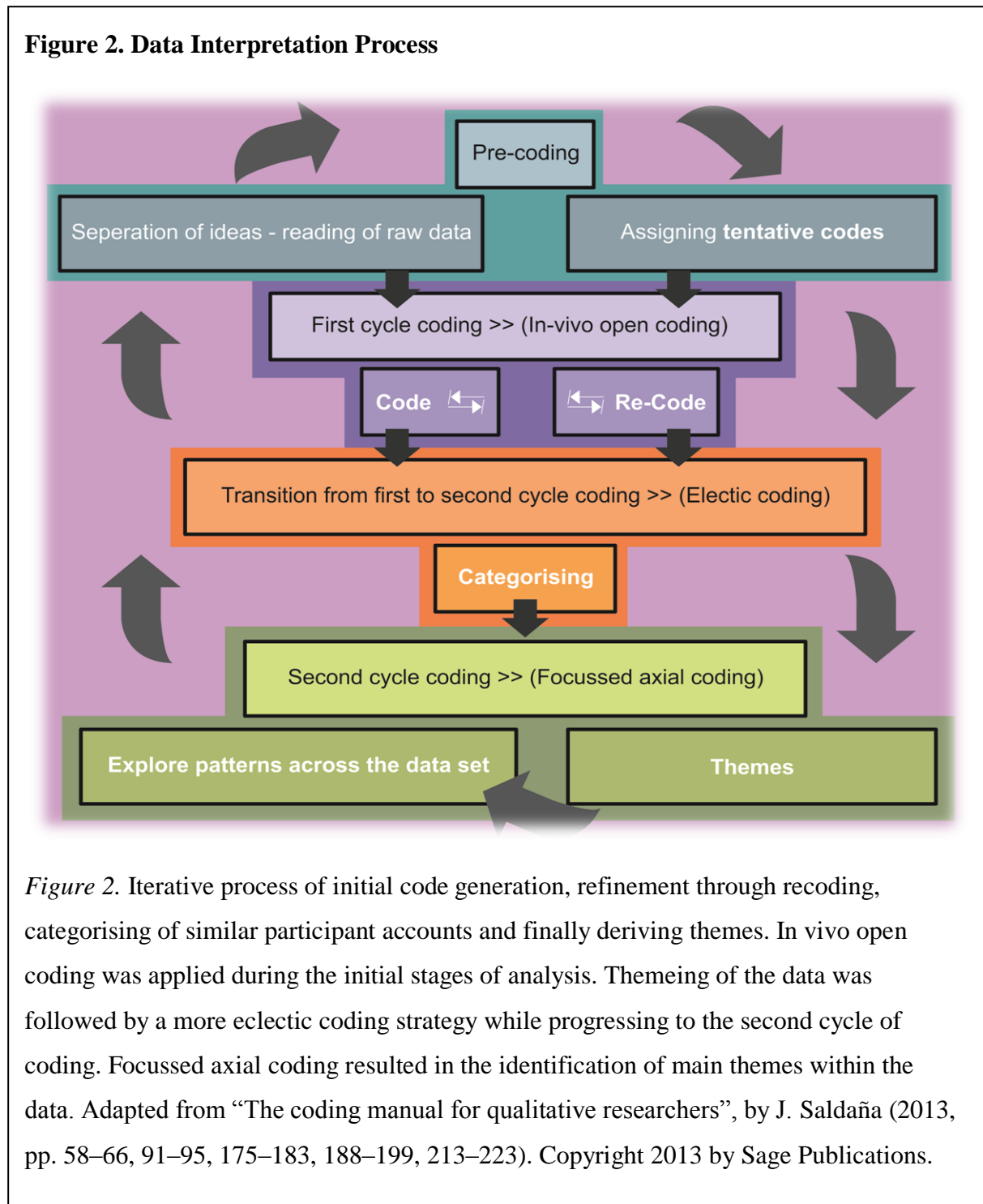
An interview produces a particular representation of participants' views and opinions (Bloch, 2007). Moreover, an open inductive approach is needed to make sense of the interview outcome (Hammond & Wellington, 2013; Harding, 2013; Huy, 2012; Miles, Hunberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Smith & Eatough, 2012). It is also important for the researcher to become acquainted with the data recordings, transcript content and field notes to develop an emerged overview of the accounts of the participants of their lived realities (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012). Through this approach the data was allowed to "speak for itself" during the early stages of data analysis (Rivas, 2012) and codes emerged from the data (Nieuwenhuis, 2011).

Data analysis is already a consideration at the conceptualisation phase of any phenomenological study. Characterised as a dynamic process (Witzel & Reiter, 2012), data analysis prompts deeper thinking (Bazeley, 2009; Bergin, 2011). Gibson and Brown (2009, pp. 88–89) regard analysis as a "lived feature" of semi-structured interviews. Initially we felt overwhelmed and hemmed in by the vast amount of raw data collected during the participant engagement stage. We attribute this to the emerging nature of our engagement within the qualitative paradigm. Huy (2012) and Storey (2008) acknowledge that knowing how and where to start constitutes significant challenges during the data analysis stage of any research.

Saldaña (2013) describes coding as a value-adding, transitional process which facilitates the creative movement from the initial analysis to thematic abstractions from the data (Richards & Morse, 2013, p. 151). Coding requires the researcher to have an open mind, especially during the early stages of analysis while assigning meaning to raw data (Bazeley, 2013). Layder (2013) emphasises the value of generating as many new ideas and codes as necessary to methodically reflect the data during this stage. Attentive reading of each transcript in conjunction with an initial process of "jotting" as described by Miles et al. (2014, pp. 93–95) characterised our initial coding efforts. This involved analytical handwritten field notes documenting initial thoughts and understanding as we interrogated the transcripts. These jotted ideas also informed the codes assigned to sections of transcribed data which could refer to as little as a single word or as much as an entire paragraph (Fade & Swift, 2011).

Interview transcripts were subsequently imported into MAXQDA10, a qualitative data analysis software programme which required skilled engagement (MAXQDA, 1989–2013; Schutt, 2012). As a data management tool, MAXQDA10 proved vital in allowing the

voice of the participants to be heard. Coding as a “circular process” allowed us to revisit the raw data “based upon theoretical findings and current research literature” (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011, p. 138). According to Bazeley (2013), the never-ending nature of coding reflects the need to code and recode until all the categories are saturated (see Figure 2).



*Figure 2.* Iterative process of initial code generation, refinement through recoding, categorising of similar participant accounts and finally deriving themes. In vivo open coding was applied during the initial stages of analysis. Themeing of the data was followed by a more eclectic coding strategy while progressing to the second cycle of coding. Focussed axial coding resulted in the identification of main themes within the data. Adapted from “The coding manual for qualitative researchers”, by J. Saldaña (2013, pp. 58–66, 91–95, 175–183, 188–199, 213–223). Copyright 2013 by Sage Publications.

This circular transition, illustrated in Figure 2, implies a labour-intensive engagement with and emersion into the raw data. The study's dependability was enhanced through the establishment of a detailed audit trail. This implied retrievability of assigned codes, sections of data and analytic memos while creating the transition from the initial raw data to an interpretative thematic understanding of the phenomena. The seminal work by Tesch (1990) describes thematic analysis as an interpretative process aimed at revealing the phenomena under investigation. A slow and rigorous process of emersion into the data facilitated the crystallisation of shared understanding across participants' voiced experiences (Butler-Kisber, 2010). Warning against the dangers associated with deficiency or exuberance during the analytic process, Chenail (2012a) advocates allowing the data to say what the data says. This was a constant consideration during the entire data analysis process as illustrated in Figure 2.

A coding consistency check was done by an external, independent qualitative coder (Thomas, 2003). Not only was data saturation confirmed, but also the rich, dense and descriptive nature of the data was noted while assessing the trustworthiness of the data analysis. Due to the limited scope of this article, code frequencies will not be reported. Instead, refined themes supported by data are noted (Fade & Swift, 2011). The three main themes related to:

- flourishing within a reciprocal caring employment relationship,
- work-life cycle and future directiveness; and
- awareness of labour legislation as an empowerment tool.

As naturalists, we did not ignore the literature to date. The aim was, however, to allow the themes to emerge from the data generated rather than being "overinfluenced" by what is already known (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The open-minded inductive approach of this study sought external validation through a process of purposeful literature engagement and control at the end of the study (Hammond & Wellington, 2013). The literature support, which illustrates the inseparability of theory and practice, is aimed at putting the research into context of what is already known and published about the phenomena under investigation (Denscombe, 2010; Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007). Gallagher (2012, p. 70) describes this confirmation experience as the "phenomenological nod". Thus what was previously not confirmed but can be recognised is confirmed in this way. The

findings relating to the main themes stated above as well as issues related to the trustworthiness and quality of the data analysis process will be presented in three follow-up articles.

### **Researchers' positionality**

Qualitative research is researcher-dependent which necessitates both initiator and facilitator skills as part of the researcher's repertory (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Zikmund et al., 2013). Monitoring researcher assumptions throughout the research process is, therefore, vital (Mears, 2012). This constant reflexivity is multi-layered; it encompasses the need for epistemological, ontological and methodological reflection at each stage of the research process (Haynes, 2012; Tracy, 2010). Witzel and Reiter (2012) regard the researcher's readiness to become involved in the participants' perspective as a crucial element while co-constructing meaning through interaction. We had to take a step back and purposefully re-consider our own implicit assumptions through critical self-scrutiny at every stage of the study (Bloch, 2007). According to Few et al. (2003, p. 210), there is a need for researchers to reconcile their "personal motivation for conducting research with a specific population and the extent of accountability owed to the population studied" through this process of self-reflexivity. A researcher's motivation to engage in a specific research study is thus never a naïve choice (Caelli, Ray, & Mill, 2003). Acknowledging the possibility of researcher bias (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012), we opted for an empathetic and "radical listening" style characterised by honesty and integrity as advocated by Clough and Nutbrown (2012, pp. 99–100).

A mutual relationship can outlast the research period (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This is due, in part, to the complexity embedded in human social life while producing analytical accounts of social phenomena (Hammersley, 2008). Bloch (2007) cautions against the transition that can take place where a good rapport has been established during the interview, and this then transmutes into a counselling session. Moreover, the accounts shared during some situations can be so painful that it becomes impossible at times to maintain a neutral façade (Bernard, 2013). The physical and emotional toll this could potentially take on the researcher self should not be disregarded (Denscombe, 2010; Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, & Liamputtong, 2008; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Bearing in mind the sacrifices participants had to make in order to take part in the study, we were confronted by the question of reciprocity within this research relationship (Clark, 2010). Having transcended the position of an outsider

to that of an insider during the course of our engagement (Berger, 2013) we had to consider what would happen to the participants once the researcher left (Ali & Kelly, 2012). In this regards, Denscombe (2010) airs a word of caution based on the implications of prolonged relationships necessitating personal involvement. These considerations thus necessitated a sensitivity to the broader social context of the participants throughout our engagement (Schutt, 2012).

Sincerity, as an end goal, was pursued as we entered the lives of others (Dickson-Swift et al., 2007; Tracy, 2010). Subscribing to the notion that the research interview should not be mistaken for a therapeutic setting (Gillham, 2010), we overtly stated the purpose of the research and the researchers' role within this context. Upon completion of the research interview, participants were presented with a copy of Sectoral Determination 7: Domestic worker sector (South Africa, 2002) detailing their rights as domestic workers. Consideration was also given to any questions they had with regard to their current employment conditions. The researcher-participant relationship did, however, not extend beyond the research period.

### **Ethical Considerations during Participant Engagement**

Underpinned by morals, ethics is an integral part of every step of the research process within a specific research context (Alderson & Marrow, 2011; Biggam, 2012; Hammond & Wellington, 2013, pp. 59–60; Silverman, 2011). Professional integrity within this study related to the need for and commitment to ethically conducted research (Ali & Kelly, 2012; Harding, 2013, pp. 24–27; Holt, 2012, p. 102). As an interwoven aspect of each step in the research process, this implied a moral responsibility on the part of the researchers towards the participants and future social research efforts.

Embedded in the notion of voluntary participation is that there is no obligation for any individual to participate in a research project. Seeking informed consent during the initial stages of participant engagement provided the participants with an opportunity to query the meaning and implications of their participation (Bell, 2010). Carey and Asbury (2012) argue that incentivising participation in the research project should be planned with the target population in mind. Financial reimbursement was thus limited to the travelling costs incurred by the domestic workers to meet the researchers.

## **Conclusion**

The application value of qualitative research for future decision-making is imbedded in an appropriate design, execution and reporting of the study (Tong, Sainsbury, & Craig, 2007). “Methodological mastery” proved to be vital at each stage of this research study and guided participant engagement throughout the study (Huy, 2012, p. 285). This shared relationship bridged the “space between” those being researched and those doing the research through circled engagement (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). As co-creators of knowledge both the researchers and the participants entered into a trusting relationship (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The vulnerability inherently associated with the domestic worker sector is not transient in nature. The challenge was to move beyond the mere gathering of facts to allowing the participants’ “authentic voice” to be heard (Atkins & Wallace, 2012, p. 88). Engaging those involved in a specific phenomenon can challenge entrenched assumptions and ways of doing by portraying ongoing social processes. The South African domestic worker sector, far from being voiceless if we are only willing to listen, provides researchers with a wealth of investigation possibilities. Making these voices heard constitutes a critical step in future empowerment efforts within this sector of the labour market.

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## Chapter 3

### Article 3

#### **This article is in press:**

Marais, C., & Van Wyk, C. de W. (In press). Future directiveness within the South African domestic workers' work-life cycle: Considering exit strategies. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*.

## **Future Directiveness within the South African Domestic Workers' Work-Live Cycle: Considering exit strategies**

### **Abstract**

The pervasiveness of domestic work in the South African context has led to a nationally accepted figure of those engaged in the sector. The question is why do women enter into such an undervalued job situation, remain in it, and furthermore, are they ultimately able to exit this sector? A nonlinear process was applied in the current study during which the sectoral engagement of domestic workers was contextualised as a transitional work-life cycle characterised by impoverishment, limited alternatives, an acceptance of their job context and future directedness. Individual transition through these phases is the result of a unique set of circumstances. Adopting a life-cycle stance, the researchers explored participants' lived experiences of their work-life cycle. An interpretivist research design was used to examine the direct subjective perceptions of social phenomena. Non-probability respondent-driven self-sampling was employed to purposefully select 20 female domestic workers. Participants mostly came from a family background with a long family history of sectoral involvement, especially with regard to their mothers or grandmothers.

Dense, non-numerical data was generated through in-depth interviewing. Inductive data analysis was conducted with the aid of MAXQDA. The findings confirmed the existence of an institutionalised culture of engagement within the sector perpetuated from one generation to the next. Hardship and an urgent need for survival leave many without any choice—entering and remaining within the sector is often the only option. Despite negative societal perceptions of the sector, these workers take pride in their work and view their engagement as an enabling tool to better their future prospects and that of their families, even though these prospects may be limited. Attempts to exit the sector are unsuccessful due in part to their limited formal education and skills repertoire. Domestic workers are thus entrapped within a never-ending cycle of sectoral engagement, and the possibility of exiting the sector remains “but a dream” for many.

**Keywords:** work-life cycle, domestic worker, poverty, entrapment, phenomenology

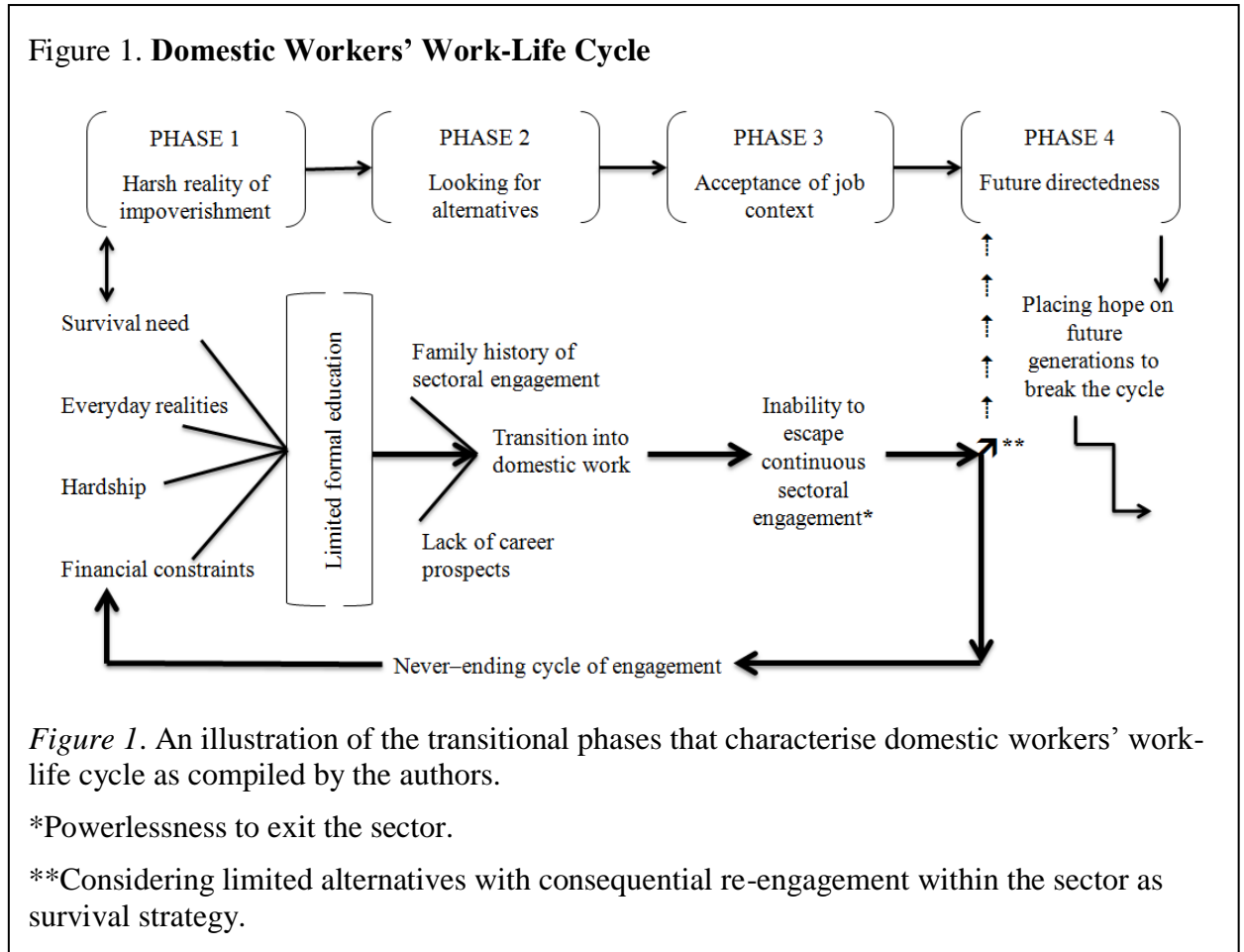
## **Sectoral Context**

“Domestic work is decent work” (Witbooi, 2011). This is a refrain that echoes throughout the world when there are calls for domestic workers to be afforded better employment conditions. Admittedly a great deal has been done to improve the general conditions within the sector. Gratitude has to be expressed for the efforts of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the various countries across the globe that have ratified numerous ILO conventions and proclaimed legislative protection for this vulnerable sector of the world’s labour force (Cohen & Moodley, 2012; ILO, 2011, 2013; Tomei & Belser, 2011). Ally (2011), however, stresses the ever present need for all sectoral role players to remain vigilant about claims of progress and the need to extend this protection even further. Within the South African context, domestic workers are currently afforded protection by the stipulations of Sectoral Determination 7 which legislates minimum wages and sectoral employment standards (South Africa, 2002, 2013). Despite initial concerns about the dis-employment effect of regulated minimum wage levels (Bhorat, Kanbur, & Mayet, 2013), the supply of and demand for domestic workers has steadily increased globally (Smith, 2011; Tomei, 2011). This has also been the trend locally with the sector currently employing almost a million workers of which the majority are Black females (Stats SA, 2013).

## **Work-Life Cycle**

The ubiquitous nature of domestic work in the South African context has led to a nationally understood figure of those engaged in the sector (Phillips, 2011). This has largely contributed to their invisibility and undervalued status. So, why do women enter this sector in the first instance, why do they remain engaged in it, and are they able to exit this sector if they so wish? The literature suggests that life cycles consist of mainly three transitional stages with varying time frames, namely education, work and retirement (Jackson, 2009). To understand the transitional characteristics implicit in this work-life identity one needs to consider the socially determined ethos that regulates the passage through these various life phases (Jackson, 2009; Rickwood, Roberts, Batten, Marshall, & Massie, 2004). The progression through these phases is unique for each individual and influenced by their historical, economical, political, cultural and work contexts (Lloyd, Roodt, & Odendaal, 2011).

Work identity is inherently the product of individuals' exposure to and interaction with diverse elements within their immediate environments and work contexts. Applying a nonlinear process we are able to contextualise the work-life of domestic workers as a transitional cycle characterised by a lack of choice and continuous engagement as illustrated and discussed below.



### Phase 1 – The harsh reality of impoverishment.

Poverty is a common denominator in the lives of domestic workers. It does not only refer to a lack of financial means but rather extends to a general state of impoverishment as a sectoral trademark. One can thus speak of a pathology of poverty (Appio, Chambers, & Mao, 2013) which is brought about by their everyday realities, extending into a dire need to survive. These everyday realities constitute a collective hardship brought about by the domestic workers' circumstances. Hardships include aspects such as the cost of living, the death of a parent or primary caregiver, becoming a child-headed household, being the sole

breadwinner, being a single parent, or unemployment to mentions just a few. Domestic workers often find themselves without a social support system and are often deprived of a social and family life, all of which intensifies the rationale for sectoral engagement (Phillips, 2011).

Poverty is cited as the primary reason for young girls initially entering the sector (Blagbrough, 2008). This is due in part to the early termination of education in a large section of the South African youth. According to Rautenbach (1999), previous political dispensations have resulted in decades of neglect and mismanagement that have deprived the countries' Black population of opportunities and left them uneducated. This general lack of formal schooling limits career prospects not only during people's initial career phases but also during the later stages of their work engagement.

### **Phase 2 – Looking for alternatives.**

The domestic worker sector is characterised by generational engagement—taking over from where the mother took over from her grandmother. Impoverished circumstances aid this almost unnoticed transition of many young girls into the sector as a way of institutionalised existence. Because these young girls often enter the sector at an early age as a means of survival, they are further deprived of education opportunities and this thus ensures their continued impoverished sectoral engagement (Bourdillon, 2009; Dinat & Peberdy, 2007). Considering that labour potential is deemed their greatest asset (Bardasi & Wodon, 2010; Mkandawire-Valhmu, 2010), entry into the sector could be viewed as an act of self-empowerment when confronted by the harsh realities of unemployment. The transition into domestic work as occupation implies entering a world of work that is characterised by low wages and status, an individualised employer-employee relationship, the need to relocate from rural to urban areas, isolation from family and the potential of exploitation. Nevertheless, despite these realities domestic work still provides a point of entry into remunerated employment for thousands of women.

### **Phase 3 – Acceptance of job context.**

Work engagement is a fundamental aspect of adult life and identity (Adams & Crafford, 2012; Saayman & Crafford, 2011). Work is also often the principal—although not guaranteed—route out of an impoverished existence for many working-aged individuals (Newman, 2011). Domestic work provides a source of income that supplements the families'

income or, in some cases, constitutes the sole income source of the extended family (Bourdillon, 2009; Kethusegile, Kwaramba, & Lopi, 2000; Tsikata, 2011). There is, however, a noticeable lack of choice when considering the reasons for sectoral engagement. People often have to make a difficult choice—either work as a domestic worker and at least earn something, or face the consequences of unemployment and the inability to meet their basic needs. This entrenches their work-life cycle even further and perpetuates their continuous engagement. There thus is a general sense of entrapment and an inability to escape the sectoral context. This amplifies the dependence upon others to survive (Zungu, 2009) and leads to an intensified sense of powerlessness.

#### **Phase 4 – Future directedness.**

The forward-looking orientation, as implied by positive psychology, suggests that the ability to hold on to hope and optimism for the future, despite tough times, holds the key to a satisfying future (Bushe, 2007; Froman, 2010; Jose, Ryan, & Pryor, 2012; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Domestic workers, like other employees, also actively desire improved employment conditions. Their lack of formal education, however, limits their opportunities to obtain employment outside the informal sectoral context. This, however, does not necessarily prevent them from sourcing alternative employment within the sector in an attempt to secure better employment conditions. Although sourcing other employment within the sector constitutes a short-term perception of their employment future, this does not amount to an exit strategy but rather a re-entry into an existing cycle of engagement.

Retirement is described as a standardised stage in any employee's life cycle (Jackson, 2009). For domestic workers, retirement may be fraught with many problems, one of them being financial constraints. Post-employment life (Phillips, 2011) may be characterised by hardship and an impoverished existence. Re-entry into the sector may thus be considered in order to meet the basic needs in the post-retirement phase of their lives.

#### **The Future Identity of Women within the Sector**

Domestic work is admittedly an important and often undervalued source of employment (ILO, 2013). Although domestic workers have a vested interest in promoting the dignity of their work because it has value for them (Anderson, 2009), Ueno (2010) describes the “discredited status” of domestic workers as a contributing factor when considering a future identity for women in this sector. Despite the numerous enabling properties of sectoral

engagement, this cycle need not be perpetuated and be foisted onto future generations. By looking at life cycles, the researchers explored participants' lived experiences of their work-life cycle and future directedness.

## **Method**

### **Research design**

The study design is situated within the interpretivist paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Hammond & Wellington, 2013; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Loseke, 2013). Influenced by the work of Alfred Schütz (1962/1967) (Cunliffe, 2010; Denscombe, 2011; Gallagher, 2012), the researchers' primary purpose was to explore individual's subjective perceptions of their own experiences as they relate to social phenomena in a non-interventional manner (Schwandt, 2003; Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2013). The shared multiple lived realities experienced by the participants within their specific social existence took centre stage as we sought to uncover and interpret the complexities of the meaning-making associated with the human experience (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2013; Fox & Bayat, 2013).

### **Contextualising recruitment procedure**

Initial recruitment efforts were directed at gaining access and establishing rapport among a target population generally described as a vulnerable sector of the labour force. For this purpose 2000 leaflets were personally distributed at taxi ranks, on public transport and in passing within the geographically demarcated area of the study. Aiming to create a subjective interest in the study among potential participants, the researchers provided interested parties with an opportunity to make an informed choice based on the information contained in the recruitment leaflet. It is important to note that no domestic worker was approached at their place of employment due in part to the sensitive nature of the individualised employment relationship and a voiced fear of job losses. Most responses related to the need to obtain employment or access legal advice related to labour issues within the sector. This "real-life" recruitment approach, as described by Deschaux-Beaume (2012), resulted in potential participants volunteering their availability telephonically and establishing an initial interviewer-interviewee relationship (Punch, 2011, 2014). Non-probability respondent-driven self-sampling was employed to purposefully select participants based on their willingness to participate in the study and engage with the researchers (Daniel, 2012; Schensul, 2012; Seale, 2012), their membership of the identified sector (South Africa, 2002) and their firsthand

knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation. Despite the diversity and initial outsider status of the researchers, we were able to establish a rapport with the participants by adopting a trusting and respectful approach.

### **Participants in the study**

Twenty Black female domestic workers participated in the study. Participants ranged in age from 27 years up to the age of 59 years. Their age of first entry into the sector varied from as young as 13 years for a child without primary caregivers at the time to as old as 35 years for an adult who had been previously employed outside the domestic worker sector. The average level of formal education reported by participants was grade six which is equivalent to a primary education. One participant had never attended any formal schooling. Participants mostly came from a family background that bore testament to their parents' involvement in domestic work, especially with regard to their mothers or grandmothers.

### **Empirical data collection**

Data generation efforts focussed on establishing an analytically engaged conversation around participants' lived experiences with the aim of jointly co-constructing meaning rather than just merely collecting data (Bloch, 2007; Gibson & Brown, 2009). Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to access the voices of those disadvantaged and silenced in the past (Franklin, 2012; Silverman, 2011). A non-descriptive interview guide was developed and refined during a pilot study (Gillham, 2010; Hammond & Wellington, 2013). Encouraged to share their life stories without fear of prejudice, participants discussed issues around broad metaphorical questions (Englander, 2012; Layder, 2013).

The need to allow multiple participants to share their meaning-making simultaneously required us to consider the sense of collectiveness and support among members of the target population while refining the interview format. This approach should not be mistaken for focus group or multiparty interview approaches. A combination of 12 one-on-one and four simultaneous (two-on-one) interviews were conducted. The distinct voice of each participant was noted during the interview as well as in the resultant transcripts. In some cases a friend—another fellow domestic worker—accompanied the participant to provide moral support but these individuals did not opt to share their meaning-making experiences and thus they were not noted as participants. Data saturation was reached during the 14<sup>th</sup> interview. A de-briefing conversation concluded each interview.

## **Data and analysis**

A naturalised approach to data transcription resulted in detailed verbatim written accounts of the shared meaning-making process (Layder, 2013; Tilley, 2003). This resulted in a rich, dense and non-numerical foundation for the actual coding process (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch, 2011). By studying the transcripts our insight into each participant's views and opinions grew (Bloch, 2007). An open inductive coding approach was applied which allowed the data to “speak for itself” and codes to emerge from the data (Hammond & Wellington, 2013; Harding, 2013; Miles, Hunberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Transcribed data was uploaded onto and analysed with the assistance of MAXQDA10, a qualitative data analysis software programme (MAXQDA, 1989–2013; Schutt, 2012). This aided in establishing a detailed audit trail to enhance the dependability of the study. As emerging qualitative researchers we became aware of the seemingly never-ending nature of coding; implying the need to read, reflect, code and re-code—a total immersion—until all categories were saturated (Bazeley, 2013; Creswell, 2009; Tesch, 1990). In-vivo open coding was applied during the initial stages of analysis. Themeing of the data was followed by a more eclectic coding strategy while progressing to the second cycle of coding. Focussed axial coding resulted in the identification of themes within the data (Saldaña, 2013). One of the main themes that emerged during the analysis related to the domestic workers' work-life cycle. The following three sub-themes emerged out of the data: sectoral context, reasons for entering and remaining in the sector, and finally future directiveness of participants.

## **Findings**

### **Sectoral Context**

#### **Institutionalised culture of engagement within the sector.**

Participants' lived accounts of their path into their current occupational context confirmed an institutionalised culture of engagement within the domestic worker sector. The point of entry was often as a young girl assisting an older female family member while she conducted her daily duties in the house of her employer. All participants confirmed that their mothers, and in some cases other female relatives, were engaged in domestic work. In many cases this became a smooth transition of employment from the one generation to the next for the employer. Family hardship due to a lack of means to satisfy their most basic needs or the

loss of parents were often cited as the driving force for entry into the sector. In many cases the initial point of entry was on a farm in a rural area. The search for better employment opportunities was given as the reason for later re-location to urban areas.

The dependence upon themselves to make ends meet amidst trying circumstances was clearly voiced. Domestic workers described their circumstances as impoverished and a constant battle to survive. For example, Sara stated, “... *we do not survive*”. The relationship between compensation, actual workload and financial obligations became a constant refrain throughout participants’ accounts. They generally characterised their engagement in the sector as “hard” but “better than nothing”. Eliza expressed her feelings in this regard as follows, “... *when we are working as domestic workers, sometimes it’s painful to work for somebody who doesn’t treat you well, but because we need the money to raise your children, you must work, you must do the domestic work ...*” The overall perception shared by participants was that being a domestic worker equates to hardship.

#### **Societal perceptions of domestic work.**

Society in general and the communities within which the participants live often regard domestic work as a degrading profession. Thus, in a sad voice, Elise stated, “... *If you ask them, ‘Where do you work? I don’t wash somebody’s panties, you know?’ It’s like that, so which means they are better than you...*” Amina, when talking about the future of her children said, “...*the young youth, they say, ‘I can’t wash panties for me and for another lady’. That’s why, yes. Because everybody you’ve got a friend that’s not working, you’re working. After this she come to you, she ask you a money, but if you tell her, ‘Go to find you a job,’ she say, ‘I never work for a domestic worker, no. I can’t.’*” Expressing her feelings about these comments, Elise said that “... *it breaks my heart ... I’m just telling them it’s a job. There’s nothing you can do, but it’s a job ...*”

#### **Career “choice”.**

Despite being confronted by such negative perceptions, participants’ lack of choice was cited as their main reason for being a domestic worker. Their limited formal education was often mentioned as a stumbling block in their attempts to secure alternative employment. Emilia explained it as follows, “... *for me is too hard to be a domestic worker ... I have no money, I want to work ... I’m working as a domestic worker because I’ve not found a work ...*” Participants viewed domestic work mostly as a job just like any other in which they took

pride. They were grateful for the enabling properties of their engagement in the sector. Connie said, “...*that is why I go to be a Domestic Worker to work for my child ...*” Similarly, Sammy said, “... *if you work as a domestic worker, your child can eat, they have clothes ...*” Participants provided accounts of how the income they received—albeit limited—enabled them to care and help others, including the church and burial societies they belonged to.

These accounts are indicative of an interrelatedness within a broader social context, a form of Ubuntu and caring for one another that transcends Western cultural norms. Being obligated to take care of their families, and in many cases extended family members, participants were constantly aware of their need to just survive. This refers to the satisfaction of the most basic human needs which all depend on finding sufficient financial resources. Most participants described themselves as sole breadwinners faced by daily struggles to survive. Belinda said, “... *every month I’m suffering...*”, while Anne attributed this mostly to the “... *problem is only money exactly ...*” Even in cases where participants described their employment conditions as being less than favourable, their obligation to satisfy their children’s basic needs remained a priority. The inability to fulfil these needs due to the high cost of living and the low-income range of participants was voiced repeatedly. The cost of education for their children and transport costs made additional demands on an already limited monthly budget. The relationship of workload compared to compensation received was an issue of concern for many participants. In several cases this meant that they had to find a way of supplementing their income. Two major approaches were noted in this regard. Firstly, it was found that participants could access credit facilities with relative ease, but at the same time they were unable to repay their loans on a regular basis; and secondly some engaged in entrepreneurial activities which provided a supplementary source of income.

In addition to the financial and physical hardships endured, participants also spoke of the emotional strain they experienced because of their employment context. As researchers we were not prepared for the depth of the raw emotions participants shared with us. Voicelessness was noted due to a prolonged internalisation of feelings, even among those participants who spoke of a positive experience within their employment context. Eliza summed this up when she said, “... *it’s painful to work for somebody who doesn’t treat you well, but because we need the money to raise your children, you must work, you must do the domestic work, although you work with a broken heart every day ...*” Anne extended this notion by characterising domestic work as “... *difficult work there because you don’t learn so*

*much ... Yes and it's hard because if you work for a madam, she can tell you what to do. You can't say no...*” Feelings of guilt were also expressed by participants due to their inability to balance commitments related to their family life with those of their work life. Rita expressed this frustration as follows, “... *I don't have time to catch up with my kids ... I'm not there for them if they need me ...*” Gorfinkiel (2011) calls this “doing motherhood from a distance”. An added dimension to this emotional distress is the issue of trust. Participants repeatedly related accounts of being treated with suspicion as they go about doing their daily work activities. This fostered a sense of powerlessness and isolation enhanced by fear and their inability to express their feelings in this regard.

### **Future Directedness.**

Exploring aspects related to the domestic workers' perceived future, we were confronted by a sense of hopelessness and inability to envision a positive old age. Trapped in the here and now, Anne hopelessly uttered the words “... *there is no future...*” In most cases this was attributed to the inability to secure alternative jobs due to a lack of appropriate training. Only one participant noted that she and her husband were actively working towards making financial provision for their old age. Amina, although still young, openly admitted, “... *I can't save money, eish ...*” Most participants were in denial about the impending realities associated with retirement. They accepted the fact that they would have to work until they died as a given. Some even alluded to the possibility of “double dipping” during this stage, i.e. claiming social security benefits after the age of 60 while remaining employed.

Breaking this cycle of entrapment was a priority for participants when they talked about their children's futures. They regard education as a way out, and thus access to education and the completion of school for the next generation is an ongoing commitment and acts as driving force in their daily work tasks. Parental challenges in this regard did not only relate to accessing sufficient funds to pay school fees, and in some cases higher education enrolment, but also motivating their children to learn from their own circumstances and take ownership of their own futures. Connie complained, “... *our children are so lazy...*” while Ann doubted that there would be a future for her child, despite her efforts, because “... *he is involved with the wrong friends...*” Elise wished for her children “... *to go to school to learn, so that they can do better for themselves ... Like, living the life that they want; driving the car that they like ...*” Amina cherished a similar desire for her daughter not to have to live

the life she had but rather to “... *finish school, go to university, get a right job and a nice life* ...”

## **Discussion**

The global prevalence of poverty (Hughes & Haworth, 2011) is the major reason for sectoral engagement. A generational lack of financial means and the fight for survival act as the main driving forces for many women when they contemplate any future work engagement. Although low levels of formal education limit career options further, the high rate of unemployment makes domestic work an option even for educated women within the South African economic and labour context.

Society has for decades refused to acknowledge domestic work as real work (Ally, 2005). And yet, domestic workers are significant contributors to and enablers within the world economy, and thus, according to Sparks (2011), legislative reforms enabled domestic workers to shed the servant label and be recognised as workers with employee status like all other workers. According to Witbooi (2011), chairperson of the South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union (SADSAWU), domestic workers are indeed workers like all others. Yet, despite regulatory efforts aimed at improving the overall position of domestic workers, the broader community still perceives working within the sector as undervalued, low paying and largely invisible in nature (Griffin, 2011; Smith, 2011; Tomei, 2011).

Work engagement constructs the identity of a person over time (Bothma & Roodt, 2012). Like all other workers and employees, domestic workers progress through their work-life cycle at varying time intervals. Prolonged exposure to an impoverished existence often makes it almost impossible for domestic workers to shed this identity and change their lives. Consequently, despite efforts on the part of the domestic worker to exit the sector through securing alternative forms of employment in the formal sector, she usually remains entrapped in a never-ending cycle of engagement from an early age. According to Grant (1997), the plight of domestic workers is an anachronism—a chronological error—perpetuated from one generation to the next. This further entrenches a general sense of disempowerment brought about by exposure to contextual hardship (Cock, 1980; Fish, 2006; Nduna & Jewkes, 2012).

Domestic work is, to a large extent, “work like no other” (Mundlak & Shamir, 2011, p. 289). Domestic workers are often confronted by less than favourable employment conditions as they are confined to an individualised employment relationship. Their actions

thus need to be purposefully directed towards breaking the cycle of poverty (Harzig, 2006). Silence is usually the only option they feel they have if they wish to remain employed. Confrontation or engagement with the employer regarding their employment conditions is usually not a realistic option for domestic workers as this is overshadowed by the fear of losing their jobs.

The domestic workers often find their sense of self-worth outside their work context. These alternative spheres of engagement add to their perceived fulfilment (Ueno, 2010), which often relate to their involvement within their broader community. They further project their hope for the future onto the next generation—their children. Providing them with access to education opportunities that will positively impact the rest of their lives (Assaad, Levison, & Zibani, 2010; Phillips, 2011) is regarded as an enabling tool, one that has the potential to break this never-ending cycle of sectoral engagement.

### **Recommendation**

The recommendations flow from the findings presented above. The need to align workload and compensation levels was mentioned during all the discussions with the domestic workers. This implies a re-assessment of stipulated minimum wage levels by the Department of Labour in order to better the employment conditions of domestic workers. The inability of domestic workers to actively prepare for their post-employment life also necessitates proactive social security legislation that will enable them, in conjunction with their employers, to make provision for their retirement. The sectoral outcry demands the action of all role players to empower young girls by providing them with education opportunities as an alternative to early entry into the sector. Consideration could be given to a developmental mentoring programme to help domestic workers guide their children in their career choices and thereby enabling access to not only secondary education but ultimately to tertiary education in an attempt to break the generational engagement within the sector.

### **Conclusion**

In this article we framed the various work-life phases that characterise the sector by reflecting on the sum total of participants' shared life experiences. It is evident that domestic workers are confronted by a variety of everyday realities which are not conducive to helping them satisfy their basic human needs. Their need to survive often leaves the domestic worker no other choice than to take on domestic work and continue working as a domestic worker for

as long as they are able to. Domestic workers are disempowered by limited alternative employment prospects outside the informal sector and a prolonged exposure to the unique sectoral context which makes the possibility of exiting the sector “but a dream” for many.

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## Chapter 4

### Article 4

#### **This article is in press:**

Marais, C., & Van Wyk, C. de W. (In press). Affirmation of Ubuntu within a flourishing work relationship as voiced by South African domestic workers: A positive labour perspective. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*.

## **Affirmation of Ubuntu within a Flourishing Work Relationship as Voiced by South African Domestic Workers: A Positive Labour Perspective**

### **Abstract**

Is it possible for women to flourish in the domestic worker sector? Global scholarship has for decades described the hardships that characterise this sector. Despite South Africa's significant labour legislative reforms which regulate the transactional element of the relationship, the relational element remains underexplored. A reciprocal interpersonal relatedness often develops due to the prolonged engagement within the individualised employment context. Characterised by caring and connectedness, this mutually dignified treatment not only signals but also enhances human flourishing. In this study an interpretative phenomenological research design was used. Twenty female domestic workers were recruited through purposive respondent-driven self-sampling. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used for data generation purposes. An open inductive approach supported the thematic analysis of data. Participants' accounts of relational reciprocity were indicative of the Ubuntu principles at work within the employment context. In terms of the findings of this study, it appears that actions need to go beyond the "letter of the law" in order to enhance flourishing within the South African domestic worker sector.

***Keywords:*** flourishing, Ubuntu, reciprocal interrelatedness, domestic worker

Can women flourish within the domestic worker-employer relationship context? Global scholarship has for decades described the hardships that millions of female domestic workers endure in their day-to-day reality. There have been legislative reforms in order to transform the sector (ILO, 2011, 2013), and South Africa, given its historical past, is at the forefront of implementing these reforms and has put in place progressive legislation that obligates parties entering into an employment relationship to comply with the stipulated employment standards and minimum wages (South Africa, 2002, 2013). This employment relationship, however, involves much more than the mere equation of cost versus entitlement for both parties (Chen, 2011; Varia, 2011). Archer (2011) extends this notion and describes the nature of the individualised employment relationship that characterises this sector as “complicated”, involving both transactional and relational elements (Armstrong, 2003).

Employers are dependent on the labour of the domestic workers. Moreover, domestic workers are usually dependent on the kindness of the employer. Legislative compliance, as an enforceable transactional element of this relationship, is a defining contributor to the nature of this interaction. The relational element, however, is often overshadowed by the scholarly assessment of legislative compliance and documented negative employment conditions within the sector. This relational element affects the overall experience of the workplace (Mills, Fleck, & Kozikowski, 2013) and in particular if the workplace consists of an individualised and intimate private household (Tomei, 2011). By exploring the relational element of the employment engagement within the domestic worker sector, this study has found that legislative compliance alone is insufficient to advance human flourishing.

By adopting a positive psychological perspective in this research study, it was found that the focus shifted from the negative aspects that undeniably exist to building upon the positive aspects of work engagement that does exist (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; Cilliers & May, 2010; Parks & Seligman, 2009; Shertzer, 2011). It is hoped that this article will contribute to the understanding of the existence and enhancement of flourishing within the South African labour context and the value of reciprocal caring and connectedness within a trusting domestic worker-employer relationship will thus be explored.

### **The Notion of a Flourishing Employment Relationship**

Positive psychology values subjective experiences while reflecting on the past, present and future experiences of any given contextual situation (Atkinson, 2013; Seligman

& Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The meaningfulness of work is therefore often linked to the nature of past, present and perceived future engagement between the various parties of the employment relationship (Chalofsky, 2010). Within this context compliance constitutes a legislated benchmark for engagement at a transactional level. At a relational level, however, the prominence of human flourishing necessitates more than the mere legislative compliance by the employer. Flourishing is thus conceptualised as a dynamic evolving outcome with the potential of affecting interactions positively to an even greater extent due to the positive reciprocity between the parties in the employment context at both a transactional and relational level.

One may say that reciprocity holds the key to the sustainability of a flourishing work engagement. Regarded as an integral component of continual sense-making efforts within an employer-employee relationship (Parzefall, 2011), reciprocity is closely related to the psychological contract. This implies a mutuality of obligations towards one another within the work context (Hess & Jepsen, 2009). Reciprocity is recognised as one of the original seven cardinal values of the African philosophy of Ubuntu (Broodryk, 2007, p. 40) which is not legislated, yet it influences the approach of millions of African people in their daily engagement with one another. This implies a sense of collective well-being and responsibility towards each other (Brooke, 2008) characterised by harmonious engagement centred around mutual kindness, empathic caring and involvement (Hall, Du Toit, & Louw, 2013).

Human connectedness, within the employment context, implies the need for active engagement. Both the employer and employee may experience an overall sense of well-being as a result of their human engagement (Latimer, 2013). This close involvement, often on a daily basis, has the potential to transcend into a dedication towards one another, although it might be limited to the context of the employment relationship (De Braine & Roodt, 2011). In addition, mutual trust is essential for cooperation within an employer-employee relationship (Den Hartog, Shippers, & Koopman, 2002). This trust, however, is shaped by environmental cues impacted by both parties' historical development, culture and past experiences (Holtz, 2013). South Africa's history of apartheid and oppression in the pre-1994 era has eroded the potential for a spontaneous trusting relationship to develop within the domestic worker sector. Arising from a mutually beneficial engagement over time (Holtz, 2013; Thomas, 2009), trust is largely dependent on parties' assessment of another's responsibility to meet their needs (Armstrong, 2003; Matthewman, Rose, & Hetherington,

2009). A work context that is characterised by respectful and caring treatment will inevitably enhance the extent of consequential trust within the employer-employee relationship (Henry, 2011). This mutual trust is a vital element of a flourishing employment relationship and often gives rise to some form of emotional bonding because of the time spent together within the intimate context of the employers' household (Tomei, 2011).

### **“One of the Family?”**

The experience of a sense of social connectedness and belonging, as core aspects of human existence, brings about an additional dimension to positive interpersonal outcomes (Jose, Ryan, & Pryor, 2012; Leung, Cheung, & Lui, 2011). Prolonged engagement within the workplace is often characterised by emotional bonds forming between people (Wang, Walumbwa, Wang, & Samuel Aryee, 2013). Domestic workers often live solitary lives characterised by geographical separation from family and friends as a result of their working arrangements (Dinat & Peberdy, 2007). The development of a trusting relationship with their employer thus contributes to their sense of social cohesion (Swaans et al., 2008) and the sense of relatedness or perceived “familial” ties becomes even more permissible.

According to Swisa (2012), there is a social silence in the literature regarding the place of domestic workers within South African families. Nevertheless, the literature does suggest that labelling the domestic worker as one of the family mitigates her status as employee and the accompanying rights associated with being employed. History also alludes to the exploitation of domestic workers, especially during their earlier years, under the auspices of the notion of familial status (Klocker, 2011). The hierarchical nature of an employer-employee relationship, often based on racial and gender differences, further mitigates the notion of equality between the employer and the domestic worker (Archer, 2011; Romero, 2013). It should, however, be noted that the past trend of “a white employer and a black domestic worker” is no longer the norm within the South African context (Fish, 2006; Harzig, 2006; Lund & Budlender, 2009; Moya, 2007; Sparks, 2011; Wanner, 2013), nor is the relationship always that of a domestic worker and a female employer given the diversity of gender roles and social change in modern households.

According to Bell (2008), only a very small minority of employers actually treat their domestic workers with more than respect and treating them as valued members of the family. In this article, the notion is put forward that relatedness is co-constructed due to the numerous

interactions between the domestic worker and the employer, and which may even extend to the families of both parties (Swisa, 2012). Thus a strong sense of social connectedness may develop that affects subjective well-being positively, which helps the domestic workers to make sense of their daily realities (Leung et al., 2011). This caring and connected relatedness will only be possible, we argue, if actions within the domestic worker sector exceed the stipulated employment standards and minimum wages. If the notion of “the” familial is frowned upon because of its perceived connotations as a continuation of institutionalised servitude, then the notion of reciprocal caring and connectedness is suggested as an alternative form of relatedness. In this way a collective identity is formed that enhances one party’s inclination to think, feel and respond to the needs of the other and visa versa (Den Hartog et al., 2002). This implies the need to cultivate a mutually beneficial relationship that is not only characteristic of the employer-employee norm but also represents a sincere and caring reciprocal friendship. The primary research question is therefore: *How does the existence of such a dual relationship, characterised by reciprocal caring and connectedness, contribute to the experience of human flourishing within the South African domestic worker’s employment context?*

## **Method**

### **Research Setting and Participant Recruitment**

Twice a day domestic workers can be seen on the streets in South Africa – arriving in the morning for work and again in the afternoon when they leave for home. However, once they enter the employer’s home they become invisible—at least for the study’s research purposes. Their individualised employment relationship and voiced fear of job losses made it difficult to recruit participants during our initial research efforts. By purposefully working towards the establishment of a rapport without influencing the sensitive nature of the employee-employer relationship, a “real-life” approach to recruitment as described by Deschaux-Beaume (2012) was used. Two thousand recruitment leaflets, inviting participation and affirming confidentiality, were distributed over a period of two months on public transport, at taxi ranks and within the broader community. By requesting them to telephonically confirm their willingness to participate an opportunity for an initial interaction between the potential participants and researchers were created. However, most telephonic responses related to queries regarding employment or legal advice.

An interpretative phenomenological qualitative research design was used to understand the complexity of meaning-making of the everyday lived realities as voiced by the participants (Chilisa, 2012; Creswell, 2013; Hammond & Wellington, 2013; Loseke, 2013; Matjeke, Viljoen, & Blaauw, 2012). Purposive respondent-driven self-sampling was used to recruit potential participants (Daniel, 2012; Schensul, 2012; Seale, 2012). In addition to their willingness to participate in the research study (Kirkevold & Bergland, 2007), participants also had to belong to the domestic worker sector as defined by Sectoral Determination 7 (South Africa, 2002), be employed within the geographically demarcated area of the study ("Municipal Demarcation Board: Emfuleni Local Municipality," 2011) and have firsthand knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation. Twenty Black female domestic workers who met these inclusion criteria shared their lived realities during the interviews. According to the literature, this sample size is substantial for a study of this nature (Bernard, 2013; Quinlan, 2011; Smith & Eatough, 2008). The participants ranged in age from 27 years to 59 years. In most cases they were single parents who were also responsible for the extended family. Three participants were employed as live-in domestic workers. The participants' reported formal education levels ranged from no formal education to grade 11. Although on average, they had completed primary school, this did not limit the rich descriptions of their shared experiences.

### **Data Generation**

Data was generated by focussing on the joint construction of meaning while engaging in social dialogue (Glesne, 2011; Janesick, 2010). Semi-structured in-depth interviews (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2013) were conducted in either English or Afrikaans, two of the official languages in South Africa (South Africa, 2012). A pilot study aided in refining a non-descriptive interview guide (Bell, 2010; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2012). Each interview was transcribed and analysed prior to conducting the next interview, thus allowing emerging matters to influence further data generation (Cresswell, Morrison, Sheikh, Kalra, & Coyne, 2012; Mears, 2012; Silverman, 2011). As a dress rehearsal (Chenail, 2011), the pilot study indicated that a different approach to the original one had to be taken in order to obtain informed consent. Thus, care was taken to dispel any fears and uncertainties related to the purpose of the research, mutual expectations within the research context were discussed, and the participants were informed that they were free to withdraw at any time and that all information they decide to share would be treated as confidential. In addition, the

pilot study validated the use of broad metaphorical questions while exploring participants' lived realities during the study (Bazeley, 2013, pp. 117–118; Zikmund et al., 2013).

In the research study, the entrenched characteristics of the South African domestic worker sector were taken into account and the participants were thanked for their willingness to engage in the research interviews despite perceived power imbalances. Their voiced fear of potential job losses due to their participation in the study was taken into account, and thus, an interview design and setting that was fluid and adaptable in nature was used (Chilisa, 2012, pp. 204, 276–277). Consideration was given to the need for collectiveness and support, shaped by the principles of Ubuntu (Broodryk, 2006, 2007), among members of the target population. A simultaneous interview format, i.e. a two-on-one interview, was used and thus participants could choose to be interviewed on a one-on-one basis or they could take a fellow participant along for moral support. A total of 12 one-on-one interviews and four simultaneous interviews were conducted. Data saturation was noted during the course of the 14th interview. This notion was further reaffirmed by an additional two interviews being conducted.

### **Data Analysis**

After the data had been transcribed, it was coded to assign meaning to the detailed accounts that had occurred during the meaning-making process (Bazeley, 2013; Layder, 2013). MAXQDA (1989–2013) was used as the data management tool. Through a circular emersion into the raw data and an open inductive approach to data analysis and reduction, the data was allowed to speak for itself (Hammond & Wellington, 2013; Harding, 2013; Huy, 2012; Miles, Hunberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Rivas, 2012; Smith & Eatough, 2012). By means of a thematic analysis of the data (Creswell, 2014; Saldaña, 2013; Tesch, 1990) themes and sub-themes were identified that related to aspects of flourishing within the employment context of the domestic workers.

## **Results Section**

### **“I Am Because We Are”**

The construct of a caring and connected engagement came up over and over again. In addition, reciprocity of support alluded to a sense of caring and care-giving within the employer-employee relationship which transcended the mere legislated stipulations of Sectoral Determination 7. Participants found meaning in their employment relationship via a

layered engagement within which they found a sense of relatedness. For instance, Ann described this relatedness as follows, “*I am so happy here, I think it is my mothers’ house, because here we become like family. My employer and her kids and family ... they take me just like their family ...*” This attitude of mutual caring and commitment implies an urgency to be attentive to the needs of the other party which Sara described as, “*... she helps me a lot. I also have to help her ...*” The kind of help described by participants related to aspects such as the provision of food for their families, the payment of school fees for their children, assisting with the funeral costs of a family member, and actions related to the alleviation of hardship in general. The depth of the relationship thus extended beyond the mere exchange of money for work done. There was a sense of equilibrium within the relationship – an acceptance of a give-and-take interaction which benefitted both parties. This notion extended also to the mutually respectful treatment within a friendly work environment.

Participants regarded their engagement within the sector as an enabling tool, one that empowered them to make a difference in their own lives and the lives of others. Not only were they able to support and provide for their own family’s needs, but they assisted the employer to meet her work commitments. According to Eliza, “*... I’m proud of what I’m doing ... for giving me a job ... I’m grateful...*” Central to this engagement is the element of trust. Mireya expressed her trust in her employer by saying, “*... I know my employer is not a tsotsie, he is not a thief ...*”, while Eliza wanted her employer to understand that, “*... I’m not a thief. I’m working because I need the money; I’m not working because I want something from them ...*” The level of trust often corresponded with the nature and duration of their employment relationship, personal background and mutual expectations.

The role of effective communication within a flourishing work context is another issue, which is beyond the scope of this article, but which nevertheless needs to be noted. The ability of participants to voice their feelings and concerns to their employers without fear of possible job losses was an important aspect of their employment relationship. Effective open communication was found to be a central characteristic of those relationships that could be described as flourishing. The conversation between employer and employee revolved around employment conditions, the resolution of disputes and the sharing of personal joys and hardship.

## Discussion

The overarching aim of this article is to present the voiced accounts of domestic workers' experiences of flourishing within their employment relationship. The negative accounts of participants' lived realities constituted the bulk of the data generated during the interactions with them. By deliberately extrapolating the positive aspects of their employment engagement, the principles of the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001) could be applied in order to explore the notion of flourishing as a construct.

As human beings we need each other (Rich, 2004), and thus there is an ever-present yearning for meaningful engagement which also extends to the work context. This context often implies prolonged interaction (Volti, 2008), and within the domestic worker sector this occurs within the private household of the employer. The level of connectedness that evolves between the employer and the employee over time relates strongly to the perception of being appreciated and valued (Reinders, 2011; White, 2012). Nadasen (2012) feels very strongly that employers need to treat domestic workers with respect. Such respect helps employees to assign positive meaning to their interaction and lays the foundation for employee well-being (Fosha, 2009).

According to the broaden-and-build theory, a behavioural cycle is put into motion within which a positive emotive experience gives rise to broadened "thought-action repertoires" (Fosha, 2009; Fredrickson, 2001; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002). These positive emotions result in a cascading process that does not only signal flourishing but also produces it (Fredrickson, 2001). Positive emotions are worth cultivating since they carry into the future elements of flourishing and well-being (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001). These positive emotions, although often short-lived in nature, can produce significant and long-lasting change in the thoughts and actions of those involved (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005).

The participants' accounts confirmed the potential cascading consequences of a caring connectedness that is reciprocal in nature. The literature recognises the prevalence of genuinely attentive caring and affectionate relationships within the sector (Ally, 2011). Moreover, the cultivation of such a mutually beneficial relationship between the employer and the domestic worker enhances their social resources and overall positive work identity and experience (Crocker & Canevello, 2008). Participants often related detailed accounts of

how their employers' attentiveness to their needs—both financial and emotional—enhanced their overall well-being. These constitute acts of kindness and sincere caring which help to improve the lived realities of the domestic worker (Pavlovich & Krahnke, 2012). There is no legislative obligation upon employers to engage in such acts, and therefore these acts lead to ever-growing positive engagement. At no stage, however, should these acts of reciprocal caring be viewed as payment in kind. Instead, these actions can be viewed as the application of cardinal Ubuntu principles within the employment context. The participants also listed the various actions they engaged in to show their interest in the well-being of their employers. In some cases participants even described themselves as “one of the family” based on the prolonged and intimate nature of their daily engagement with their employers. They spoke with a great sense of gratitude about the role that their employers played in helping them meet their needs and in some cases also helping their relatives.

In some cases, contrary to what one would expect, the relational element of the employment engagement was experienced in such a positive manner that the non-compliance of the employer with legislation did not taint the participants' experience of flourishing. The value participants placed on feeling loved and trusted within the extended context of the family often outweighed the transactional element of the pure legislated employment relationship (Bell, 2008). This is mainly attributed to the cascading effect of reciprocal positive emotional experiences.

Positive emotions have the capacity to divert the focus away from negative emotions (Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003) thereby enabling a mindset that is appreciative in nature and allows for the attainment of even more positive outcomes (Bushe, 2007). It is individuals' perception of reality that influences their behaviour towards one another (Balu, 2009). Moving away from the archaic notion of “maid and madam” (Cock, 1980) and cultivating a sense of sincere reciprocal caring characterised by dignified treatment, flourishing can be enhanced within the domestic worker sector. Interaction of this nature cannot be legislated, but the growing awareness within the South African socio-political post-apartheid context provides the foundation for new ways of doing in which the past need not dictate the future.

## **Acknowledgement of Limitations**

The exploration scope of human flourishing was limited to the exploration of the interplay between a caring and connected employment relationship. This is but one element of a far more complex societal reality faced by many domestic workers all over the world. Participant engagement was limited to domestic workers and the accounts shared by them could not be collaborated with their employers due to the sensitive nature of their engagement.

## **Recommendations**

It is recommended that future research efforts be aimed at investigating the notion of a flourishing employment engagement from both the perspective of the employer and the domestic worker. Specific attention should be given to understanding the inner workings of a flourishing employment relationship. By reflecting upon what constitutes a flourishing work relationship, researchers could help to create an awareness in all role players in the sector and thereby help more people to flourish.

## **Conclusion**

Legislative compliance refers to the transactional element of an employment relationship. In addition, sectoral legislation advocates the granting of more favourable employment conditions than the stipulated minimum but does not obligate any party with regard to the relational element of the engagement. This article emphasised the value of reciprocal caring and connectedness. Participants confirmed their experiences of flourishing because of the positive experiences they had in their employment relationship. These experiences have a cascading effect that filters through to the various levels of engagement between the employer and the domestic worker which is indicative of the value of the relational element of engagement within the domestic worker sector. This article is not meant to undervalue the negative experiences of domestic workers, but aimed to highlight some of the positive experiences.

Participants flourished because of the reciprocal interaction with their employers. The private household as place of employment could potentially act as an environment that promotes human flourishing due to the formation of unexpected friendships—caring and connected reciprocity—that results from a prolonged engagement within close proximity. Once the employment relationship is able to build upon the shared positive emotional

elements, it will transcend the mere “endure-to-survive” mode to one that is truly flourishing in nature.

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## Chapter 5

### Article 5

#### **This article is in press:**

Marais, C., & Van Wyk, C. de W. (In press). Legislative awareness as empowerment tool within the South African domestic worker sector: A qualitative reflection. *South African Journal of Labour Relations*.

# Legislative Awareness as Empowerment Tool within the South African Domestic Worker Sector: A Qualitative Reflection

## Abstract

South Africa is heralded as a global ambassador for the rights of domestic workers. Empowerment, however, remains an elusive concept within the sector. Fear-based disempowerment still characterises the employment relationship resulting in an absence of an employee voice. The dire need to survive renders this sector silent. This article explores the role that legislative awareness can play in the everyday lives of domestic workers. By means of an interpretivist phenomenological research design the researchers sought to access the voiced experiences of domestic workers within their employment context. Consequently purposive, respondent-driven self-sampling knowledgeable participants were recruited. In-depth interviewing generated the data. The distinct voice of each participant was noted during an open inductive approach to data analysis. Findings indicated that empowerment was an unknown construct for all participants. The confidence to engage their employers on employment issues was lacking. Nevertheless, domestic workers should embrace ownership and make efforts to empower themselves. This would sanction their right to assert their expectations of employment standards with confidence and use the judicial system to bring about compliant actions. The article concludes with the notion that legislative awareness can result in empowered actions through informed employee voices.

**Keywords:** employment standards, labour rights, legislative awareness, informal sector, women and work, empowerment

## **Sectoral Context**

Africa is the third largest employer of domestic workers globally. According to the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) global and regional estimates, this includes approximately 3.8 million female domestic workers across the continent (ILO, 2013). South Africa, in turn, has the highest employment rate of domestic workers within the region with an estimated engagement of 924 000 workers, of which only 40 000 are male (Stats SA, 2013, p. 31). Characterised by progressive legislative reforms in recent years, the sector's minimum employment standards and wages are regulated by Sectoral Determination 7 (South Africa, 2002, 2013). Although the evolution of these legislated stipulations is due, in part, to a history of exploitation that characterises this labour source globally (Matjeke, Viljoen, & Blaauw, 2012), it is still viewed as a new beginning affording lower-income workers an essential form of legislative protection (Bhorat, Kanbur, & Mayet, 2013; Burrow, 2011; Sparks, 2011). Despite the initial predictions of sectoral job losses as a result of these legislated reforms (Mangqalaza, 2012; Volti, 2008) in conjunction with high unemployment rates and poverty levels (Fisher, Katz, Miller, & Thatcher, 2003), the sector continues to exhibit a growing trend in employment figures.

Labour rights afford a sense of empowerment (Maher & Staab, 2005) to a sector of the labour market that has long been described as vulnerable and invisible. Legislative interventions of this nature retain their value only if they remain open to scrutiny and are aligned with the needs of those the legislation aims to protect. Heralded as one of the most extensive efforts globally to formalise domestic employment (Ally, 2008, p. 2), the positive developmental outcomes of legislative reform are still being questioned within the South African employment context (Fish, 2006; Tomei, 2011). Ally (2011) alludes to the existence of a "silent paradox" that relates to the existence of progressive labour legislation's inability to bring about significant changes to the entrenched social inequalities that still characterise the sector. This could be attributed to the fact that the private house is not acknowledged as a formal workplace, the consequential invisibility of those working within this individualised context (Neetha & Palriwala, 2011) and their inability to make legislative reforms part of their everyday reality.

The mere proclamation of sectoral employment standards does not guarantee legislative compliance (Moya, 2007). The literature continuously advocates the need for better legislative enforcement of employment standards (Marais, 2009; Zungu, 2009).

Employers, to date, have voluntarily and often only in part responded to the law due to a lack of visible enforcement (Dinkelman & Ranchhod, 2010). As a result of limited manpower to effect enforcement efforts, the geographical vastness of the sector and the complex nature of the employer-employee relationship in this sector (Archer, 2011; Blaauw & Bothma, 2010), the empowerment effect of legislative reform inevitably becomes curtailed. Domestic workers are further also described as only notionally free to alter their conditions of employment due to the entrenched notion of servitude within the sector (Woolman & Bishop, 2007). The need for empowerment is therefore frequently voiced in conjunction with discussions about changing the plight of these poor and marginalised women. This implies the necessity to involve those whose voices are often silenced within the broader social realm as we explore pathways to even greater empowerment (Rosenberg, 2013).

The creation of decent work for domestic workers remains an ever-present call for action at different administrative levels (Blackett, 2011; ILO, 2011; Tomei & Belser, 2011; Witbooi, 2011). The responsibility of the state as well as the employer is clearly set out in the legislation and is enforceable. The potential role of the domestic worker to this tri-party relationship is, however, unclear and often undervalued. It is argued that the extent to which they take ownership of their own employment context is still limited. Domestic workers' access to adult education facilities do aid their general communications skills—reading and writing—and even skills related to their work context, but these usually only relate to the cooking, cleaning and caring aspects of their job (Molema, 2011). Little is, however, directed towards their ability to access legislation, and improve their knowledge of legislation and its application within their employment relationship.

Although the initial legal vulnerability of the sector has been addressed through sound legislative reforms, there is still a void due to the limited legislative awareness of the members of the sector. This article will argue that empowerment through legislative awareness holds the key for domestic workers to bring about change within their employment relationship themselves. Moving away from their institutionalised passivity, domestic workers' voices can resonate to their benefit.

### **Legislative Empowerment**

To understand the true value of legislative reforms, provision must be made for multi-dimensional outcomes, of which empowerment is one of the main achievements.

Empowerment is characterised as a topic of interest in diverse disciplines (Mills, Fleck, & Kozikowski, 2013; Yeap & Myint, 2005). Viewed as a multidimensional, never-ending expansive process, empowerment enables the initial sense of self to combine with the ability to act and bring about change thereby shaping a person's "life outcomes" (Hategekimana, 2011, p. 52; Shields, 1995; Yeap & Myint, 2005). Empowerment is inevitably context-dependent and therefore both internally and externally derived (Baden, 2013; Mills et al., 2013; Spreitzer, 1995; Stander & Rothmann, 2009; Wagner et al., 2010). Reflective of employee's perceived control over their work life, empowerment within the domestic worker's context necessitates the removal of conditions that foster a sense of powerlessness and strengthening the position of the individual domestic worker. This inevitably requires access to resources, and in this context refers to the ability to access and apply a sound knowledge base regarding the various legislative stipulations applicable to the work context. The initial structural empowerment of the sector came about through legislative reforms but will only come to fruition once domestic workers apply their ability to voice their thoughts, concerns and disputes themselves. Empowerment therefore implies that individuals take charge of their own destiny and influence decisions that affect their future work engagement (Zimmerman, 1995).

### **Fear-Based Disempowerment**

Domestic workers have for many decades been disempowered because of the very nature of their employment relationship. The power dynamics at play within the employer-employee relationship can put domestic workers at risk of retaliation and potential job losses should they confront the employer on issues related to their employment relationship (Mkandawire-Valhmu, Rodriguez, Ammar, & Nemoto, 2009). Thus the potential of retaliation gives rise to an ever-present sense of fear which is a very real emotion present within all humans to varying degrees (Horn, 2004; Phillips, 2003; Rich, 2004). Within the employment context of the domestic worker, these feelings of fear render employees powerless and intensify their dependence on others to bring about change on their behalf (Thomas, 2009). This sense of institutionalised fear, which has evolved over generations, is still deeply rooted within the inner self of the domestic worker sector.

Employees normally think of the concept of retaliation in very broad terms, including aspects that could cause discomfort within the employment context due to the voicing of an opinion (Walker, 2008). Archer (2011) attributes this to the lack of direct communication on

the part of the employer which gives rise to growing uncertainty in the domestic workers' resultant understanding and actions. Domestic workers also refrain from involving a third party—intervention by labour inspectors—out of fear of the deteriorative effect this might have on their continued relationship with the employer (Abrantes, 2013).

Communication is an integral part of all empowerment efforts. Employees continually face situations where they need to decide whether to speak up (i.e. voice) or remain silent (Morrison, 2011). The problem, however, is that the domestic worker sector functions within the delimitations of what essentially constitutes a private household characterised by an individualised employment relationship—far different from what is generally encountered within an organisational context. Fear and its debilitating effects make it almost impossible for these women to speak out. The resultant silence implies that they are refraining from calling attention to issues that relate to their work context and relationship (Knoll & Van Dick, 2013). This silence does, however, comment on both the absence and inhibition of voiced dialogue (Styres, 2008, p. 90). The sectoral context of submissiveness provides for even further cultivation of this silence (Ally, 2008; Cock, 2011; Griffin, 2011; Mkandawire-Valhmu et al., 2009).

### **The Need for Employee Voice to be Heard**

The domestic worker sector has been described as silent for generations. Worldwide actions to empower this sector have resulted in their voices being heard within a broader variety of social and political contexts. Empowerment thus constitutes the implementation and practical application of these voiced ideas and concerns within the employer-employee relationship. Morrison (2011, pp. 375–376) describes employee voice as a verbal act, based on discretionary behaviour that is constructive in its intent. Even though employees have the right to access information and consultation (Bagchi, 2011), employee voice remains an ambiguous concept as a result of the perceived cost-benefit ratio that resultant actions may imply (Avey, Wernsing, & Palanski, 2012). Within the domestic worker sector this need for self-protection when considering the choice between voice and silence is especially relevant due to authoritarian power differences and an overriding need to secure and retain employment.

Porter (2013, p. 6) emphasises that true empowerment can only feature when there is a sense of security which facilitates transformative mobilisation that benefits the affected

parties. When reflecting upon the concept of “voice” within the labour context, it is necessary to consider who can and cannot speak, and who speaks for whom (Pereira, 2008). The studies of employee voice within the context of employment relations have focussed on the presence or absence of a union whose membership, it should be noted, does not act as proxy for the existence of employee voice (Benson & Brown, 2010). Historically, however, union membership has been advocated to provide employees with a channel to voice their concerns about their employment context and to affect redress (Benson & Brown, 2010; Neetha & Palriwala, 2011; Tsikata, 2011). Ally (2008, p. 7) argues that the inability of the sector to mobilise was broadened by the very legislation reforms that aimed to empower these workers. The proclamation of Sectoral Determination 7 could be viewed as the emancipation of the domestic workers but its impact is dampened by the continuous silence of employee voice within the sector. This is due in part to the fact that working conditions have not worsened in the last decade and thus the need to have a collective voice faded into the background.

According to Fish (2006), union membership could admittedly contribute to the sense of personal empowerment within the individualised employment context. The domestic worker sector is unfortunately often regarded as largely unorganisable (Middaugh, 2012). Ally (2005) warns against the consequences of labelling domestic workers in this manner. Not only does it reinforce the notion of invisibility, it also devalues those actions taken to date to unionise and reform the sector. The need for alternative approaches to effect change remains pressing. The role that the individual domestic worker can play in this process is still largely undefined. Community-based networking centred around sound legislative knowledge could potentially play an important role in domestic workers’ efforts to organise and access improved employment conditions (Kennedy, 2010) by making their voices heard within their own employment context.

### **Labour Legislative Awareness**

Legal education is an important strategy for the advancement of women. The South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union (SADSAWU) advocates the effective implementation of labour legislation through education (Ally, 2008). Knowledge is a liberating power based on information (Annan, 1997). This necessitates the identification and removal of conditions that cause feelings of disempowerment which inhibit the employee’s ability to take control of challenges that may arise within their work context (Bekker &

Crous, 1998). The role of training and development constitutes a focal point in defining empowerment efforts and implies a need to raise awareness of the various legislative stipulations that could facilitate improved employment conditions.

Awareness is regarded as the departure point of any learning experience that aims to empower (Cavaleros, Van Vuuren, & Visser, 2002). Constituting a powerful tool with the potential to bring about change, awareness aids in structuring an individual's understanding of their interaction with the world (Mann, 1993). Through legal rights education a critical awareness can be created about both rights and obligations on the part of not only the employer—as so often is the case—but also on the part of the employee, enhance their ability to assert these rights and bring about positive change in future engagements (Agimba, Butegwa, Osakue, & Nduna, 1994).

Access to credible information remains vital to enhance domestic workers' legislative awareness. The sectoral demographics, however, pose a challenge. Coming from what is generally described as an impoverished background, domestic workers often have limited levels of formal education and an overall fear of confronting employers, and thus an alternative approach to reaching this group of workers is required. It is suggested that awareness efforts should be aimed at transcending the institutionalised dependence culture that expects others to bring about change on behalf of the domestic worker within the legislative context. This view might appear harsh given the historical context of the sector. However, we believe that substantial sectoral empowerment will only be realised once the domestic workers themselves assume ownership of their own employment relationship based on their awareness of legislated employment standards. Communication efforts therefore need to be focussed on enhancing employee voice. This requires communication strategies that disseminate information that is viewed as reliable by all recipients (Valentini, 2012).

### **Embracing Ownership**

There is an urgent need within the sector to change the mindset from knowing about the existence of legislation reforms to actually having the ability and confidence to apply this knowledge within the employees' daily work engagement. A mature approach from both the employer and the domestic worker is thus required. This implies the need to acknowledge that while awareness assists in ordering one's actions (Curle, 1972), it is not a once-off event, but rather implies an empowering journey. The role and function of a unionised voice within

the sector will thus have to be reconstructed (Ally, 2008). Hogan (2000) affirms the need for individuals to take responsibility for their own empowerment amidst surrounding circumstances. Domestic workers that perceive themselves as empowered would thus be more inclined to speak up and make their voices heard amidst reduced levels of uncertainty and accompanying emotional strain (Greasley et al., 2005).

Employee voice implies action with the intent to bring about improvements (Wilkinson & Fay, 2011). The enabling properties of legal rights education are dependent on the context in which the education takes place and the manner in which this knowledge is applied by particular users (Meyer, 2002). Thus there is a responsibility to take ownership of the process while voicing personal choices, preferences and discontent (Chalofsky, 2010; Porter, 2013).

Legislative reforms have afforded domestic workers the autonomy to effect change. As long as employees perceive themselves as dependent on others to bring about change their ability to speak up will be limited (Bekker & Crous, 1998). Domestic workers' activism at personal and grassroots level holds the key to recognising and claiming their rights (Gurung, 2009). The creation of awareness plays a vital role in sectoral members accessing relevant information to bring about this sense of ownership and engage in actions that are indicative of autonomous legislative empowerment.

### **Research Design and the Co-Construction of Meaning**

An interpretivist phenomenological research design was used to access the voiced experiences of domestic workers within their employment context (Fox & Bayat, 2013; Hammond & Wellington, 2013; Loseke, 2013). As the study focussed on understanding and interpreting social actions as a result of their daily lived realities, participant recruitment was central to the design and outcome of this study (Hill & Nutt Williams, 2012; Schwandt, 2003). Characterised as a vulnerable sector within the South African labour force, we did not approach potential participants at their place of employment (Byrne, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Acknowledging further that employers could act as potential gatekeepers and that our presence might influence their individualised employment relationship negatively, we opted for what Deschaux-Beaume (2012) describes as a “real-life” approach to recruitment. Implying the need for researcher mobility, the first author personally distributed 2000 recruitment letters (Kaiser, 2009) within the demarcated geographical area. The study

purpose and the implications of participation were explained. Aiming to establish initial rapport, she approached potential participants at taxi ranks, on public transport and in passing. Telephonic responses by interested parties indicated a willingness to participate in the study. The attrition rate was noticeably high during the time from the initial telephonic interaction and the actual interviews being conducted, due in part to the participants' cited fear of losing their job as a result of their participation in the study.

Participants' willingness to engage with the researchers resulted in purposive, respondent-driven self-sampling being used as a recruitment strategy (Daniel, 2012; Kirkevold & Bergland, 2007; Schensul, 2012; Seale, 2012). Inclusion criteria implied being an employed domestic worker as defined by Sectoral Determination 7 (South Africa, 2002), as well as firsthand knowledge of and the ability to articulate experiences relating to the phenomenon being studied. Twenty Black female participants, between the ages of 27 years and 59 years took part in the study. None of the participants belonged to a labour union. This number of participants was deemed substantial for a lived realities study (Bernard, 2013; Quinlan, 2011; Smith & Eatough, 2008). They had a limited level of formal education, with the average being at a primary level. This did not impact on their ability to engage with us and share their rich and dense descriptive accounts of their lived realities. In order to obtain their informed consent, the researchers addressed the fears and uncertainties as voiced by the participants, clarified their role in the research effort, explained their right to withdraw and re-affirmed confidentiality.

In-depth interviewing were conducted to generate data as meaning was co-constructed rather than merely collected (Bloch, 2007; Denscombe, 2011; Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2012; Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2013). During the pilot study the dynamic interplay between us as the researchers and the domestic workers as the participants, the sensitivity of the topic and the interview questions became evident (Glesne, 2011). Thus a developmental semi-structured interview guide (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2012; Englander, 2012; Layder, 2013) was drawn up to guide the conversation around broadly formulated metaphorical questions which added a further dimension to this knowledge-creation process. Interviews were conducted in a variety of social settings, mostly after hours and over weekends, and concluded with a debriefing conversation addressing participants' feelings or questions resulting from our interaction. The research relationship did not extend past the

interview interaction, but each participant was handed a copy of Sectoral Determination 7 (South Africa, 2002, 2013) as she left the interview setting.

The distinct voice of each participant was evident in the verbatim-transcribed interviews. An open inductive approach to data analysis assisted in developing an ever-growing insight into participants' shared accounts with each new interview being conducted (Harding, 2013; Huy, 2012; Lichtman, 2014; Miles, Hunberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Codes were allowed to emerge from the data (Nieuwenhuis, 2011; Rivas, 2012) through a circular, value-adding transitional process (Bazeley, 2013; DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch, 2011; Saldaña, 2013). MAXQDA (1989–2013), a qualitative data analysis software programme, aided in the establishment of a detailed audit trail as themes and sub-themes developed. One of the main themes that crystallised during the analysis related to labour legislative awareness as an empowerment tool within the domestic worker sector. Four further sub-themes were also identified: Survival mode, domestic workers' perceptions of the post-Sectoral Determination 7 era, an urgent need to learn more about the various legislative stipulations, and empowerment consequences.

## **Findings**

### **Survival Mode**

The need to survive on a daily basis is one of the strongest forces driving employment within the domestic worker sector. Participants shared accounts of their general state of impoverishment which characterised their past, present and perceived future existence. *"We're still in that condition, the bad condition ..."* is how Rita explained her daily struggle to make ends meet. Emilia extended this notion saying, *"... first one ma'am, sometimes I'm working without food. I'm working from morning until I'm going without nothing. The second thing ma'am is money, the money is too little, the money is little for me..."* Mireya in turn stated, *"... I do not worry about the food, I only worry about the money, they must just give me my money..."* Acknowledging their dependency upon a regular income, participants characterised their compensation as *"better than nothing."* Grateful for the fact that they had managed to secure employment, the exchange of labour for compensation took centre stage, and money—especially the lack of it—emerged as a common concern.

## **The Post-Sectoral Determination 7 Era**

Participants were all aware of the fact that legislative conditions within the domestic worker sector had changed but lacked detailed knowledge in this regard. They voiced a general mistrust of the Department of Labour and their inspectors to improve employment standards within the sector despite the proclamation of the legislation. Amina described her perception in the following words, “... *if you’re going to Labour some will help you, some will never help you because it’ll take a long process, yes. To go there and to take that form... You know, it’s a long process ... Not wasting for money but wasting of time.*” Mandi claimed that, “... *the people go their but are not treated okay... they chase them away.*” Rita expressed her feelings of hopelessness by identifying the problem as, “... *you go there, what next?*” Regarded as serious allegations, these perceptions often lead to participants remaining voiceless rather than taking their concerns to the relevant authorities. Sammy firmly believes that, “*you go to the Department; they are not going to help you...*” This might be due in part to the lack of visible policing of the sector, as not one participant had ever encountered a labour inspector at her place of employment. Connie made her disappointment known when she said, “... *they said they are going to come to this house but they did not come.*” Despite the lack of visibility being perceived as empty promises, participants were also concerned about perceptions of corruption and scheming with employers which could affect their job security. Central to this distrust—the feeling that they could not rely on others—was the fear of potential job losses which acts as an inhibiting force preventing domestic workers from speaking up or voicing their concerns.

Voicing their desire to engage with their employers on issues of legislative compliance, they thus find themselves in a “catch-22 situation”: speak up and potentially lose their job or, alternatively, keep quiet and remain in a disadvantaged position. Most participants indicated that retaining their employment status was the deciding factor when it comes to engaging with their employers on issues related to employment standards. This is again attributed to their dire need to survive at the most basic level. Participants seldom negotiated aspects related to their conditions of employment and very few had a signed copy of their contract of employment. When reflecting upon their employment conditions, perceptions of inequitable compensation levels within the sector, the relationship between workload and compensation, working hours and the absence of a formal contract stood out as issues of concern. Most participants, however, noted that their employers did register them

for Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) purposes, although they did not have any written proof of this. All the participants were strongly in favour for government to step in and create more awareness of the plight of domestic workers. Pleading for change and improved employment conditions, Emilia said, *“I think ma’am government, to make a better for a domestic worker if he give a domestic worker something like we know our salary because our salary now is not the same and then we don’t know about what time to start your work, what time to go home and then the other thing ma’am, we ask government to make, what is this, medical for domestic workers.”*

### **Looking for a Needle in a Haystack**

Despite their sense of isolation that the participants shared with us, the invisible nature of the sector, and their fear of confronting employers, issues related to empowerment did feature—although not by name. It was noted that the concept of empowerment was an unknown construct for all participants. Their conversations continuously centred on the fulfilment of their basic needs and their lack of alternatives. This can be attributed in part to their lack of a collective voice and inability to affect their own conditions of employment and that of others. Elise noted, *“... we don’t have union, and we are not supposed to go on strike.”* In addition Ann jokingly stated that domestic workers do not go on strike (*“toi-toi”*).

Participants’ knowledge of the stipulations of Sectoral Determination 7 was inadequate and in some cases misinformed. Belinda admitted to her level of uncertainty by saying, *“I hear, but I didn’t know it. Like this papers I see, I don’t know what’s happening here. I read, I read mama, I can’t understand what’s happening there.”* Their knowledge was based mostly on hearsay from within their broader social engagement. Amina’s uncertainty was also evident when she said, *“I know about hours. If I’m right, we must work seven hours or eight, no, not seven hours. Seven hours or eight hours a day, yes. Money, you must get... some other people say you must get one thousand eight hundred a month or some people say you must get one thousand seven... I don’t know.”* Rita unashamedly admitted, *“...we are afraid to go and ask someone.”* Nevertheless, the participants indicated a hunger to learn and understand aspects of legislation that would assist them to speak with authority on matters related to their employment relationship. This implies an urgency to take ownership of empowerment initiatives by accessing credible knowledge themselves. Furthermore, the participants also indicated a willingness to share their reliable legislative knowledge, once

gained, with their broader social network thereby potentially expanding the empowerment consequences of legislative awareness even further within the sector.

## **Discussion**

The plight of domestic workers is globally well documented. Empowerment, however, remains an elusive concept within the sector. Despite substantial labour legislative reforms to date, the call for “decent work”—a loaded concept in itself—remains ever-present (Burrow, 2011). The challenge to empower this sector lies hidden in the ability of the sectoral role players to make these reforms relevant in the lives of those for whom domestic work is a daily reality.

The domestic worker sector is often a haven of employment opportunities for those who have limited education, are unemployed, confronted by an impoverished existence and lack social support. Confronted by the dire need to survive and meet the most basic of needs, these women find themselves in a position where they are often at the mercy of others and merely endure their situation. This reality is further amplified by the sheer cost of living in relation to the wages earned. Currently the minimum sectoral wage in South Africa equates to less than one US dollar per hour (South Africa, 2013) which was deemed inadequate by the participants. Nevertheless, the alternative prospect of “no income” was viewed as counterproductive. Participants voiced the belief that “any money is better than no money.” This is indicative of the position domestic workers still find themselves in—impoverished and unable to affect change. They are so dependent on the limited income that they do earn that the prospect of potential job losses, should they attempt to alter their working context, inhibits their willingness to voice their concerns. Admittedly the notion of being empowered is an enigmatic idea for these women given the daily hardships they have to confront.

The first step in empowering domestic workers is to acknowledge the gravity of their disempowered state. Often described in financial terms and related to the fulfilment of basic needs, the ability to effect change themselves is undervalued. The proclamation and implementation of legislated reform in South Africa partially levelled the power balance within the employer-employee relation. Stipulated minimum wages and employment standards act as the benchmark for cultivating a positive engagement between employer and domestic worker. Unfortunately the mere proclamation of legislation does not equate to spontaneous compliance. Although the purpose of this study was not to assess legislative

compliance, participants' accounts of their daily realities were in many instances indicative of non-compliance by the employer. The ability and willingness of the domestic worker to confront her employer was, however, impaired by a sense of fear-based disempowerment. This is indicative of the lack of alternatives that characterise employment within this sector and the perceived consequences of potential job losses should they engage their employer in a discussion on their employment conditions (Bell, 2008). Tangirala and Ramanujam (2012) describe this as a "mediation chain" of continuously judging the perceived influence their voice might have prior to consultation with the employer. The perceived willingness of the employer to discuss these conditions further influences the employees' willingness to voice her opinion or remain silent (Burris, 2012; Landau, 2009).

Employee voice is an inherent aspect of all employment relationships (Wilkinson & Fay, 2011). Fear-based disempowerment, however, is an inhibiting internal motivational state that dampens the spirit of an employee's voice. This silence—a noticeable absence of voice—is attributed in part to the invisible nature and context of the low-status work being performed behind closed doors. Fear that leads to a non-confrontational mood of engagement between the employer and the employee often gives rise to internal and interpersonal conflict, misunderstanding and dissatisfaction (Horn, 2004). A lack of legislative awareness, we argue, adds to the insecurities that fuel this nature of engagement and reinforces the entrenched subordinate position of domestic workers.

To bring about change and establish a new way of thinking requires the effective implementation, monitoring and enforcement of legal instruments (Hobden, 2011). However, monitoring compliance within the private household as place of employment is easier said than done (Fish, 2006; Tomei & Belser, 2011). The literature also notes that there is a general lack of visible enforcement and regulation by authorities within the sector (Matjeke et al., 2012). Amplified by an over-reliance on the efforts of others—Department of Labour—to effect change on their behalf and the general mistrust participants voiced in these authorities signals the need for an alternative approach to bring about positive employment conditions. Engaging the parties in this relationship ultimately holds the key to true empowerment of the sector. Legislative awareness campaigns have till now mainly been focussed on the legislative obligations of the employer and the consequences of non-compliance.

Legal rights education should be viewed as an enabling tool that can enhance domestic workers' resourcefulness within their own employment context. Taking ownership

of this process will increase their ability to confront non-compliant employment contexts and enhance existing positive employment relationships. This empowerment aim can be attained through information sharing and legislative awareness. Not only will this sanction domestic workers' rights to assert their expectations of employment standards with confidence, it will also enable them to use the judicial system to their advantage without fear of inviting some form of corrective action.

Empowerment is about having and exercising choice (Hogan, 2000). As long as domestic workers lack this choice they are not empowered. It is argued that empowerment efforts that contribute to enhance these levels of self-determination (Spreitzer, 1995, 1996; Spreitzer, 2007; Stander & Rothmann, 2010) will reinforce positive employment relations between the various role players in the sector driven by the domestic workers purposefully taking ownership of their own employment engagement and consequent outcomes. The notion of self-monitoring is already apparent in participants' accounts of how they "check up on their employers" to see whether the employer has registered them for UIF purposes. The domestic worker's voice should constitute an upward expression with a constructive agenda (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012). This requires firsthand knowledge of the various stipulated employment standards that ought to govern their employment relationship. It is, however, vital that employees recognise any presence of a pseudo voice—granting opportunities to voice concerns without the intention of really considering the input—be it so or not (De Vries, Jehn, & Terwel, 2012). This kind of voice will be counterproductive to the intended empowerment efforts of government within the South African domestic worker sector. The call for greater reform within the domestic sector through a collective voice thus still remains an urgent issue despite reforms to date.

### **Recommendations**

Heightened legislative awareness can result in empowered actions. We recommend that further research efforts focus on the development of an awareness programme specifically aimed at empowering domestic workers with sound legislative knowledge. This should form the basis of a roll-out programme by the Department of Labour aimed at empowering domestic workers within their employment context. Such a programme will have to accommodate the unique demographics of the sector. Labour inspectors' sectoral involvement should be directed towards enabling self-advocacy among domestic workers rather than merely "policing" employers' compliance levels. The role of the employer as

potential empowerment catalyst in the development of the employee voice needs to be further explored. We suggest that the primary focus should be on enhancing positive employment relations within the sector.

### **Limitations**

This study was limited to the experiences shared by participating domestic workers. The views of other sectoral role players were not sought. In addition, the actual levels of legislative awareness were not formally assessed.

### **Conclusion**

This article has advocated the need for the employees' voice to be heard within the employer-domestic worker relationship. The voices of domestic workers are often silent because of their sense of fear-based disempowerment. We suggest that in order to amplify these voices and thereby empower thousands of women to be co-constructors of a positive employment engagement, more awareness of the legislation be created. The voice of the domestic worker is a fragile aspect of their lived realities, and often dependant on the work context. Building the competencies of the domestic worker's voice requires empowerment efforts that are directed towards assuming self-ownership of their future engagement based on factual knowledge of the relevant legislative stipulations. Empowerment and legislative awareness should thus coincide. Legislative awareness has the potential to empower this historically disenfranchised sector of the South African labour market through the active participation of the domestic workers. Employee voice is the catalyst for legislative awareness to be transformed into action resulting in improved employment conditions and relationships. The key to empowering the domestic worker sector lies in the ability of this sector to establish dialogue between employees and their employers which is based on their knowledge of legislation and is free from fear of retaliation.

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## CHAPTER 6

### Conclusions, Limitations, Recommendations and Personal Reflection

#### 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter the conclusions from the completed empirical study and resultant literature control are presented. The limitations of the research study are discussed and recommendations are made for consideration by the various sectoral role players and broader scholarly community. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the ever-growing body of knowledge of workplace research with specific reference to domestic workers.

#### 6.2 Conclusions emanating from the study

The overall objective of this study was to interpret the lived realities of domestic workers within the South African labour legislative context. The summarised findings in relation to the secondary objectives set for this research are as follows:

- The *first objective* was to analyse the literature in terms of the lived realities of the South African domestic worker sector. As a global phenomenon, the plight of domestic workers is well documented. Much of the literature points to the ever-present need to develop a heightened awareness of the daily realities of domestic workers. Sectoral engagement is often viewed as the only viable alternative for those confronted by a general state of impoverishment. The sector is a large source of employment for almost a million South Africans, of which the majority are female. This sector is characterised by a devalued social status, limited formal education and a lack of alternatives, and thus domestic workers often face an existence tainted by hardship and an overriding need to survive.
- The *second objective* was to document the lived experiences of domestic workers within the context of Sectoral Determination 7. For this purpose an interpretative phenomenological research design was used. The chosen methodology facilitated the exploration, analysis and interpretation of the first person accounts of this social phenomenon. Twenty Black female domestic workers were purposively selected and interviewed for this study (see Appendix A). Broad metaphorical questions were used to explore the participants' lived realities. The pilot study indicated a need for collectiveness and support among members of the target population while they were engaged in the research project. To accommodate this need, interviews were thus

conducted on a one-on-one basis or on a two-on-one basis, i.e. simultaneous basis. The distinct voice of each participant was noted both during the interviews and during the resultant transcripts (see Appendix C). The themes were allowed to emerge from the data through an open inductive approach to data analysis. Data saturation was attained during the 14<sup>th</sup> interview and an additional two interviews were conducted to confirm this notion. An independent coder assessed the trustworthiness of the data collected, as well as the analysis and interpretation of the data (see Appendix D). The following three main themes were identified:

- flourishing within a reciprocal caring employment relationship,
- work-life cycle and future directiveness; and
- awareness of labour legislation as an empowerment tool.

The methodological approach of this study required that the data analysis stage be followed by a detailed literature control. The three main themes and accompanying sub-themes (see Appendix B) were contextualised and presented in separate articles that make up this submission.

- The *third objective* revolved around ascertaining how Sectoral Determination 7 has transformed the work-life cycle of domestic workers. Adopting a life-cycle stance, participants' lived experiences of their work-life cycle was explored in-depth. Their sectoral engagement was contextualised as a transitional work-life cycle characterised by impoverishment, limited alternatives, an acceptance of their job context and future directedness. The findings confirmed the existence of an institutionalised culture of engagement within the sector perpetuated from one generation to the next. Hardship and an urgent need for survival left many without any choice—entering and remaining within the sector was often the only option. Despite negative societal perceptions of the sector, it was found that the workers took pride in their work and viewed their engagement as an enabling tool to better their future prospects and that of their families, even though these prospects might be limited. The proclamation of Sectoral Determination 7 was heralded as a legislative victory for the South African labour market in general and for the domestic workers in particular. Despite this reform, the ubiquitous nature of domestic work in South African has led to a nationally accepted stereotype of those engaged in the sector. Attempts to exit the sector are unsuccessful due in part to their limited formal education and skills

- repertoire. Domestic workers are thus trapped within a never-ending cycle of sectoral engagement, and the possibility of exiting the sector remains but a dream for many.
- The *fourth objective* considered how the inception of labour legislative reform has contributed to the building of positive employment relationships within the domestic worker sector. Legislated employment conditions regulate the transactional aspect of the employer-domestic worker engagement. However, the relational element of this engagement is underexplored within the context of the domestic worker sector. By tapping into the positive emotions and experiences of the participant domestic workers, the individual and collective well-being of people in the sector was contextualised. The importance of reciprocal caring and connectedness became evident during the interviews. Participants confirmed their experiences of flourishing because of the positive experience they had within their prolonged employment relationships. This positive interaction cascaded through to the various levels of engagement between the employer and the domestic worker and thus indicated the value of the relational element of engagement within the domestic worker sector. Participants thus flourished because of the reciprocal interaction with their employer. Characterised by caring and connectedness, this mutually dignified treatment not only signals but also enhances human flourishing. Once the employment relationship is able to build upon the shared positive emotional elements it can transcend the mere endure-to-survive mode to one that is truly flourishing in nature.
  - The *final objective* was aimed at probing how domestic workers' labour legislative awareness relates to their sense of empowerment within their employment relationship. The need for the employee voice to be heard within the employer-domestic worker relationship was evident in the sectoral "silence". The voices of domestic workers are often silent because of their sense of disempowerment based on fear. The creation of sound legislative awareness is suggested as a preferred strategy in order to amplify these voices and thereby empower thousands of women to be co-constructors of a positive employment engagement. Domestic workers' voices are a fragile aspect of their lived realities, and often dependant on their work context. Building the competencies of the domestic worker's voice requires empowerment efforts that are directed at the assumption of self-ownership of their future engagement based on factual knowledge of the relevant legislative stipulations.

Empowerment and legislative awareness should coincide. Legislative awareness has the potential to empower this historically disenfranchised sector of the South African labour market through their active participation. The employee voice is the catalyst that can turn legislative awareness into action whereby employment conditions and relationships can be improved. The ability to establish dialogue between themselves and their employers, informed by their knowledge of legislation and free from fear of retaliation, holds the key to empowering the sector through the actions of each individual member. By taking ownership of the empowered role that both employers and domestic workers enjoy because of legislative reform, both parties can benefit from the working relationship.

- In conclusion, it is noted that the primary purpose of the study – to interpret the lived realities of domestic workers within the South African labour legislative context – was achieved. The need for domestic workers to embrace their rights as employees is a vital step in the empowerment of this sector of the South African labour market. Flourishing does require the cultivation of a mutually beneficial engagement that is guided by the stipulations of Sectoral Determination 7 and characterised by a sincere caring and connectedness. It is my profound hope that more domestic workers get to experience positive employment relationships characterised by a flourishing work engagement.

### **6.3 Limitations of the research**

The findings presented in this study should be interpreted in terms of the following limitations:

- The exploration scope of human flourishing was limited to the interplay of a caring and connected employment relationship. This is but one element of a far more complex societal reality faced by many domestic workers all over the world. Participant engagement was limited to domestic workers and the accounts shared by them could not be verified with their employers due to the sensitive nature of their engagement.
- This study was limited to the experiences shared by the participating domestic workers. The views of other sectoral role players were not sought. Also, the actual levels of legislative awareness were not formally assessed.

- The sample size of 20 participants was deemed substantial for a lived realities study. Nevertheless, the age group of domestic workers younger than 30 years was underrepresented. This is attributed to the initial outsider status of the researcher and the use of respondent-driven self-sampling as participant recruitment method.

## **6.4 Recommendations**

Below are recommendations based on the findings presented above.

### 6.4.1 Recommendations for sectoral role players

- There is a need for the Department of Labour to reassess the stipulated minimum wage levels within the domestic worker sector. Despite the enabling properties of their sectoral engagement, participants repeatedly called for the alignment between workload and compensation levels in order to improve their employment conditions.
- In addition, labour inspectors' sectoral involvement should be directed towards enabling self-advocacy among domestic workers as opposed to merely "policing" employers' compliance levels. This will require increased numbers and greater visibility of labour inspectors. This approach will foster trust in the Department of Labour as protector of employment standards and will also provide the remedies in the case of unfair labour practices.
- The Department of Labour needs to develop an awareness programme that empowers domestic workers with labour legislative knowledge that is specific to their employment context. The unique sectoral demographics should be considered. This will amplify the domestic workers' voice and positively enhance the employer-employee relationship.
- Domestic workers are encouraged to embrace their status as employees within the South African labour context. They thus need to take ownership of and empower themselves with knowledge of the legislative stipulations of Sectoral Determination 7. This will strengthen their employee voice, enable them to engage with their employer on issues that affect their employment context and dispel the fear of potential job losses should they voice their concerns.
- Consideration could further be given to actions that might assist domestic workers to actively prepare for their post-employment life. This will require proactive social

security legislation that will enable these workers, together with their employers, to make provision for their retirement.

- There is an urgent need to empower young girls by providing them with access to education as an alternative to early entry into the domestic worker sector. Consideration could be given to a developmental mentoring programme that could assist the domestic worker in guiding her children and enabling access to not only secondary education but ultimately to tertiary education in an attempt to break the generational engagement within the sector.

#### 6.4.2 Recommendations for sectoral scholarship

- Future research efforts should focus on the development of an awareness programme specifically aimed at empowering domestic workers with sound legislative knowledge. The programme should accommodate the unique demographics of the domestic workers. Consideration could be given to involving both the employer and the domestic worker in this initiative.
- It is further recommended that research efforts be aimed at investigating the notion of a flourishing employment engagement from both the perspective of the employer and that of the domestic worker. Specific attention should be given to understanding the inner workings of a flourishing employment relationship. By reflecting upon what constitutes a flourishing work relationship, researchers could help to create awareness among all role players in the sector and thereby help more people to flourish. This will also broaden the disciplinary array of research efforts related to positive employment relations and the notion of human flourishing within the work context.
- The role of the employer as potential empowerment catalyst in the cultivation and resonance of employee voice could also be explored. The primary focus should be on the enhancement of positive employment relations within the sector, i.e. one that is characterised by the principles of Ubuntu.
- The role of the researcher while engaging with participants who could be classified as vulnerable could also be explored. Differentiating between the research role and that of being a therapist could aid future sectoral engagement and further facilitate ethical participant engagement.

- Finally, more research needs to be done on the practicalities of conducting a pilot study within a qualitative paradigm. There is a lacuna in the current literature in this regard.

### **6.5 The 21<sup>st</sup> participant: A final reflective note**

This PhD submission represents my transitional journey of “learning and becoming” (Callary, Werthner, & Trudel, 2012) as an academic scholar. Phenomenology, as theoretical framework, afforded me a lens through which I could explore the lived experiences of others afresh (King & Horrocks, 2010; Rich, Graham, Taket, & Shelley, 2013). As such I became as much a research tool (Pezalla, Pettigrew, & Miller-Day, 2012) as all other resources utilised or consulted during this study.

Gaining and sustaining access to the sector was challenging at times. The need to overcome my outsider status was a constant factor throughout my engagement with the participants. Confronted by the raw emotions the participating women shared with me, I felt I was “seeing for the very first time”. I had to acknowledge my own unawareness and resultant insensitivity to an issue that is so much part of the daily reality of the participating domestic workers. There is a sense of desperation to survive that should never be ignored.

Einstein (1879–1955) said, “Few are those who see and feel with their own hearts.” I regard myself as privileged to have experienced this empowering, interactive and humbling developmental experience firsthand. I hold the accounts of daily realities shared with me dear to my heart. I wish more people, especially employers, could get to know the inner self of the domestic worker – legislative non-compliance would then not be an issue. Viewing the world through their eyes and being aware of the daily realities these women face could transform archaic stereotypes and negative perceptions which are still prevalent within the post-1994 South African context. This research study has thus opened my eyes to the realities faced by so many domestic workers in this country.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Demographic Profile of Participants**

Table 1

*Participant Profile*

Participant pseudonym	Interview number	Interview type	Duration of the interview (minutes)	Age (years)	Age upon first entry into the sector (years)	Education level (grade)
Marjorie *	1	One-on-one	28.34	52	15	5
Sara	2a	Two-on-one	46.52	50	10	4
Mariah	2b	Two-on-one	"	50	19	6
Sammy *	3	One-on-one	24.44	50	18	5
Ann *	4	One-on-one	30.46	59	25	6
Eliza	5	One-on-one	18.28	44	35	10
Mona	6	One-on-one	18.35	59	15	
Mina	7a	Two-on-one	61.43	56	20	6
Rosa	7b	Two-on-one	"	49	20	3
Anne	8a	Two-on-one	25.33	28	17	
Rita	8b	Two-on-one	"	45	34	11
Annie	9	One-on-one	22.24	51	13	3
Mandi *	10a	Two-on-one	24.41	34	16	8
Libby *	10b	Two-on-one	"	36	16	
Mireya	11	One-on-one	62.07	43	16	5
Belinda	12	One-one-one	30.29	52	25	8
Connie	13	One-on-one	32.39	44	28	9
Emilia	14	One-on-one	25.47	41	35	11
Amina	15	One-on-one	26.42	27	24	11
Elise	16	One-on-one	20.01	29	27	

*Note.* \* Indicates live-in employment status.

## **Appendix B**

### **Overview of Data Analysis and Meaning-Making**

Table 2

*Theme 1: Work-Life Cycle*

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Sectoral context	Institutionalised culture of engagement within the sector	Generational engagement in the sector	<i>"... ons is baie ons my ma se kind, dis baie. My ma kan nie almal sorg nie, nou ek sien, ek sukkel, ek sukkel die skoene, ek sukkel die kleure nou ek los die skool, ek gaan bietjie job soek ..."</i> Participant 15, 20 August 2012 (Interview 11 – Mireya 43), 35-35.
		Impoverished existence	
		Lack of alternatives	<i>"... As hulle dood gaan dan moet jy weet ek gaan swaar kry. Ek moet myself sorg maak ..."</i> Participant 7, 26 July 2012 (Interview 6 – Mona 59), 10-10.
		any job is better than no job at all	<i>"... Daardie baas daar, sy het gesê sy soek my by die kombuis, ek moet help daar want my Ouma is oud en kan nie werk nie ..."</i> Participant 1, 21 May 2012 (Interview 1 – Marjorie 52), 42-42.
			<i>"... Eish, weet jy die moeilike wat die domestic workers kry, nê, kleingeld. Hard werk, nê, dis die ding wat ons altyd huil met hom ..."</i> Participant 13, 19 August 2012 (Interview 10a – Mandi 34), 20-22.
		<i>"... Ons survive nie ..."</i> Participant 2, 17 July 2012 (Interview 2a – Sara 50), 173-173.	
			<i>"... ek moet werk, ek moet kos koop ... dit was swaar toe my ma dood is ..."</i> Participant 4, 21 July 2012 (Interview 3 – Sammy 50), 18-18; 20-20.

Table 2 (continued)

## Theme 1: Work-Life Cycle

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Sectoral context (continued)	Institutionalised culture of engagement within the sector (continued)		<i>“Om domestic workers te wees. Ja, dis bietjie hard, maar wat sal ons maak. Dis beter dan niks, nê. Dis die ding wat ek kan sê. Dis bietjie hard, maar wat, dis beter as niks.”</i> Participant 13, 19 August 2012 (Interview 10a – Mandi 34), 2-2.
			<i>“... when we are working as domestic workers, sometimes it’s painful to work for somebody who doesn’t treat you well, but because we need the money to raise your children, you must work, you must do the domestic work ...”</i> Participant 6, 24 July 2012 (Interview 5 – Eliza 44), 4-4.
	Societal perceptions of domestic work as a career	Degrading profession	<i>“... If you ask them, “Where do you work? I don’t wash somebody’s panties, you know?... It’s like that, so which means they are better than you ...”</i> Participant 20, 14 September 2012 (Interview 16 – Elise 29), 146-150.
		Being a domestic worker equates to hardship	<i>“... the young, so how to say that? The young youth, they say, ‘I can’t wash panties for me and for another lady’. That’s why, yes. Because everybody you’ve got a friend that’s not working, you’re working. After this she come to you, she ask you a money, but if you tell her, ‘Go to find you a job’ She say, ‘I never work for a domestic worker, no. I can’t’ ...”</i> Participant 19, 12 September 2012 (Interview 15 – Amina 27), 94-102.
	Perceptions of their own occupation	<i>“Van die domestic workers mense nê, hulle dink ons is simpel, ons is cheap. Hulle dink nie hierdie job wat ons doen is ‘n job van (onhoorbaar 0:10:44). Hulle sê altyd, die mense wat domestic work doen is die mense wat poor is, die mense wat sukkel, hulle moet, hulle het nie ‘n keuse nie.”</i> Participant 13, 19 August 2012 (Interview 10a – Mandi 34), 82-82.	

Table 2 (continued)

## Theme 1: Work-Life Cycle

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Sectoral context (continued)	Societal perceptions of domestic work as a career (continued)		<p>“... toe ons begin om domestic workers te wees, ons was klein, nê, maar ons moet, want hoe sal ons lewe as ons nie vir ander mense help en hulle gee vir ons ietsie in ons hande. Ja, dis hoekom ek sê dit was hard. ...” Participant 13, 19 August 2012 (Interview 10a – Mandi 34), 4-6.</p> <p>“... sy mag maak nie die ousie seer maak omdat sy weet nou ek is arm ...” Participant 15, 20 August 2012 (Interview 11 – Mireya 43), 237-237.</p> <p>“... maar as jy domestic werk jy eet soos al die mense. Jy kry...jy kan klere koop, alles wat jy nodig is.” Participant 4, 21 July 2012 (Interview 3 – Sammy 50), 8-8.</p> <p>“... Ek like hom nie arm nie want ons is arm ...” Participant 15, 20 August 2012 (Interview 11 – Mireya 43), 10-10.</p> <p>“... ek moet gaan help die miesies, sy gaan by die werk ...” Participant 2, 17 July 2012 (Interview 2a – Sara 50), 76-76.</p> <p>“... thank you for giving me a job .... now I can buy my kids anything that I want ...” 14 September 2012 (Interview 16 – Elise 29), 163-172.</p> <p>“... Ag, (Participants name) het maar net gesien ek is ‘n huiswerker ...” Participant 12, 18 August 2012 (Interview 9 – Annie 51), 39-41.</p>

Table 2 (continued)

## Theme 1: Work-Life Cycle

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Sectoral context (continued)	Societal perceptions of domestic work as a career (continued)		"... <i>My ma was jonk, hy worry nie vir sy kind ...</i> " Participant 5, 21 July 2012 (Interview 4 – Ann 57), 16-16.
Reasons for entry into and remaining in the sector	Career "choice"	Lack of alternatives	"... <i>Be patient because you need the job, you need the money, you see. ...</i> " Participant 6, 24 July 2012 (Interview 5 – Eliza 44), 52-52.
		Skills levels	"... <i>as jy net by die huis sit. jy sal ook nie daai bietjie kry nie maar as hy ook baie min is, dis baie swaar...</i> " Participant 8, 26 July 2012 (Interview 7a – Mina 56), 166-166.
		Employment opportunities	
		Taking responsible for own and extended family members	"... <i>Om domestic workers te wees. Ja, dis bietjie hard, maar wat sal ons maak. Dis beter dan niks, nê... toe ons begin om domestic workers te wees, ons was klein, nê, maar ons moet, want hoe sal ons lewe as ons nie vir ander mense help en hulle gee vir ons ietsie in ons hande. ... want ek het nie by die skool gegaan ...</i> " Participant 13, 19 August 2012 (Interview 10a – Mandi 34), 2-6.
			"... <i>As ek nie domestic gewerk het, wat sal ek gemaak het ...</i> " Participant 4, 21 July 2012 (Interview 3 – Sammy 50), 86-86.
			"... <i>Niemand om te my skool vat, want my ouma hy was dood. Is my ouma hy het by die skool gebetaal en alles doen ...</i> " Participant 5, 21 July 2012 (Interview 4 – Ann 57), 20-20.

Table 2 (continued)

Theme 1: Work-Life Cycle

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Reasons for entry into and remaining in the sector (continued)	Career “choice” (continued)		<p data-bbox="1205 443 2074 592">“... You know, to me a domestic worker is so difficult because you got there because you don't have a money, you don't have a qualification ... that is why you go to the ... and there is no other job you can get, ... and they don't have that qualification so that is why I go to be a domestic worker to work for my child ...” Participant 17, 25 August 2012 (Interview 13 – Connie 44), 16-16.</p> <p data-bbox="1205 660 2074 809">“... It's because I have no parents. I'm staying with my grandmother and grandchildren and then she take me to the school with pension, yes, and then she said to me, you are going to stop here because we have no money to buy the uniform, to buy the books, that's why I'm leave the school in Standard 9 ...” Participant 18, 27 August 2012 (Interview 14 – Emilia 41), 19-20.</p> <p data-bbox="1205 877 2074 963">“... Die ding wat ook gemaak het dat ek moet kom werk by die kombuise, ek het swaar gekry, toe los ek die skool ...” Participant 12, 18 August 2012 (Interview 9 – Annie 51), 39-41.</p> <p data-bbox="1205 1032 2074 1118">“... Nou as die baas vir my gesê is, die werk hy's klaar, miskien ek gaan jou pay gee or down pay gee. Dis reg ...” Participant 4, 21 July 2012 (Interview 3 – Sammy 50), 176-176.</p> <p data-bbox="1205 1187 2074 1310">“... my mother was not working and I don't have a chance. ... I'm supposed to find a job to take care of my mother, to take care of my younger brother. Yes, that's why because I don't have a choice. My father was not there for us until now ...” Participant 19, 12 September 2012 (Interview 15 – Amina 27), 26-26.</p>

Table 2 (continued)

Theme 1: Work-Life Cycle

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Reasons for entry into and remaining in the sector (continued)	Career “choice” (Continued)		<p>“... ek raak arm, ar, arm ... ek het niks gemaak nie want ek het by die huis gesit ...” Participant 3, 17 July 2012 (Interview 2b – Mariah 50), 82-82.</p> <p>“... For me is too hard to be a domestic worker because at the work there are so many things not right for me because I have no money, I want to work. What I’m saying, that’s why I’m working as a domestic worker because I’ve not found a work ...” Participant 18, 27 August 2012 (Interview 14 – Emilia 41), 6-6.</p> <p>“... Want as jy werk soek, jy lui die klokke, antwoord die mense, wat soek jy? Ek soek die werk. Sy sê gaan by Mandela dat hy jou die werk gaan gee. Ek het nie werk. ...” Participant 4, 21 July 2012 (Interview 3 – Sammy 50), 70-70.</p> <p>“... Ja, daai tyd die werk was baie ... Nou, die werk is baie skaars ...” Participant 15, 20 August 2012 (Interview 11 – Mireya 43), 55-57.</p>

Table 2 (continued)

## Theme 1: Work-Life Cycle

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Reasons for entry into and remaining in the sector (continued)	Psycho-social aspects of work	Financial burdens	"... <i>every month I'm suffering...</i> " Participant 16, 21 August 2012 (Interview 12 – Belinda 52), 6-8.
		Emotional hardship	"... <i>Problem is only money exactly ...</i> " Participant 10, 27 July 2012 (Interview 8a – Anne 28), 68-68.
		Physical adversity	"... <i>It's not nice, it's not nice, because the future, you want money, so my husband is not working, it's only me ...</i> " Participant 10, 27 July 2012 (Interview 8a – Anne 28), 64-64.  " <i>... Die lewe is te swaar vir my want ek het twee kinders, 'n seuntjie en 'n dogtertjie. My seuntjie, hy werk nie en ek het alleen, ek het nie 'n man nie maar my man was lelik maar hy maak nie die change vir support nie. Jy sien, dis waarom jou lewe is te swaar ...</i> " Participant 3, 17 July 2012 (Interview 2b – Mariah 50), 24-24.  " <i>... ek moet werk, ek moet kos koop ...</i> " Participant 4, 21 July 2012 (Interview 3 – Sammy 50), 18-18.  " <i>... Geld is nog probleem, jy weet hoe duur is goeters ... Ek worry. Hard to say wat ek sal doen ...</i> " Participant 17, 25 August 2012 (Interview 13 – Connie 44), 202-206.

Table 2 (continued)

## Theme 1: Work-Life Cycle

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Reasons for entry into and remaining in the sector (continued)	Psycho-social aspects of work (continued)		<p>“... I’m not working very nice there for that lady. I’m working like just because I want to give my children the food to eat ...” Participant 16, 21 August 2012 (Interview 12 – Belinda 52), 64-68.</p> <p>“... Eish, weet jy die moeilike wat die domestic workers kry, nê, kleingeld. Hard werk, nê, dis die ding wat ons altyd huil met hom...” Participant 13, 19 August 2012 (Interview 10a – Mandi 34), 20-22.</p> <p>“... Ag, maar, my kinders se future is orraait. Hulle is orraait, al sukkel (Participant’s name) maar so tussenin, want ek sukkel ‘n bietjie met hulle bietjie dat hulle moet verder leer, daar’s nie geld nie ... Dis net ek alleen wat doen, ek wat werk ...” Participant 12, 18 August 2012 (Interview 9 – Annie 51), 46-53.</p> <p>“... Ek leen die geld by my vriend, hy gee my, ek gaan by my broer, my skoonsuster ... sy gee my bietjie kos, ek moet met die kinders eet ...” Participant 15, 20 August 2012 (Interview 11 – Mireya 43), 75-77.</p> <p>“... As I said, I’m working because I need the money. That one who is university is depending on me and my husband because my husband, he’s got two wives, we are two wives to him. So the other wife is at home, Limpopo, so every month we must share the money, the other money go to that wife, the other to me, so it doesn’t afford my needs at home, so I have to work to help him, to help the children to go to school ...” Participant 6, 24 July 2012 (Interview 5 – Eliza 44), 56-56.</p>

Table 2 (continued)

Theme 1: Work-Life Cycle

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Reasons for entry into and remaining in the sector (continued)	Psycho-social aspects of work (continued)		<p data-bbox="1205 443 2074 531">“... I’m not working very nice there for that lady. I’m working like just because I want to give my children the food to eat...” Participant 16, 21 August 2012 (Interview 12 – Belinda 52), 64-68.</p> <p data-bbox="1205 600 2074 719">“... painful to work for somebody who doesn’t treat you well, but because we need the money to raise your children, you must work, you must do the domestic work, although you work with a broken heart every day ...” Participant 6, 24 July 2012 (Interview 5 – Eliza 44), 4-4.</p> <p data-bbox="1205 788 2074 876">“... Domestic worker, its difficult work there because you don’t learn so much ... Yes and it’s hard because if you work for a madam, she can tell you what to do. You can’t say no ...” Participant 10, 27 July 2012 (Interview 8a – Anne 28), 2-4.</p> <p data-bbox="1205 944 2074 1032">“... I’m happy because its work, but other circumstances because they don’t trust me, I feel like I’m in a cage ...” Participant 6, 24 July 2012 (Interview 5 – Eliza 44), 90-90.</p> <p data-bbox="1205 1101 2074 1189">“... It breaks my heart. It breaks my heart. ... I’m just telling them it’s a job. There’s nothing you can do, but it’s a job ...” Participant 20, 14 September 2012 (Interview 16 – Elise 29), 149-154.</p>

Table 2 (continued)

Theme 1: Work-Life Cycle

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Reasons for entry into and remaining in the sector (continued)	Psycho-social aspects of work (continued)		<p data-bbox="1205 443 2033 501">“... <i>don't have time to catch up with my kids ...</i>” Participant 11, 27 July 2012 (Interview 8b – Rita 45), 30-32.</p> <p data-bbox="1205 568 2085 655">“... <i>It's long hours and when I arrive at home, I have to go and fetch the kids and prepare the food and wash them, clean the house, you know ...</i>” Participant 20, 14 September 2012 (Interview 16 – Elise 29), 178-188.</p> <p data-bbox="1205 722 2002 780">“... <i>I'm not there for them if they need me ...</i>” Participant 11, 27 July 2012 (Interview 8b – Rita 45), 60-62.</p> <p data-bbox="1205 847 2078 935">“... <i>Al my vriende ek het baie mooi geken. Hulle is ver. Nou hierso ons het die mense wat net sê, hallo, hoe gaan dit?...</i>” Participant 5, 21 July 2012 (Interview 4 – Ann 57), 136-136.</p> <p data-bbox="1205 1002 2085 1059">“... <i>ek huil ek het nie huis nie ...</i>” Participant 7, 26 July 2012 (Interview 6 – Mona 59), 124-124.</p> <p data-bbox="1205 1126 2069 1184">“... <i>Ek kan nie spaar, want ek moet kos koop ...</i>” Participant 13, 19 August 2012 (Interview 10a – Mandi 34), 56-58.</p>

Table 2 (continued)

## Theme 1: Work-Life Cycle

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Reasons for entry into and remaining in the sector (continued)	Enabling properties of engaging in domestic work	UBUNTU	<p>“... Me, dis baie swaar maar ons sê altyd as ek by die huis net sit, nie daai bietjie werk wat ons werk nè, wie sal vir jou gee? Ons moet vir daai bietjie werk, ons sal Stokvel speel laat jy bietjie meer kry. As die kind daarso by university is ek sal speel saam met die ander vrouens ...” Participant 8, 26 July 2012 (Interview 7a – Mina 56), 116-116.</p> <p>Ek help my family en myself, die kerk ek help, die society ek help. Ek is so bly Participant 5, 21 July 2012 (Interview 4 – Ann 57), 2-2.</p> <p>“... Nou as jy domestic werk, jou kind hulle eet, hulle kry klere ...” Participant 4, 21 July 2012 (Interview 3 – Sammy 50), 180-180.</p>
		Provide for family	
		Satisfy basic	
Future directiveness	In pursuit of better options: A way out...	Will it ever get better?	<p>“... Let’s say if you work in other places, you can learn, you’ve got an experience, but a domestic, you don’t have experience ... there is no future...” Participant 10, 27 July 2012 (Interview 8a - Anne 28), 8-10.</p>
		Plans/activities towards retirement	
	Denial of impending reality	<p>“... Ek moet werk tot dood ...” Participant 13, 19 August 2012 (Interview 10a – Mandi 34), 115-115.</p> <p>“... jy sal daar kom werk tot jy die ...” Participant 3, 17 July 2012 (Interview 2b – Marih 50), 134-134.</p>	
	Continue working past retirement age		
Self sufficient			

Table 2 (continued)

## Theme 1: Work-Life Cycle

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Future directiveness (continued)	Plans/activities towards retirement (continued)	Place their hope on the next generation	"... <i>I can't save money, eish ...</i> " Participant 19, 12 September 2012 (Interview 15 – Amina 27), 78-80.
		Parental challenges	" <i>Ek het my kinders skool gevat met daai domestic.</i> " Participant 4, 21 July 2012 (Interview 3 – Sammy 50), 86-86.
	Breaking the cycle ...	Hoping and working so that their children do not have to enter the world of the domestic worker	"... <i>Ons kinders is so lui ...</i> " Participant 17, 25 August 2012 (Interview 13 – Connie 44), 208-212.
			"... <i>Sy het nie future. Ek het probeer om te future gegee, maar daar's nie future, want hy loop saam met die stout kind ...</i> " Participant 5, 21 July 2012 (Interview 4 – Ann 57), 50-50.
		"... <i>Mamma, I want to ... I want education. I don't want to work just like you ...</i> " Participant 17, 25 August 2012 (Interview 13 – Connie 44), 72-80.	
			"... <i>I wish for them to go to school to learn, so that they can do better for themselves ... Like, living the life that they want; driving the car that they like ...</i> " Participant 20, 14 September 2012 (Interview 16 – Elise 29) 100-106.

Table 2 (continued)

Theme 1: Work-Life Cycle

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Future directiveness (continued)	Breaking the cycle ... (continued)		<p>“... you see the child from this nowadays, you don't know how ... maybe she can disappoint you and you don't even think she can do something but she told me, Mamma, I want to ... I want education. I don't want to work just like you because I want to finish and then when I finish, I can go to work and when I work ... just you, you just leave your job, stay at home, I can work for you because I see you work so hard ...” Participant 17, 25 August 2012 (Interview 13 – Connie 44), 72-78.</p> <p>“... I don't want to be live that life I get. I want to get a better life. Maybe when she finish school, go to university, get a right job and a nice life. That I wish every day ... I'm struggling, we make sure. I don't want... also my mother, he make it better for us. Also I wish that life my mother give me, I wish me, I'm make more for my children ...” Participant 19, 12 September 2012 (Interview 15 – Amina 27), 68-70.</p> <p>“... I want a better future for my children. I don't want my children like find a small education like me, I want my children to be, to find a better future ... to finish the school and then to go forward with an education ...” Participant 18, 27 August 2012 (Interview 14 – Emilia 41), 34-36.</p> <p>“... I send them to live a better life, not like me, not end up just like me to go and work for domestic worker. Domestic worker is the work that we are need, but it's not a work that you can teach your children, go to work and the domestic worker, no, I tell them every day, I told them every day, if you learn, you go everywhere when you want ...” Participant 6, 24 July 2012 (Interview 5 – Eliza 44), 58-58.</p>

Table 2 (continued)

Theme 1: Work-Life Cycle

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Future directiveness (continued)	Dreaming of a better future	Being valued for her inner self as a human being	<i>"... Like a queen, ... because I do everything for them. Each and every day, do this or do this ..."</i> Participant 11, 27 July 2012 (Interview 8b – Rita 45), 86-92.
		Transcend the boundaries of her every day lived realities	<i>"... The people don't know about you. The people who don't want to learn about you, what kind of people you are ... When I go home, I talk about it with my children, with my husband, maybe we discuss this and sometimes he console me and say, be patient, maybe they will see that's how a person you are. One day. Be patient because you need the job, you need the money ... If they can change, they can learn to understand me, they can see I'm not a thief. I'm working because I need the money; I'm not working because I want something from them ..."</i> Participant 6, 24 July 2012 (Interview 5 – Eliza 44), 40-40; 52-52; 78-78.
			<i>"... I would like to live like a queen one day ... I desire a happy home ..."</i> Participant 20, 14 September 2012 (Interview 16 – Elise 29) 128-136.
			<i>"... I was hoping to achieve what I want in life and to achieve the things that I didn't have in life. Maybe someday I can spoil myself and go to Durban or Cape Town ..."</i> Participant 6, 24 July 2012 (Interview 5 – Eliza 44), 70-72.

*Note.* Summative outcome of the data analysis process.

Verbatim quotes supported by details about the participant, the date of the interview and the actual position of the quote within the transcribed interview.

Table 3

*Theme 2: Flourishing - Positive Employment Relationship Case*

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Employment relationship (caring and connectedness)	Reciprocity of support (sense of caring and care giving)	Sense of belonging and connectedness (meaningfulness of the relationship; layeredness of the relationship)	<i>“... ek is so bly hierso, ek dink dis my ma se huis, want hierso ons word soos family. My employer en sy kind en sy family hulle was so...hulle vat my net soos sy familie ...”</i> Participant 5, 21 July 2012 (Interview 4 - Ann 57), 99-103.
		Attitude of mutual caring and commitment to help	<i>“... Ek het met die wit mense baie gewerk maar het my ook my grootgemaak want hulle het my gesorg as ek het nie 'n Ma en Pa ...”</i> Participant 7, 26 July 2012 (Interview 6 - Mona 59), 10-10.
		Attentiveness to the needs of the other party	<i>“... sy help my baie. Ek moet ook vir haar gaan help ...”</i> Participant 2, 17 July 2012 (Interview 2a - Sara 50), 84-84.
		Depth of the relationship extends beyond the mere exchange of money for work done	<i>“... it's not a messy family. Just to keep them happy and sometimes they make you happy ...”</i> Participant 20, 14 September 2012 (Interview 16 - Elise 29), 50-56.
			<i>“... Sometimes my employer is good for me because sometimes he buys some bread, take this bread and give your kids at home. Sometimes we don't know if I'm telling my problem, I've got a problem, I have no money, I'm ask you, give me R100 to push the days until month end ...”</i> Participant 18, 27 August 2012 (Interview 14 - Emilia 41), 56-56.

Table 3 (continued)

*Theme 2: Flourishing - Positive Employment Relationship Case*

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Employment relationship (continued)	Reciprocity of support (continued)		<p>“... <i>Sometimes jy weet as ek, ek het nie geld vir die transport, ek vra ... ek het nie geld, ... ek leen, ek leen die geld van die ticket maar einde van die maand, sy sal nie vat daai geld nie ...</i>” Participant 17, 25 August 2012 (Interview 13 - Connie 44), 58-62.</p> <p>“... <i>ek is lief vir hom ... Miesies het mooi my gehelp ...</i>” Participant 7, 26 July 2012 (Interview 6 - Mona 59), 116-116.</p> <p>“... <i>Die grote het bed gehad. die twee hulle het nie bed gehad nie. Ek het saam met hulle geslaap by een bed en toe, as ek begin werk by hierdie mense wat ek nou werk, die Pa, hy wil praat, dan vra hy vir my, sê vir my hoe leef jy saam jou kinders? Toe sê ek vir hom, ek leef baie swaar, baie swaar ...</i>” Participant 8, 26 July 2012 (Interview 7a - Mina 56), 140-140.</p> <p>“... <i>As nie daai mense wat ek daar gewerk het, my kind hulle sal nie skool gegaan het nie. Nou sy't vir my gehelp lat die kinders skool toe gegaan. As my klein sussie gedood is, hy't my gehelp met die geld om my suster te graf ...</i>” Participant 4, 21 July 2012 (Interview 3 - Sammy 50), 86-86.</p> <p>“... <i>Hy gee nie sy ouma 'n drukkies nie, maar hy gee vir jou 'n drukkies ...</i>” Participant 5, 21 July 2012 (Interview 4 - Ann 57), 118-118.</p>

Table 3 (continued)

*Theme 2: Flourishing - Positive Employment Relationship Case*

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Employment relationship (continued)	Work engagement and treatment	Decent work for decent pay	<p><i>“... working as a domestic worker, but in future they will realise that domestic worker is also a job for everyone who can work and get money, cause there as a domestic worker you get money, like they also work here, they also work in the shops, they also work in a furniture shop, they money that we get is the same money ...”</i> Participant 6, 24 July 2012 (Interview 5 - Eliza 44), 74-74.</p> <p><i>“... die miesies is goed, maar die geld is min ...”</i> Participant 14, 19 August 2012 (Interview 10b - Libby 36), 97-107.</p> <p><i>“... die ding wat kan ek dankie sê is net dat hulle my by hulle plek gehou vir lank ...”</i> Participant 13, 19 August 2012 (Interview 10a - Mandi 34), 113-113.</p>
		Job content and workload (clearly voiced expectations)	
		Autonomy in scheduling daily activities	
		Enabling environment and resources	
		Length of service (time frame)	
		Acknowledgement of challenges in own caring environment	
		Treatment received within the employment context	
Power relations			

Table 3 (continued)

*Theme 2: Flourishing - Positive Employment Relationship Case*

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Employment relationship (continued)	Work engagement and treatment (continued)	Acceptance into employers' family context (sister-like/one of the family)	"... <i>you must treat me nicely...</i> " Participant 19, 12 September 2012 (Interview 15 - Amina 27), 6-8.
		Value description of contribution	"... <i>Sy't jou gehelp om jou kinders groot te maak ...</i> " Participant 4, 21 July 2012 (Interview 3 - Sammy 50), 23-23.
	Communication	Domestic workers' voice	"... <i>So die mense, hulle is bang om te praat en die hele die tyd ons moet praat ...</i> " Participant 17, 25 August 2012 (Interview 13 - Connie 44), 194-200.
		Style/level of communication	"... <i>Miesies en baas ek soek nie dit en dit en dit en dit ek wil hoor by julle hoe sê julle ...</i> " Participant 8, 26 July 2012 (Interview 7a - Mina 56), 240-240.
		Legislative stipulations	
		Contractual compliance	"... <i>as jy iets kort, jy vra ...</i> " Participant 2, 17 July 2012 (Interview 2a - Sara 50), 84-84.
		Dealing with mistakes	"... <i>O, ek is so bly hierso, ek dink dis my ma se huis, want hierso ons word soos family. My employer en sy kind en sy family hulle was so...hulle vat my net soos sy familie ... Ja, en my employer, as ek het my hartseer soos by die huis iets, ek sê vir hom. Hy.....ons gesels orraait ...</i> " Participant 5, 21 July 2012 (Interview 4 - Ann 57), 99-103.
Dispute resolution			

Table 3 (continued)

*Theme 2: Flourishing - Positive Employment Relationship Case*

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Employment relationship (continued)	Communication (continued)		“... <i>Ja, as hy verkeerd gemaak het, kan hom sê, maar hy het vir my nie my verkeerd gemaak ...</i> ” Participant 4, 21 July 2012 (Interview 3 - Sammy 50), 92-92.
			“... <i>Ek het gedink hulle sal as ek het nie iets or breek iets, gebreek, hulle sal my raas, nê, maar ek kry die goeie mense ... hulle sê nee, is die accident. Hulle was vriendelik ...</i> ” Participant 5, 21 July 2012 (Interview 4 - Ann 57), 4-4.
			“... <i>Nee, ek gaan nie by die CCMA oor werk ... Ek praat saam met hom, ons moet die goed regmaak saam met hom, nie die ander mense nie, ek gaan nie daar ...</i> ” Participant 1, 21 May 2012 (Interview 1 - Marjorie 52), 220-222.
Psycho-sociological contract	Reciprocity within the employment context	Give and take – equilibrium in the relationship	“... <i>Just to keep them happy and sometimes they make you happy ...</i> ” Participant 20, 14 September 2012 (Interview 16 – Elise 29), 50-52.
	Ethics of reciprocity	Respectful treatment and friendly work environment	“... <i>aanmekaar dan ek help hom, kan help by die huis, dan sy help my met die geld ...</i> ” Participant 2, 17 July 2012 (Interview 2a - Sara 50), 2-2.
		Clearly stated expectations	“... <i>ek is happy met my werk wat ek het. Die Here het my gegee daardie werk nou ... my hart is bly. Ek is bly by my hart ...</i> ” Participant 1, 21 May 2012 (Interview 1 - Marjorie 52), 306-306.

Table 3 (continued)

*Theme 2: Flourishing - Positive Employment Relationship Case*

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Psycho-sociological contract (continued)	Reciprocity within the employment context (continued)	Acceptance - being perceived as “one of the family”	“... <i>If I’m doing a wrong things to you, you must tell me. Don’t talk to the back of me .... You know I understand. Don’t talk that with... I can’t speak to you because you’re my boss; that one. If I make a mistake for you, tell me ... Maybe me and you it will be a friendly... I’m not supposed to be afraid to talk to you ...</i> ” Participant 19, 12 September 2012 (Interview 15 - Amina 27), 55-64.
		Job security	“... <i>ek moet gaan help die miesies, sy gaan by die werk ...</i> ” Participant 2, 17 July 2012 (Interview 2a - Sara 50), 76-76.
	Psychosocial well-being (perceptions of self, perceptions of dignity within the work context and trust)	Empowered to make a difference in the lives of others and provide for the future	“... <i>I’m proud of what I’m doing ...</i> ” Participant 6, 24 July 2012 (Interview 5 - Eliza 44), 76-76.
		Pride in what she does	“... <i>Ek sê dankie Here, laat hy net vir my daai mense gewys het ...</i> ” Participant 8, 26 July 2012 (Interview 7a - Mina 56), 146-146.
		Gratitude for dignified treatment within the employment relationship	“... <i>For giving me a job ... I’m grateful...</i> ” Participant 20, 14 September 2012 (Interview 16 - Elise 29), 163-172.
		Mutually trusting employment relationship	“... <i>ek weet die baas, sy is nie tsotsie nie, is nie skelm nie, is so waar ... my baas het my ge-register ...</i> ” Participant 15, 20 August 2012 (Interview 11 - Mireya 43), 130-134.

Table 3 (continued)

*Theme 2: Flourishing - Positive Employment Relationship Case*

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Psycho-sociological contract (continued)	Psychosocial well-being (continued)	Knowledge of and adherence to the stipulations of SD 7 by both parties	<i>“... If they can change, they can learn to understand me, they can see I’m not a thief. I’m working because I need the money, I’m not working because I want something from them ...”</i> Participant 6, 24 July 2012 (Interview 5 - Eliza 44), 78-78.
		Flourish within the current positive employment context	<i>“... Nou as jy domestic werk, jou kind hulle eet, hulle kry klere. Die domestic hy’s nie baie geld nie, maar daar is nie iemand wat daai geld kan jou gee nie as jy by die huis sit ...”</i> Participant 4, 21 July 2012 (Interview 3 - Sammy 50), 180-180.

*Note.* Summative outcome of the data analysis process.

\* Verbatim quotes supported with details about the participant, the date of the interview and the actual position of the quote within the transcribed interview.

Table 4

*Theme 3: Legislative Awareness as Empowerment Tool within the South African Domestic Worker Sector*

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Survival mode	State of impoverishment	Nature and extent of poverty experienced ( past, present and anticipated future)	"... we're still in that condition, the bad condition ..." Participant 11, 27 July 2012 (Interview 8b – Rita 45), 129-134.
		Survival mode (satisfy basic needs)	"... First one ma'am, sometimes I'm working without food. I'm working from morning until I'm going without nothing. The second thing ma'am is money, the money is too little, the money is little for me. Another thing again, ma'am, eish, I'm scared." Participant 18, 27 August 2012 (Interview 14 - Emilia 41), 10-10.
		Perceptions of self-worth as defined by occupational status	"... Ek is swaar net by die geld. Ek's nie worry eintlik by die kos nie. Ek worry net vir die geld, moet net my geld gee ..." Participant 15, 20 August 2012 (Interview 11 - Mireya 43), 127-130.
		Domestic work is just like any other job	
	Medium of exchange and the value of money	Money as a commodity and an exchange method	"... Hy sê die miesies is goed, maar die geld is min ..." Participant 14, 19 August 2012 (Interview 10b - Libby 36), 97-107.
		Dependency upon income	"... Ek weet by my hart ek werk en darem ek kry iets, soos jy sê dis beter as niks ..." Participant 13, 19 August 2012 (Interview 10a - Mandi 34), 84-88.
		Value of self vs value of work	"... geld....maak 'n mens ongelukkig... omdat jy nie het nie ..." Participant 12, 18 August 2012 (Interview 9 - Annie 51), 89-95.

Table 4 (continued)

*Theme 3: Legislative Awareness as Empowerment Tool within the South African Domestic Worker Sector*

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Survival mode (continued)	Medium of exchange and the value of money (continued)		<i>"... Ek is swaar net by die geld. Ek's nie worry eintlik by die kos nie. Ek worry net vir die geld, moet net my geld gee ..."</i> Participant 15, 20 August 2012 (Interview 11 - Mireya 43), 127-130.
Empowerment	Needle in a hay stack	Basic need fulfilment as overarching driving force for actions	
		Lack of alternative	
		Lack of understanding of the concept empowerment	
	Sense of isolation	Nature of the individualised employment context	
		Perceptions of employer-employee relationship	
		Support systems	

Table 4 (continued)

*Theme 3: Legislative Awareness as Empowerment Tool within the South African Domestic Worker Sector*

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Empowerment (continued)	Sense of isolation (continued)	Lack of a collective voice (the notion that they can only affect their own conditions of employment and not those of others)	
		Strength of voice	
		Conversations on the bus	“... as die domestic workers paar keer hulle maak nie die toi- toi, hulle maak nie daai.... as ons gesels, ons gesels met die lewe ... By die baklei vir die toi-toi, die strike, ah, ah ... Nee, die domestic, hulle maak nie so nie. Want hulle weet as hulle maak so, die ...jou werk, jy kan maar jou werk los, en waar gaan jy kos kry, wie gaan jou alles doen? ...” Participant 5, 21 July 2012 (Interview 4 - Ann 57), 80-82.
		Employment rights	
		Fear of confronting the employer	“... We don’t have union, and we are not supposed to go on strike ...” Participant 20, 14 September 2012 (Interview 16 – Elise 29), 213-222.
		Support systems	
	Alternative employment opportunities		
		Social networking	

Table 4 (continued)

*Theme 3: Legislative Awareness as Empowerment Tool within the South African Domestic Worker Sector*

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Domestic workers' perceptions of the post-SD 7 era	The invisible nature of the sector	Government (distrust of DoL officials, fear of job losses, lack of visible engagement, re-assess employment standards in the sector)	<i>"... I think ma'am government, to make a better for a domestic worker if he give a domestic worker something like we know our salary because our salary now is not the same and then we don't know about what time to start your work, what time to go home and then the other thing ma'am, we ask government to make, what is this, medical for domestic workers ..."</i> Participant 18, 27 August 2012 (Interview 14 – Emilia 41), 106-106.
		Employer (legislative compliance)	
		Domestic worker (pleading for improved employment conditions, catch 22 situation)	<i>"... if you're going to Labour somewhere will help you, some will never help you because it'll take a long process, yes. To go there and to take that form... You know, it's a long process ... Not wasting for money but wasting of time ..."</i> Participant 19, 12 September 2012 (Interview 15 Amina 27), 202-204.
			<i>"... jy sien daar by die Labour moet hom weer Government bietjie check daar nè ... so wragtig, matsotsie is over daar ..."</i> Participant 15, 20 August 2012 (Interview 11 - Mireya 43), 213-219.
			<i>"... Die mense gaan daarso maar hulle treat hulle nie orraait nie ... hulle jaag hulle weg ..."</i> Participant 13, 19 August 2012 (Interview 10a - Mandi 34), 162-166.
		<i>"... The problem is, you go there, what next? ... Cause we're still in that condition, the bad condition ..."</i> Participant 11, 27 July 2012 (Interview 8b – Rita 45), 129-134.	

Table 4 (continued)

*Theme 3: Legislative Awareness as Empowerment Tool within the South African Domestic Worker Sector*

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Domestic workers' perceptions of the post-SD 7 era (continued)	The invisible nature of the sector (continued)		<p>"... jy gaan by die Department, hulle gaan jou nie help nie ..." Participant 4, 21 July 2012 (Interview 3 - Sammy 50), 174-174.</p> <p>"... Ek is bang praat, as ek sien hoe my relationship en my miesies is nie reg, ek is bang ek moet daar by Labour gaan en altyd as hy praat daar by die TV, hy sê sien jou miesies is nie reg vir jou jy moet daar by die Labour gaan, jy moet hom claim, dit is nie maklik nie en ek, ek is net so. Ek is so bang want ek, ek sorg my job, oor my job moet nie weg nie ..." Participant 15, 20 August 2012 (Interview 11 – Mireya 43), 148-154.</p> <p>"... hulle het gesê hulle kom hierso by die huis maar hulle kom nie daai mense nie ..." Participant 17, 25 August 2012 (Interview 13 – Connie 44), 158-170.</p> <p>"Dit pla my nie, want ek het werk. Wat sal ek maak, ek moet kos kry. As ek by die huis gaan, sit ek, sê die baas het vir my nie dit en dit gemaak, wat gaan ek eet by die huis? .... baas gevat hy't vir my gesê sy gaan register, maar ek het hom nie gevra nie ..." Participant 4, 21 July 2012 (Interview 3 - Sammy 50), 140-146.</p> <p>"... you know government is so useless ..." Participant 19, 12 September 2012 (Interview 15 - Amina 27), 212-212.</p>

Table 4 (continued)

*Theme 3: Legislative Awareness as Empowerment Tool within the South African Domestic Worker Sector*

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Hunger for knowledge	Perceptions of current employment relationship	Negotiated employment conditions	"... <i>How much money I must get it ...</i> " Participant 16, 21 August 2012 (Interview 12 – Belinda 52), 4-4.
		Formalised employment relationship	"... <i>hard werk, min geld, minder pay ...</i> " Participant 14, 19 August 2012 (Interview 10b - Libby 36), 21-24.
		Issues of concern (contract of employment, working hours equitable compensation and UIF)	
	Existing legislative knowledge	Familiarity with the stipulations of Sectoral Determination 7	"... <i>Nee, (Participant's name) weet nie, daar's niks wat ek ken nie. Ek weet niks, dis daaroor wat ek wil kom weet ...</i> " Participant 12, 18 August 2012 (Interview 9 - Annie 51), 21-21.
		Sources of existing knowledge	"... <i>I hear, but I didn't know it. Like this papers I see, I don't know what's happening here. I read, I read mama, I can't understand what's happening there ...</i> " Participant 16, 21 August 2012 (Interview 12 - Belinda 52), 135-142.
		Confidence to engage with employer on issues of employment standards (fear of potential job losses and the need to speak with authority)	"... <i>Miskien dit sal vir my baie help dat ek die goed weet. Miskien nou ek sit hierso en dink ek ken die goed, maar ek ken nie. Ons hoor die goed net, miskien dis nie eers waar of wat, so. Miskien as ek kan daai training kry, is beter ek sal die ander mense waarheid sê wat ek weet dis....dis waar ...</i> " Participant 13, 19 August 2012 (Interview 10a - Mandi 34), 173-178.

Table 4 (continued)

*Theme 3: Legislative Awareness as Empowerment Tool within the South African Domestic Worker Sector*

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Hunger for knowledge (continued)	Existing legislative knowledge (continued)		<p>“... <i>We are afraid to go and ask someone ...</i>” Participant 11, 27 July 2012 (Interview 8b - Rita 45), 127-128.</p> <p>“... <i>Dink jy as die mense die rights beter geken het sal hulle makliker praat? (Participant’s name): Ja hy sal maklik. Baie mense lief die employers, baie baie, net hy is bang maar is bang maar is baie mense, sy werk daar by die kitchen is baie baie baie miesies, is baie ... Ek is so bang want ek, ek sorg my job, oor my job moet nie weg nie ...</i>” Participant 15, 20 August 2012 (Interview 11 – Mireya 43), 148-154.</p> <p>“... <i>I know supposed to, yes. I know about hours. If I’m right, we must work seven hours or eight, no, not seven hours. Seven hours or eight hours a day, yes. Money, you must get... some other people say you must get one thousand eight hundred a month or some people say you must get one thousand seven... I don’t know ...</i>” Participant 19, 12 September 2012 (Interview 15 Amina 27), 173-178.</p> <p>“... <i>ek verstaan nie mooi, ek wil net ... waar praat ... ek sal nie so gaan, ek soek die goed want ek ken hom nie. Ek wil mooi verstaan eintlik ...</i>” Participant 1, 21 May 2012 (Interview 1 – Marjorie 52), 242-242.</p>

Table 4 (continued)

*Theme 3: Legislative Awareness as Empowerment Tool within the South African Domestic Worker Sector*

Sub-theme	Category	Sub-category	Significant quotes*
Legislative awareness as empowerment tool	Taking ownership of their own empowerment initiatives	Willingness to learn about the stipulations of SD 7	<i>"... We are afraid to go and ask someone ..."</i> Participant 11, 27 July 2012 (Interview 8b – Rita 45), 127-128.
		Accessibility of information	<i>"... Nog niks daaroor gepraat. My mies het nog niks daaroor gepraat nie. Die kontrak wat sy ook vir my gemaak het, het ek maar net geteken, ek weet ook nie vir wat het ek geteken, want dis net 'n hele klomp werk wat daar geskrywe is ..."</i> Participant 12, 18 August 2012 (Interview 9 - Annie 51), 29-31.
		Knowledge is power	
		Legal rights education as an enabling tool	
		Confidence to assert legal rights	

*Note.* Summative outcome of the data analysis process.

\* Verbatim quotes supported with details about the participant, the date of the interview and the actual position of the quote within the transcribed interview.

## **Appendix C**

### **Proof of Transcription Accuracy**

**TRANSCRIBER'S CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that, **insofar as it is audible**, the foregoing is true and correct transcripts of the proceedings / interviews recorded by means of a mechanical recorder in the matter of:

CLIENT: CHRISTEL MARAIS  
RECORDED AT: CAPE TOWN  
DATE HELD: 23.08.2012  
TRANSCRIBER: On Time Transcribers CC  
DATE COMPLETED: 02.10.2012  
NUMBER OF TAPES: DIGITAL RECORDINGS  
NUMBER OF PAGES: VARIOUS

**QUALITY OF RECORDING**

<b>EXCELLENT</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>POOR</b>	<b>SHOCKING</b>
	X			

**COMMENTS**

There were some audio quality issues with Intv. 2.

## **Appendix D**

### **Proof of Consensus Conversation**

**CHARLENE DOWNING**

***BA CUR, BA HONS, M CUR (CUM LAUDE), D CUR***

10 March 2014

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:**

I hereby confirm the following participation and involvement :

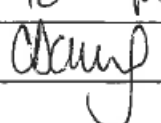
- acted as the independent coder of the original transcriptions of the individual interviews for the study;
- was part of one interview at the initial stage of the fieldwork as part of the pilot study for the study; and
- attended and actively participated in a consensus discussion with the candidate re data saturation; synthesis and analysis of the sub-categories, categories and main themes of the study.

in the PhD Thesis (Article method):Title:

LIVED REALITIES OF DOMESTIC WORKERS WITHIN THE SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

of Candidate: Christel Marais

Student number: 12182257 and Promoter: Prof. Christo de W van Wyk

Name in full: Charlene Downing  
Date: 10 March 2014  
Signature: 

**Appendix E**  
**Proof of Language Editing**

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

5 March 2014

This is to confirm that I, Yvonne Pawlowski, edited the PhD thesis of Christel Marais (student number 12182257; promoter Prof. C. de W. van Wyk) entitled "Lived realities of domestic workers within the South African labour legislative context: A qualitative study". The thesis took on the format of articles and as the editor I edited the text in terms of language while maintaining the author's authentic voice.

Yvonne Pawlowski

Sworn Translator to the Supreme Court of SA  
BA (Trans) (Rhodes University)  
BA (Hons)(Psych)(Wits)  
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