CHAPTER-IV

THEORETICAL FRAME WORK OF THE DOMESTIC WORKERS
In this chapter, I introduce the main theoretical discussions and concepts that guide my work. In particular, I discuss conceptualisations of paid domestic work, class and other social hierarchies, vulnerability at work, children’s work, female life-courses, and inter gene rationality between working mothers and daughters. Like some inspirational studies on paid domestic work in India, I aim at a strong contextualisation of the work in everyday realities, practices and negotiations.

I approach paid domestic work by focusing on the relations between the two sides, the employers and workers. In doing this, I draw upon Marxist feminist approaches to domestic labour relation analysis, which take into account the context and historic specificity of each labour relation, and find it important to analyse through empirical data how class operates in the relations between the two sides. This approach considers an understanding of class structures and relations critical for social sciences, and intrinsically linked to the analysis of domestic labour relations. However, to analyse class relations in India, I want to broaden the approach by understanding class relations as symbolic, not simply material (Bourdieu 1984), in line with some important recent contributions to class analysis in India (Fernandes 2006; Säävälä 2010).
4.1 PROFILING DOMESTIC WORKER IN INDIA

As an occupation, the field of domestic work is quite diverse covering profiles such as child care, cooking, cleaning and hospitality at home. Viewing the focus of this paper- women domestic worker in urban sector-, we need to lay focus on occupational profiles which are compatible with characteristics like ‘being woman’, ‘domestic work being a core activity rather than a subsidiary activity’ and ‘mainly urban based occupation’. In this section, we outline salient features of domestic workers in India, mainly demographic, socio-economic and labour market related aspects. For this, we extracted unit level data from National Sample Survey 66th Round (2010-2011). As part of the data generation, we followed a multi-step process. First, we merged household and personal level data across states. Second, we did a search for domestic work related occupation profiles from National Classification of occupation (NCO) 1968.

4.2 DOMESTIC WORKERS - BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

Domestic work, a predominantly female occupation, has been increasing in India. Growing urbanization, the increased labour force participation rate of women, and the decline of extended families are the primary reasons for the exponential growth of this sector. Despite this growth, there are few (if any) laws and policies to regulate domestic work and protect domestic workers. In recent years, efforts have been made at the state and central levels to legislate for these workers and several draft
legislations are currently under discussion by organisations of domestic workers.

Most domestic workers are from the marginalized sections of society and a large number of them are migrant workers. Workers range from full-time to part-time workers, skilled and unskilled workers. Largely women, who already know how to clean and cook, domestic workers are seen as requiring very little skill training. Besides, the work is seen as allowing women, who also shoulder the responsibility of their own households, some degree of flexibility. This fact reinforces sexual division of labour within the world of work and of race, caste, class, poorer economies apart from gender as well. In 2000, the UN Human Rights Commission declared domestic worker as a form of contemporary slavery.

Organising domestic workers has been a huge challenge as the workplace is inaccessible and multiple, marked by a high rate of attrition and instability. As a result, the demand for the better wages or working conditions through an organized union has been weak and scattered. A strong and well organized work force has been pivotal in ensuring progressive policy and legislation, while simultaneously enabling better enforcement of existing legislations.

4.3 LEGISLATING FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS IN INDIA

Domestic workers are not protected under the scope of labour laws in India. Early judgements had declared that those engaged in personal
service could not be considered workmen for the purpose of the Trade Unions Act, 1926. This is also the position with regard to most other labour laws since the household or home is not considered an industry to which the labour laws could apply. As a result, domestic workers are currently not covered within the scope of most labour legislation. They are not entitled to maternity or other social security benefits, and their working conditions or hours of work are not regulated. In certain states, minimum wages have been notified for domestic work.

Several attempts have been made to legislate for this challenging sector. A Domestic Workers (Conditions of Service) Bill (a private members bill introduced in the Rajya Sabha the upper House of the Indian Parliament) was drafted as early as 1959 but was never enacted. This bill together with All India Domestic Servants Bill, introduced in the Lok Sabha the Lower House of the Indian Parliament- provided for a minimum wage, maximum hours of work, a weekly day of rest, 15 days annual leave with wages, casual leave, and the maintenance of a register of domestic workers by the local police. In 1972 and 1977 two further private member bills [Domestic Workers (Conditions of Service) Bill, 1972 and the Domestic Workers (Conditions of Service) Bill, 1977] were introduced in the Lok Sabha, which provided for the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 to be extended to domestic workers. These bills lapsed with the dissolution of the Lok Sabha.
The House Workers (Conditions of Service) Bill of 1989 and a similar bill introduced in 1990 were also not enacted. Both of these bills dealt mainly with full-time domestic work. An important aspect of the 1990 bill was that it envisaged that every employer would have to contribute to the House Workers Welfare Fund. The National Commission on Self-Employed Women and Women in the Informal Sector, 1988 recommended a system of registration for domestic workers. The Commission felt that in view of the existing trends of exploitation, it was extremely important to fix a minimum wage, and to enact a legislation to regulate conditions of employment, social security and security of employment.

The National Commission for Women has drafted a Domestic Workers (Registration, Social Security and Welfare) Act, 2008 and has held consultations around this bill. This bill is a comprehensive bill that seeks to establish a registration procedure for all domestic workers, including part-time and full-time workers. The bill also proposes the setting up of a Domestic Workers Welfare Fund to which workers and employers have to contribute, for compulsory registration of domestic workers, and also deal with registration of service providers (defined as placement agencies for domestic workers), regulation of working conditions and for imprisonment and fines by way of punishment for violation of the provisions of the bill. Central and state level boards are to be set up for administering the law.
The Nirmala Niketan and National Campaign Committee for Unorganised Sector Workers has also drafted the Domestic Workers (Regulation of Employment, Conditions of Work, Social Security and Welfare) Bill, 2008 which is also subject to discussion. This draft law seeks to regulate the employment of domestic workers to ensure regularity of employment, payment of contribution by employers and domestic workers, setting up a Social Security and Welfare Board and central and state level boards to administer the law. This draft also envisages enforcement by the government through a system of inspections at reasonable hours of domestic premises. These recent bills are discussed at greater length below.

Given the federal nature of the Indian Constitution and that legislative entries relating to labour are to be found in the Concurrent List, there have also been, at the state level, several initiatives towards ensuring protection for the domestic workers. Tamil Nadu included domestic workers in their Tamil Nadu Manual Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Work) Act, 1982, in 2007 and the Tamil Nadu Domestic Workers Welfare Board was constituted in the same year. Maharashtra published a Code of Conduct relating to domestic workers.

Most of the draft laws discussed above prohibit employment of children below the age of 14 years as domestic workers. The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 was amended in 2006 to ban the employment of children as domestic workers. Under Section 27 (A) of the
Maharashtra State Public Service Conduct Act, 1997 the Maharashtra government prohibits government employees from employing children below 14 as domestic workers. Such rules can also be found in the rule books of 18 other states. The All India (Conduct) Rules, 1968 have also been amended to prohibit any government employee from employing a child below the age of 14 years.

The states of Kerala and Karnataka have adopted minimum wage laws for domestic workers. In June 2005, the state of Karnataka introduced, by a notification, domestic work into the schedule contained in the Minimum Wages Act. According to the notification, a domestic worker who works for eight hours in a house is entitled to an amount between 1,600 and 1,800 rupees per month. But if the members of the household where the work is done are more than four, the charges will go up to 2,200 rupees. If she/he works more than eight hours, they have to be paid double the rate. In 2003, the National Domestic Workers Welfare Trust and other organizations filed public interest litigation (PIL) in the Supreme Court for a comprehensive legislation for domestic workers in India that has been admitted. The PIL challenged the inadequate social and legal protection and demanded better working conditions like mandatory national holidays and two weeks of paid leave, in addition to a weekly day off for domestic workers. It also sought medical assistance for accidents caused 'on-site' and during employment, maternity benefits, provident fund benefits and the
identity cards to the workers. The petition also sought a ban on child domestic work and sexual harassment faced of domestic workers.

4.4 KEY ISSUES IN LEGISLATING FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS

DEFINITION OF DOMESTIC WORKERS:

The definition of the domestic worker needs greater clarity. The domestic worker is defined as a person employed to do the housework or allied activities in any household, thus excluding those involved in cleaning or cooking in offices, shops and other such premises. Many workers are engaged by small shops and establishments for similar work. Workers who are employed in cleaning and more particularly, catering jobs in an establishment are covered by the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970. Additionally, the Shops and Establishments Act can also be invoked to protect workers engaged in shops and similar such establishments. Thus, whether a comprehensive law to cover all categories of domestic work is desirable or whether there needs to be a separate law for domestic workers engaged in household work and whether those involved in cleaning/cooking/catering in establishments should continue be treated as workers under existing labour laws, needs further explication within the domestic workers movement.

It is very difficult to define the term “domestic” because it is very vague. The term “domestic” denotes a class of “menials” which includes many types of workers, like ayah, kitchen helper, cook and sweeper. So we
would define the term Domestic Workers as “those workers who do cooking, care the children, cleaning utensils, washing clothes, cleaning and sweeping the houses in return for the payment of wages”.

There are two types of domestic workers – Part-time servants and full-time workers. Part-time workers are those who are employed at one or more than one house to perform some definite duties and go away when the assigned work is over. They are not residential helpers. Full-time workers are attached to one house only. They are present for the whole day at employer’s house and do whatever work is assigned to them.

WAGES

Wages for the domestic workers are determined by factors such as tasks performed, hours of work, their social status, skills (or the lack of it), the need for flexibility and other labour market conditions. There are on-going debates over the norms for setting wages. These debates include several tricky issues such as whether the wage ought to be time rated or piece rated, in kind, hourly or weekly, part-time or full time; based on house size or persons per household, over time; adjusted for boarding, include medical care and other necessities and multiplicity of employers. Another concern that has been expressed is the need to link the wages to dearness allowance, which will ensure that the minimum wages do not fall lower than the cost of living for this very poor category of largely female workers. Several issues in wage setting relate to the live-in domestic workers, such as
the regulation of agencies, leave periods (including annual, sick and maternity leave), hours of work, on call periods/ rest periods.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Female domestic workers, especially those who live in their employers home, are vulnerable to sexual abuse. The existing sexual harassment law following the Vishaka judgement of the Supreme Court does not apply to domestic work. There is thus a need for the proposed law to provide a mechanism for dealing with such harassment. Migrant domestic workers are especially vulnerable to sexual assault. A separate law, or a component of a domestic violence law, is needed to control trafficking of women and workplace sexual harassment.

DISCRIMINATION

Domestic workers invariably represent the more marginalized communities in society. Prejudice and bias related to social status is reflected very strongly at the workplace for many domestic workers. A clear statement in the law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of caste, class, gender, sexuality and/or religion is necessary. Another insidious but widely prevalent bias is that of poverty and criminality, which has wider ramifications as domestic workers are the first to be questioned on the occurrence of a crime. Greater protection needs to be accorded to domestic workers against police harassment and discrimination.
TRAFFICKING AND MIGRANT LABOUR

Both inter and intra-country migration brings with it certain vulnerability for workers within the sector. Lacking support systems in a new city, many have low bargaining power and the ability to protect their basic rights. The situation of foreign domestic migrants is even worse than that of domestic migrants as they are generally un-documented and they are regularly harassed by the police and the authorities. See the proposed calculation on the basis of piece-rated wages by the Stree Jagruti Samiti, Bengaluru.

REGULATION OF AGENCIES

Agencies that seek to procure and place domestic work proliferate in several parts of the country. Time and again allegations of harassment, rape, corruption, and adoption rackets, are levelled against these agencies. Regulation of these agencies is of prime importance and this must necessarily be tied in with education of citizens employing domestic workers through agencies.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

While the nature of the work renders it difficult to organize the domestic workers, particularly those that work full-time in households, the other challenge is to register a union under the Trade Union Act, 1926. There is a need for this law to be amended to clarify that domestic workers are deemed to be working in an industry and are thus within the scope of
the law. Issues for organizing domestic workers in several parts of the world have focused on union issues; formation of co-operatives; credit and savings groups. Vocational training; social activities; employment exchanges; support services; a place to congregate; crche; legal and general advice; support in disputes with employers and in familial disputes. The law must take of cue from these efforts to rethink organizing as necessary to the effective implementation of any legislation for domestic workers.

ENSURING EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

Reconceptualising the legal framework so as to enable effective implementation is imperative. Experience in both Karnataka and Maharashtra states suggest it is difficult to implement even the minimal protections accorded by the law. Time and again, the labour department has expressed its inability to monitor the implementation. Providing a role to unions of domestic workers or women’s organisations in enforcing the law and in registering complaints of non-compliance is essential. Re-envisioning and recasting the labour regulation framework so to be able to address the protection of domestic workers is crucial.

4.5 RECENT EFFORTS AT LEGISLATING FOR DOMESTIC WORKER

The National Commission for Women (NCW) has proposed the Domestic Workers (Registration Social Security and Welfare) Act, 2008. It claims to put in place a Comprehensive Central Legislation designed to
register and meet the working conditions of the domestic workers, who are an important segment of the service sector of the Indian economy. Simultaneously, the National Campaign Committee for Unorganised Workers and Nirmala Niketan has also proposed a Domestic Workers (Regulation of Employment), Conditions of Work, Social Security and Welfare) Bill, 2008 (NCCUW).

Definition of a domestic worker Section 2 (f) of the NCW Bill defines a domestic worker as a person who is employed for remuneration whether in cash or kind, in any household through any agency or directly either on a temporary basis or permanent, part-time or full-time to do the household work or allied work. The section provides an explanation stating that a 10 Sujata Gothoskar, New initiatives in organizing strategy in the informal economy Case study of domestic worker household and allied work includes but is not limited to activities such as cooking or a part of it, washing clothes or utensils, cleaning or dusting of the house, caring/nursing of the children/sick/old/handicapped. The definition does not extend to workers who do similar work in office spaces and in other establishments. It also does not specifically exclude child labour employed in domestic work.

Whereas the definition of domestic worker in the NCCUW draft states that a person between the age of 15 and 60 years working in any domestic employments, directly or through any agency or contractor whether exclusively for one employer or in a group or otherwise one or
more employers whether simultaneously or otherwise and includes a casual or temporary domestic worker; migrant worker But does not include any member of the family of an employer.

Schedule I to the NCCUW bill indicates that domestic work will include gardening, baby sitting, cooking and serving, cleaning and washing and care of the sick and aged. Section 2 (h) of the NCW Bill states that employer means any person that engages the domestic worker to do any work in a household whether part-time or full-time either directly or through any other person to whom the affairs of such household and includes any other person to whom the affairs of such household is entrusted, whether such person is called an employee or is called by any other name. The NCCUW draft provides a similar definition of an employer and defines employer as any person who has an ultimate control over the affairs of the establishment, work or service and includes any other person to whom the affairs of such establishment are entrusted, whether such person is called an employee or is called by any other name prevailing in the scheduled group of employments. But the NCCUW draft provides an additional definition, that of an establishment. Section 2 (j) states that an establishment means any place or premises belonging to, or under the control of an employer where the domestic workers are employed in any work; and includes an establishment belonging to the employer. (According to Section 2 (9) of the Delhi Shops and Establishments Act, 1954, an Establishment means a shop, a commercial establishment, residential hotel,
restaurant, eating house, theatre or other places of public amusement or entertainment to which this Act applies and includes such other establishments as Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, declare to be an establishment for the purposes of this Act.) It appears that while the definition of establishments could be read broadly to include shops and commercial establishments, the NCCUW draft intends to confine the bill only to those engaged in domestic work and working within a house and the definition of establishment should be read down accordingly.

Wages Both Section 2 (m) NCW and Section 2 (u) NCCUW draft defines wages as all remunerations expressed in terms of money or capable of being so expressed which would, if the terms of contract of employment, express or implied were fulfilled, be payable to a domestic worker in respect of work done but does not include (i) the value of any house accommodation, supply of light, water, medical attendance, or any other amenity or any service excluded from the computation of wages by general or special order of the government; (ii) any contribution paid by the employer to any pension fund or provident fund or under any scheme or social insurance and the interest which may have accrued thereon; (iii) any travelling allowance or the value of any travelling concession; (iv) any sum paid to the domestic worker to defray special expenses entailed on him by the nature of his employment. Section (u) provides an additional clause (v) which states any gratuity payable on discharge. The South African legislation approaches the question of wages differently. 11 The legislation
enumerates the hourly rates, weekly rate and the monthly rate payable and the amounts are prefixed in the statute. Section 3 links the wage increases to the Consumer Price Index. It states: If the annual increase in the Consumer Price Index reported by Statistics South Africa six weeks before a wage increase in terms of this clause comes into effect is 10% or higher, domestic workers will be entitled to receive a wage increase in the Consumer Price Index. The NCCUW draft acknowledges the importance of setting the criteria for determining the minimum wages in the Statute. Section 8 (ix) states that the appropriate government shall ensure to every domestic worker the right to minimum wages in accordance with norms evolved at the 15th Session of Indian Labour Conference, 1957 and Reptakos Brett judgement.

Calculating wages

In a study put together by Stree Jagruti, an organization based in Bengaluru in on minimum wages for domestic workers. The report proposes a few guidelines for fixing the minimum wages for domestic workers. The recommendations are reproduced here, as much thought has been given to the specificities of domestic work as a category.

4.6 MINIMUM WAGE LAW PROPOSAL

We propose the following Guidelines: Domestic Workers involved in Sweeping, Swabbing, Cleaning Clothes, Cleaning Vessels, Dusting and other unspecified items should be paid a minimum of 151 (Basic) + 99 (VDA) = 300 Rupees per month for an hour’s work per day, regardless of
the activity or the number of tasks; Domestic Work involving cooking and preparing food should be paid 350 Rupees per 11For details see South Africa’s Basic Conditions of Employment Act, No 75 of 1997 available at month for an hour’s work per day; Any part-hour or multiple of hours should be calculated pro-rate against the appropriate rate, above; Domestic Workers should be given a weekly day off. If this is not given, overtime should be paid: the resulting monthly rates should be 400 Rupees and 475, respectively. This is based on an overtime rate of double the standard rate and 4.5 overtime days per month; these rates should be altered each year in line with inflation. Under these terms, our example of a two-hour, three-task employment with no time off would be paid 400 * 2 = 800 Rupees. Similarly, the Alternative Law Forum, Bengaluru has recommended the following method for calculating wages -: a prescribed minimum wages + 1 to 5% of the household income + 10% annual increment + overtime for time worked beyond agreed period of work or duration of work+ additional wage for additional work. Modes of delivery of welfare benefits

The NCCUW draft bill conceives of Domestic Workers Boards to be set up in each State, with a larger mandate of regulating employment and conditions of service. The employers of domestic workers shall make contributions to the social security and welfare funds of the Domestic Workers Boards. Every registered worker is also required to make a small contribution to the fund. Thus, the welfare fund is seen as a subset of the Worker Boards. Additionally, the NCCUW seeks to regulate the agencies
that procure and place domestic workers (especially migrant workers) across the country.

Similarly, the NCW bill seeks to set up a Domestic Workers Welfare Fund. Section 15 states that the fund shall be administered and applied by the State Board. And every member registered as a beneficiary under the Act shall be entitled to the benefits from the welfare fund. Contributions to the fund include grants made by the Central Government, money received by beneficiaries, amounts received by district boards, income from investment amounts in the fund, fines and contributions from the domestic worker. The District and State Boards shall be responsible for registration and monitoring of domestic workers. All agencies that carry on the business of providing domestic workers are required to be registered under the Act. The NCCUW bill envisages that every employer shall pay a yearly contribution into the fund for every full-time or part-time domestic worker employed, with the contribution for a part-time domestic worker on the part of an employer being lower. This bill also provides for the compulsory registration of domestic workers and places a duty upon the employer, service provider (placement agency) or domestic worker to register with the appropriate board. Examples of best practices from other sectors would be useful in designing welfare structures for the domestic workers sector. Informal workers such as head-load workers, construction workers, etc have been successful in enacting progressive legislations such as the Maharashtra Mathadi, Hamal and Other Manual Workers (Regulation of Employment
and Welfare) Act, 1969 and the Tamil Nadu Manual Workers Act in Tamil Nadu. In Tamil Nadu, the Domestic workers have already been added to the schedule to the Act, and a separate welfare scheme has been notified for them.

IMPLEMENTATION

The NCCUW bill visualizes a three tier implementation mechanism. A District Board accountable to a State Board, which in turn is answerable to a Central Advisory Committee. Thus, at the lowest level, the District Board shall be the contact point for the domestic worker. The NCW Bill sets up a Domestic Workers Board at the State level. Additionally, it sets up a Central Advisory Committee, State Advisory Committee and Inspectors to implement the provisions of the Act. Interestingly, it grants powers of inspection to any registered trade union. Section 15 states that any registered trade union may have the power to inspect work premises and prosecute the erring employer for violations under this Act.

The NCCUW bill provides for a system of inspection at reasonable hours within the household premises to ensure compliance with the provisions of the law. The idea of the home being a private domain has been one of the reasons for the labour law not extending to the home. However, over the years there has been a great erosion of the public/private distinction for the purposes of the law. Domestic violence, cruelty and other forms of sexual abuse carried on within a home are subject to legal
regulation. There appears to be no good reason why labour related provisions should not be enforced within the home. Any proposed law for domestic workers has to grapple with these key issues identified above.

The centrality of class became evident from the very first interviews with both employers and workers. This, backed by a broad reading of domestic labour relations, is one reason why I perceive domestic labour relations as class relations. However, rather than deciding a priori that class is the most important aspect, I approach class and other hierarchies through empirical findings. My approach is to take into account the intersecting social dimensions of gender, caste, age, ethnicity, and religion and analyse their impact and role in domestic labour relations. Other important discussions of paid domestic work in India relate to its increasing commodification, especially through part-time work, and the simultaneous perserverence of traditional elements which are manifested in maternalism, a peculiar feature of domestic labour relations. Approaching paid domestic work as a form of vulnerable employment, I look at how structural factors such as age contribute to workers’ vulnerability, positioning them in what I call a continuum of vulnerability.

Finally, this chapter takes us beyond two-sided labour relations to locate paid domestic work in the context of female workers’ lives. The concepts of life course, work-life course and intergenerational transmission of work allow an understanding of how central parameters of female
workers’ lives, such as marriage, reproduction, or dowry, influence their labour market participation.

4.7 STUDYING HIERARCHIES IN PAID DOMESTIC WORK DOMESTIC LABOUR RELATIONS AS CLASS RELATIONS

The study of paid domestic work has been a favourite of Marxist feminists. Marxist feminism provides helpful insights for investigating paid domestic work “as an occupation located within the class structure of a particular historical situation as part of the societal reproduction system” (Romero 2002, 59–60). This approach to domestic labour relationships emphasises that: 1) race and gender oppression is not intrinsic to the occupation; 2) the occupation is part of capitalism; 3) domestic work involves physical and ideological reproduction; 4) reproductive labour is devalued because of social divisions of labour; and 5) housewives and domestic workers are both part of the reserve army of the unemployed and thus serve a vital function in the capitalist economy.

Domestic service or paid domestic work appears “as a capitalist relationship in which race, class, and gender inequalities are part and parcel of the capitalist system of production, not simply residues of slavery or feudalism”. Thus, structural and market-based imperatives tend to supersede and alter other features of shared or common identification among women. The presence of domestic workers releases wealthier, educated women from the double burden of wage work and household
work, also referred to as the ‘second shift’. Studies in diverse countries such as the US or India show little difference in male participation in household work. As Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2002, 9) argue: “Strictly speaking, the presence of immigrant nannies does not enable affluent women to enter the workforce; it enables affluent men to continue avoiding the second shift.” Thus, new inequalities between women from different classes are established while male privileges within the home remain virtually intact. As a result, the home becomes one of the sites of class struggle, rendering domestic labour relations essentially conflictual (Romero 2002, 74; Dickey 2000a, 32).

While Romero (2002, 59–60) recognises the differences in the Paid domestic work challenges notions of “sisterhood” as privileged women of one class use the labour of another woman to escape aspects of sexism (Romero 2002), and poses philosophical and practical challenges to feminism and political theory, and to women’s organisations (Anderson 2000). labour process between domestic work and other settings, she argues that domestic workers are engaged in battles similar to those of other employees, essentially a struggle between employers and workers over working hours, work load, and wages. Since the work often takes place in the informal sector, employers can be perceived as consumers in an essentially unregulated capitalist market, seeking the most work for the lowest wage. The household unit is subject to the imperative of class relations comparable in many respects to any workplace. Moreover, given
that domestic work takes place within the home, it becomes part of the societal reproduction system and, thus, carries both superstructural and basic economic functions. Such an approach has been perceived useful since it “enables us to focus on particular forms of waged domestic labour, each with particular sets of social relations”.

The Marxist theory in general has been heavily criticised for its lack of context specificity and lack of gender sensitivity, and for its assumption of a quintessential (male) worker. The feminist Marxist approach complemented traditional Marxism by making gender central to the analysis of class relations. But it has also been criticised for unsuccessful transformation of the Marxist agenda, and for having similar problems of structuralism, overemphasis of economic structures, and for determinism. While it aimed at engendering the analysis, it still seemed to consider gender analysis as subordinate to capital analysis. It has been argued that those feminist Marxist-oriented studies which focus on paid domestic work are an exception within the Fem-49 Vuorela (1987, 202) refers to the tendency of capitalism to change human reproduction relations to serve its own purposes by seeking the cheapest possible reproduction of the commodity labour-power, thus transforming domestic labour and subsistence production into functions of capitalist production. Furthermore, capitalism tends to penetrate the reproductive process, outside its own sphere, by subsuming it into capitalist relations as well. Feminist Marxist
tradition because of their rigorous contextualisation, time-specificity and gender sensitivity (Beechey and Perkins 1987).

Others, however, have criticised these studies for their unsuccessful attempt to explain why the contemporary transformation from unwaged to waged domestic labour has occurred; and for failing to explain the heavily gendered nature of the occupation (Gregson and Lowe 1994, 72). Another criticism is that while the (earlier) studies managed to explain the historical decline of domestic service in the Western countries by the expansion of productive forces and the proletarianisation of women, they did not manage to explain the resurgence of paid domestic work in these countries (Gregson and Lowe 1994, 72).

Two points arise: first, more recent studies (see Bakan and Stasilius 1995; Anderson 2000; Romero 2002) have, in my understanding, provided a rich, gendered, and contextualised analysis of domestic labour relations, and avoided the idea of an occupation which totally disappeared and then re-emerged. Second, the question of the historic disappearance and re-emergence is irrelevant in most countries of the South, where domestic service has never disappeared (Ray and Qayum 2009). Thus, given the different trajectory of domestic work in India, analysis of domestic work in India enriches the general analysis of domestic work.

Whilst the Feminist Marxist approach is in many ways apt for analysing domestic labour relations in India, I find it necessary to
complement it with cultural and symbolic elements of class formation, drawing from both Weberian and Bourdieuan tradition. The class analysis, Liechty (2003, 12) argues, “needs to unite a Weberian sensitivity to the powerful role of culture in social life with a Marxian commitment to locate different forms of cultural practice in the context of unequal distributions of power and resource in society”. For Weberians, class is about relations and grounded in economic exchange relations and cultural processes (Wright 1997, 59; Liechty 1997). While a Marxist approach has been viewed as best suited for an abstract macro-level analysis, Wright (1997, 44–45) suggests, from a Weberian standpoint, that class analysis needs to be located in the exploration of ways in which the social relations of production “are embodied in specific jobs, since jobs are the essential ‘empty places’ filled by individuals within the system of production”. Similarly, labour process theoreticians have emphasised that workers’ interests and ideologies emerge in work places, not merely as an outcome of general class reproduction or socialisation (Julkunen 2008, 26). Liechty (1997, 13), who analysed middle class construction in Nepal, finds important Weber’s insistence that class position (economic power) is distinct from social status (honour or prestige), albeit often tied to it, and the notion that social status is not determined by class alone.

To explain the ways in which both class and social status is reproduced in India, it is helpful to look at Bourdieu’s (1984) class conceptualisations, which build upon Weberian tradition. Like several other
studies on class relations in India (see Derné 2008; Dickey 2000a, 2002; Fernandes 2006; Säävälä 2010), I find useful Bourdieu’s (1984) notion of class as a result of economic, cultural and symbolic capital, and about a struggle in these fields. While the fundamental basis of class lies in economic power, the symbolic features are not derivative of economics but nevertheless, play a fundamental role in defining a person’s class (Dickey 2002, 216–217). Thus, by ‘class’, I refer to a set of cultural practices, symbolic and cultural capital and consumption patterns combined with a certain level of wealth and income (Bourdieu 1984).

Class is reproduced through a range of classificatory practices that are developed as individuals and social groups convert different forms of capital to preserve their relative social standing and capacity for upward mobility. Such practices are not merely individualised or subjective forms of behaviour, but rather the outcome of a dynamic set of processes that are both symbolic and material, and shaped both by longer historical processes and the temporality of the everyday. In the Indian context, caste has a central role in these symbolic processes, and it intertwines with class in the everyday practices. As Liechty (2003, 8) suggests, rather than taking ‘class’ for granted as a natural, universal category, I attempt to explain class in domestic labour relations in Jaipur by describing the experience of it in everyday life.
Related to the analysis of class formation, the concept of ‘exploitation’ is routinely used in labour studies as a process in which employers take advantage of workers’ labour power. Most studies are empirical descriptions of ‘labour exploitation’ and ‘exploitative labour relations’, leaving the term undefined. (See, e.g., Grant 2008; Holm 2008; Miraftab 1996; Rollins 1985). At its simplest, and using Marxist terms, ‘exploitation’ refers to the appropriation of surplus through workers’ labour power. It is “a process which generates both deprivation and powerlessness, and by virtue of appropriating the surplus, exploiters are able both to obtain much higher levels of economic welfare and to have much higher levels of economic power” (Wright 1997, 187). For the exploited, economic welfare is depressed by virtue of having surplus appropriated from them, and economic power drastically curtailed by their being excluded from control over the allocation of the surplus (ibid). Studies on female workers in Asia have referred to exploitation as part of a capitalist system of production that takes advantage of (women’s) labour, which is cheap because it is abundant and because the work is defined as a woman’s household task (Prügl 1996, 43–44). However, rather than taking ‘exploitation’ as a self-evident feature of domestic labour relations, one needs to contextualise the different forms of labour extraction, and to situate exploitation within the complex and often contradictory interplay between racialised, economic, and gendered processes that have historically shaped it, and continue to do so (Brace and
O’Connell Davidson 2000, 1047). See Skeggs (1997) for the notion of ‘living class’ in her study on working class women in the UK.

4.8 MIDDLE CLASS REPRODUCTION IN INDIA

While the focus of this study is the relationship between employers and domestic workers, the locus of the economic and symbolic class struggles between them is the middle class home, predominantly of high-caste, Hindu families. Thus, a brief exploration into ‘middle class’ as a distinct category in Indian society is due here. Research on the Indian middle class was long focused on the colonial period (Fernandes, 2006, xvii, Deshpande 2003, 127–128), but recently a number of studies have explored the contemporary middle class domesticities (Dickey 2002; Donner 2008; Säävälä 2010). The middle class, particularly in ex-colonial nations, has been recognised as crucially important in, for example, nation building and maintenance of ideologies and moral standards (Chatterjee, 1993, 35–36; Deshpande, 2003, 127–128).

Since most middle class households in India today employ domestic workers, the size of the employing class correlates with the size of the domestic labour force. In the early 1990s, the size of the middle class was assessed at around 250 to 300 millions, or 30 % of the Indian population, but these figures have been considered exaggerations related to the strong belief in the economic growth of the time (see Fernandes 2006; Deshpande 2003, 134). More recently, efforts to develop ways to measure the size of
the middle class on the basis of consumption patterns or the annual income of households have been developed (Fernandes, 2006, 31–34). Liechty (2003, 64) points out that the term middle class is a concept notoriously difficult to “pin down” in objective terms. Since estimates vary considerably with the criteria used, I agree with Säävälä (2010, 9) that “it does not make that much difference if this arbitrary. The Indian Censuses provide astonishingly detailed information about the household items and vehicles, the type of latrines and drainages etc. on a state level, indicating the consumption-related living standards of the households. (http://www.censusindia.net/) figure is 150 million or 300 million”. However, as she points out, in India the middle class population seems to be growing clearly faster than the overall population (ibid, 10). Fernandes (2006, xviii) notes that while the boundaries of this social group are both fluid and political in nature, what is new to the Indian middle class is a distinctive social and political identity that represents and lays claim to the benefits of liberalisation. At the heart of this social group’s construct rests the assumption that lower middle class and upwardly mobile working class can potentially join it (ibid). Within these broad parameters, however, one necessarily has to take into account how internal differences based on caste, region, religion and language shape the middle class (Fernandes 2006, xxxiii; Derné 2008, 18; Deshpande 2002, 135; Säävälä 2010). For example, while Fernandes (2006, x) describes the ‘new middle class’ in Mumbai as English-speaking, the use of English in Jaipur is less common among its
middle classes than in the larger cities. It may not be very helpful to speak about the middle class as a single entity (Deshpande 2002; Säävälä 2010), and I also talk about middle classes in plural when explicitly referring to the diversity of this group.

Certain everyday classificatory practices are common to middle Class (es). One perceived prerequisite for belonging to the middle class can be location of residence, e.g. living in the correct neighbourhood. Another relates to how people move from one place to another: access to vehicles is a sign of economic. The National Council of Applied Economic Research in 2005 estimated the size of the middle class and aspiring middle class population at around 35 % of all households, but only 6 % as ‘middle class proper’ has argued that despite the recognition of differences the concept of ’middle class’ usually refers to Hindu middle class, and to an overwhelmingly “Hindu” middle class culture”, but in most recent studies I see more recognition of plurality also in this respect.

In general, different classes live in different areas, the poorer neighbourhoods often pocketed in between wealthier areas with enormous income differences between neighbouring areas. Very wealthy households with assets worth 200,000 US dollars may have near-neighbours with assets worth six dollars (Harriss- White and Gooptu 2000, 91). status and when middle class and rich people go out, they usually do it by motor vehicle (Froystad 2005, 113). If the inhabitants of the Jaipur middle class
neighbourhoods walked outside, it was only somewhere in the immediate vicinity, or to visit a specific place within the neighbourhood such as the community park or the temple. They commonly travelled by car even to the nearest corner shop. If there is no driver in the house, married women drive a car, albeit seldom, or hire a taxi or a motor rickshaw, and young unmarried women also drive scooters. Unmarried and married men drive cars, motorcycles or scooters, but I never saw any middle class person ride a bicycle.

Furthermore, in India use of domestic workers is usually essential for classification as ‘middle class’, whether it is lower, upper or the wealthiest echelon, facilitating their ‘status and lifestyle reproduction’ (Anderson 2002, 106).

4.9 INTERSECTIONAL HIERARCHIES IN THE INDIAN LABOUR MARKETS

So far, we have discussed domestic labour relations as loci of class struggle and of class and status reproduction. To these analytical departure points need to be added other social dimensions and internal hierarchies which characterise paid domestic work.

The literature on paid domestic work has emphasised gender as a central hierarchical category and major organising principle. It has also been shown that paid domestic work may transform gender systems through an improvement in the position of migrant women because of their status as
income providers in the home country, on the other hand, showed how Filipina domestic workers may depart from one system of gender stratification in the Philippines only to enter another one in the richer countries.

According to the Census (2001), only 5% of households in urban Rajasthan own a car whereas a sizeable 34% own a scooter, motor cycle or moped. Gender is one important dimension also in my analysis and I have aimed to understand and expose “the often silent and hidden operations of gender that are nonetheless present and defining forces in the organisation of most societies” (Scott 1988, 27). Ray (2000b, 692) has noted that the ideologies and practices of gender, caste, and religion all shape the contours of the workplace and the trajectory of class identities. I take it as a point of departure that the workplace is one important site where gender relations and relations of hierarchy and authority are produced, involving both men and women (de Neve 2004, 67).

Understanding how gender operates in domestic labour relations alone, however, is not enough, as evident from Bridget Anderson’s (2006, 237) question: “How is it that some women exploit others within a general theory of care as women’s work?” While gender may account for many oppressive aspects of domestic labour relations, it does not account for all aspects (Romero 2002).
To proceed, the concept of ‘intersectionality’, first coined by Kimberley Crenshaw (1989) in the context of the black feminist movement in the US, helps to capture the complexity of different hierarchies and to facilitate their analysis. Intersectionality refers to different hierarchical dimensions such as class, gender, race, and ethnicity which all exist in relation to each other. My aim is to recognise the dimensions of social inequality and analyse their interrelationships through the empirical reality of employer-employee relations and everyday employment practices.

Regarding the labour markets in India, it is important to note that while work in the informal sector is largely unregulated, it is far from See Brah & Phoenix (2004, 75) for a discussion on the conceptualisations of intersectionality.

Tenhunen (2010, 43) notes that rather than trying to do away with other identities (by emphasising one particular identity), improvements in any one such attribute can contribute to the others by leading to a reinterpretation of all the interconnected attributes that build up one’s status unstructured. It is organised through a kind of matrix based on social institutions or hierarchies such as class, caste and gender, and the asymmetries based on such hierarchies continue to operate in the labour markets in multiple ways (Banerjee & Raju 2009, 122). Capitalism in India is not dissolving the matrix of social institutions but reconfiguring them slowly, unevenly and in diverse ways (Harriss-White and Gooptu 2000, 90).
For instance, caste compartmentalises labour markets, stratifies salaries and has an impact on gendered division of labour (ibid, 99).

Evidently, the hierarchies between employers and workers are linked with wider processes of social differentiation in society (Tolen 2000, 64), and reflect them. Recent discussions about whether domestic labour relations in India are essentially about class or caste hierarchies relate to broader debates on how caste and class interrelate, and on whether class or caste should be seen as a more decisive hierarchy (Béteille 1997; Dickey 2002; Gupta 2000; Tenhunen 2010). Noting that there has been a relative silence about class in the analysis of India, Dickey (2002, 216) argues that class is one of the most salient idioms of identity in contemporary India. In her view domestic labour relations are essentially class relations. Dickey (2000a, 32) argues that “what makes class a distinct form of hierarchy, not merely a variation of caste, is its fundamental basis in economic power, combined with the status markers that financial resources can produce (education, honour and consumption, for example) which themselves become sources of economic power”. She perceives domestic service as an arena in which class is reproduced and challenged on a daily and intimate basis, and where the workers and employers perceive them. The Governmental system of positive discrimination towards Scheduled Castes and Tribes has had paradoxical consequences: these reservations have entrenched the importance of caste as an institution, and have reinforced the caste based segmentation, as well as making the reserved cates into an
interest group instead of dissolving caste differences (Harriss-White &
Gooptu 2000, 99). selves to be on different sides of class lines. Others,
while not denying the essentiality of class, point to the persistent nature of
the caste in domestic labour relations (Froystad 2003, 2005) and to the
complex manifestations of caste in organising the sector (Ray and Qayum
2009, 75). According to Sanskrit texts, the Indian caste system traditionally
divides people into four main castes or varnas according to a varna ordering
(from highest to lowest): brahmans; kshatriyas, vaishyas, and shudras
(Béteille 1997; Dumont 1980; Gupta 2000), and to a fifth category of the so
called untouchables, considered polluted because of occupations related to
polluted substances (Thapar, 2002, 63). In practice, the main caste
categories are divided into numerous sub-castes, and there is considerable
regional diversity in the system (Béteille 1997; Dumont 1980; Gupta
2000). For the fifth group, four different terms are used: Untouchables,
Scheduled Castes (the SCs), Harijans, and dalits (Deliège 1997, 65). The
Scheduled Castes is an administrative term used in Indian legislation, also
commonly used by the employers I met in Jaipur. The term dalit is preferred
by dalit activists and particularly in Western India, and it has increasingly
replaced other terms in academic and political contexts (Perez 2006, 91).
For these reasons I also use that term, except when explicitly refering to the
employer speech on SCs or to an administrative context.

Significant improvements in the position of dalits have taken place,
among them the establishment of a quota system for Scheduled Castes and
Schedules Tribes in the educational and administrative system; inclusion of dalit demands in the political agenda; See Chatterjee (1993, 179–181) for an extensive analysis of the debate on whether the essence of caste system is in a continuous hierarchy along which castes are ordered in terms of relative purity and pollutions as Dumont (1980) claimed, or whether the essence of caste lies in the differentiation into separate discrete castes (or jātis), as Gupta (1984) argued.

The word literally means ‘ground down’ (dal na), also translated as oppressed (Perez 2006, 91). In accordance with their proportion of the population, approximately 23% of jobs and educational opportunities are reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the 46 and the rise of dalits as a political force (Gupta 2000, 100; Kothari 1997, 446; Perez 2006, 91). These and other transformations notwithstanding, the persistence of the ‘caste’ system characterises Indian society. One central debate has been on whether caste is an inherent characteristic of Indian society or whether it is an ideological product of the specific precapitalist social formations in Indian history (Chatterjee 1993, 173). The latter position implies that the caste should disappear alongside such pre-capitalist formations, but there is growing evidence that neither the spread of capitalist economic activities nor modern education is bringing an end to caste practices (ibid).

In addition to class, gender and caste, other hierarchies that my empirical data in Jaipur brought into focus were ethnicity and religion, as
well as age and life-stage. Studies on transnational domestic work have shown that employers have a tendency to rank workers into a hierarchical order and to reproduce stereotypes on the basis of nationality or race (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001, 55–57; Anderson 2000; Jureidini 2004, Bakan & Stasiulis 1995). In the South Asian context, several studies mention that ethnicity is one way to stratify domestic work (Gamburd 2000, 187; Shah 2000, 110; Tolen 2000, 66), but they have not offered empirical descriptions of such stratification. My data highlights how ethnicity and religion stratify the sector, and form one basis for the employers’ hierarchical ordering of the workers. Although age is in many situations a constitutive and central dimension, it is frequently missing from studies on intersecting hierarchies (Thorne 2004, 404–405), including literature on paid domestic Scheduled Tribes (Gupta 2000, 100). In 2007, a dalit woman Mayawati Das was appointed Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, India’s most populous state. In fact, she had already held the post three times for short periods. In spite of corruption allegations, she is a strong symbol for the dalit movement. While previous studies on India have provided rich analysis on how paid domestic work is organised on class, gender, and caste lines, age and life stage as organising tools in the market and their influence on employer preferences have received little attention. In addition to analysing how workers’ age and life stage influence the organisation of the sector, I also explore how different stages of workers’ lives and their labour market participation influence one another.
4.10 OTHER KEY CONCEPTS FOR THE STUDY OF PAID DOMESTIC WORK

COMMODOIFICATION OF CARE

The literature on domestic work refers to ‘commodification of care’, a global capitalist shift in which the informal and unpaid assistance and caregiving of family and friends (typically women) becomes disaggregated into specific tasks and jobs, performed in the market for wages. (Zimmerman et al. 2006, 12; Anderson 2002). In such a process, tasks are broken into discrete functions, a highly differentiated and impersonal division of labour prevails, and care becomes specialised and technical rather than holistic and embedded in human relationships (Zimmermann et al. 2006, 20–21). It has been argued that such a process has profound implications for the level of control that care workers have over themselves, their bodies, and their work (ibid, 12).

The idea of commodification of domestic work captures the Indian trends of increasing part-time work and fragmentation of the Mies et al. (1988 quoted in Zimmermann et al. 2006, 106) talk about housewifeisation of paid work. For them, paid work is becoming increasingly feminised, with new jobs drawing more on women’s than men’s labour. At the same time, work is increasingly organised like women’s housework, with jobs that require flexible schedules and which are occupationally segregated. Additionally, many such jobs, like market vending, factory outwork, or childcare, are in the informal sector of the global economy, which is rapidly
expanding but, like housework, is not regulated by labour legislation work. However, there is a major difference between India and the countries of the West: in India the use of (paid) domestic workers (servants) has never ceased, and thus the shift is not so much from unpaid to paid work, but rather from patron-client-like service relations to market-based relations. Thus, in the Indian context, the question of commodification of domestic work has to be viewed in parallel with the changes in the traditional jajmani service relationships between high-caste and low-caste persons; i.e. the food-producing family and the families that supplied them with goods and services (Mandelbaum 1970, 163–164). Traditionally, each village in rural India had its own network of jajmani affiliates, establishing a web of relationships among villagers across the land (ibid, 171–172).

Such relationships have been seen as largely replaced by market relationships (Harriss-White 2001, 94; Mandelbaum 1970, 174–174; Tenhunen 2010, 21). It has also been shown that the jajmani system as a caste-based gift exchange system never existed as a single economic system, but rather alongside a market economy (Commander 1983; Tenhunen 2008, 1037). Even though jajmani ties have largely disappeared, the dependency of landless labourers on the land-owners continues in rural areas, and the underlying regular patterns of domination and coercion may be reinforced through the rural-urban labour migration (Soni 2006, 316).66 The feudal-like patronage may return in the form of Gupta (2000,131) argues that jajmani relations never existed in the Hindu religious order in
the systematic way they have been said to exist, but rather as a sporadic empirical reality, While jajmani relations were the backbone of organization of services in rural India from pre to post-colonial era, Mandelbaum (1970, 162) notes that cash-based transactions were at the same time integral elements of the village economy, and certain traditional occupations were on a contractual rather than a jajmani basis. The urban areas of Delhi and its rural hinterlands have been seen as an extension of colonial-style asymmetrical power relations between the expansionist urban elite and the subjugated hinterland, reinforced by the inherited colonial structure of the state administration and enabled by middlemen from the rural elites (Soni 2006, 316). Debt bondage and labour attachment (Harriss-White and Gooptu 2001, 95). Sometimes, the debt ties between landless labourers and landowners lead to non-contractual obligations such as the provision of a male labourers’ wife or children as labour force (ibid). There is little information on the existence of rural-urban ties of subjugation within domestic service, but Shah (2000, 94–95) has shown that in Nepal much of the recruitment of servants continues to be done through informal networks of kinship and patron-client ties. These ties link urban areas to the rural hinterland, with the aid of intermediaries who have active connections to both areas.

MATERNALISM

While labour relations can be seen as increasingly commodified, capitalist relations of selling and buying labour, Anderson (2001, 31)
reminds us that domestic labour relationships are peculiar in not being straightforwardly contractual. I approach domestic labour relations as employer-employee relations, but I also take note of the perhaps unique patterns which occur in this sector. Domestic labour relations have a tendency to retain certain non-market features such as personalised relations and maternal benevolence, sometimes purposefully maintained by one or both parties in the relationship as shown both in India (Dickey 2000a, 50–51; Ray and Qayum 2009, 6–7) and in other contexts (see, e.g., Romero 2002, 155; Rollins 1985).

Maternalism is a central phenomenon in the framing of relations with workers by their employers (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Rollins 1985; Romero 2002). Maternalism originates from paternalism, which Romero (2002, 79) conceptualises as: Paternalism is at root a familial relation, and masters expected servants to demonstrate filial loyalty and obedience in return for protection and guidance.

Given that domestic labour relations are in most cases relations between women, maternalism has largely replaced the term paternalism in the study of domestic work, while they are at times used interchangeably. Romero (2002, 138–139) argues that benevolent maternalism is a form of emotional labour which requires workers to manipulate their feelings in order to fulfill the psychological needs of the employers. Rollins (1985, 155–157) emphasises the exploitation embedded in domestic labour
relations in which the typical employers extract more than labour from workers.

What makes domestic service as an occupation more profoundly exploitative than other comparable occupations grows out of the precise element that makes it unique: the personal relationship between employer and employee. What might appear to be the basis of a more humane, less alienating work arrangement allows for a level of psychological exploitation unknown in other occupations. (Rollins 1985, 156) For Rollins, maternalism and deference are the main dynamics through which psychological exploitation takes place. She (1985, 189) talks about maternalistic rituals, such as giving gifts and borrowing money, which employers use to reinforce the inequality in the relationship. Numerous studies have shown the employers’ persistent use of the notion “part of the family”, which serves to obscure the fact that the relationship is essentially one of employment (Andresson 2000; Ray and Qayum 2009; Romero 2002; Rotkirch 2008; Shah 2000). Gregson & Lowe (1994, 190) talk about false kinship relations in which both sides of the employment relation are involved.

Rollins (1985, 186-189) argues that the friendly relation between the employer and the worker serves to confirm the benevolence of the employers and the childlike inferiority of the worker.
Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001, 207), in turn, argues that one must distinguish between maternalism and ‘personalism’. For her, maternalism is a one-way relationship, which is defined primarily by the employers’ gestures of charity, unsolicited advice, assistance, and gifts. To such gestures, the workers are obligated to respond with extra hours of service, personal loyalty, and job commitment. Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001, 208) locates maternalism in the reproduction of class inequality whereas she perceives personalism as a two-way relationship: Maternalism underlines the deep class inequalities between employers and employees. More problematically, because employer maternalism positions the employee as needy, deficient, and childlike, it does not allow the employee any dignity and respect. Personalism, by contrast, is a two-way relationship, albeit still asymmetrical. It involves the employer’s recognition of the employee as a particular person the recognition and consideration necessary for dignity and respect to be realized. In the absence of fair wage, reasonable hours, and job autonomy, personalism alone is not enough to upgrade domestic work; but conversely, its absence virtually ensures that the job will be experienced as degrading.

Previous research also notes how the elements of personalism and maternalism make domestic labour relations particularly complex. Another characteristic which distinguishes domestic work from other occupations is its locus in the private home, and the intimacy of a home as a work place (Dickey 2000b; Rollins 1985; Romero 2002). Bringing together people
from very different backgrounds in intimate and highly personalised interactions in the domestic sphere serves to further obfuscate the relations as not straightforwardly employer-employee (Moors 2003, 389; Anderson 2006, 234–235). In India, employers let people who they would normally despise, into the most private area of their lives – their home (Dickey 2000a).

Domestic work in the private sphere is ambiguous and two-edged, as ‘home’ can be considered both a protective space and a dangerous working place, with a risk of physical, verbal and sexual abuse, and arbitrary changes in working conditions (Lutz 2004, 94). Essentially, the challenge of home as a working site increases the tendency not to recognise domestic work as real employment but as something women “naturally” do (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001, 9; Romero 2002).

Romero (2002) explains this by the dichotomous separation between work and family, where housework does not fit the definitions of work as productive labour since it does not produce products which can be exchanged in the capitalist marketplace. The employers are ubiquitously reluctant to perceive themselves as employers, not least because of the implications this would have for their responsibility towards the workers (Romero 2002; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001). But workers may be equally reluctant to embrace domestic work as employment given the stigma that the workers themselves associate with it (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001, 9).
4.11 VULNERABILITY AT WORK

Indian labour markets are generally characterised by the existence of a massive informal sector, the unskilled nature of much manual work, the absolute poverty of most workers, and the fact that even though work is mainly unregulated by the state it is not unstructured (Harriss-White and Gooptu 2000, 90). All these characteristics prevail in paid domestic work. Out of over 390 million workers, only 7 to 8% of the total labour force, 4% of the total female labour force and 10% of the total male labour are in the organised or formal sector (Harriss-White and Gooptu 2000, 89; Hensman 2000, 209; Bhan 2001, 18). Despite efforts to define informal and formal sectors in India, many different definitions prevail (Naik 2009, 1; Hensman 2000, 257). ‘Informal’, ‘unregulated and ‘unorganised’; as well as ‘formal’ and ‘organised’ have been used interchangeably. This is somewhat problematic since there are unorganised workers both in unregulated and regulated jobs; only half the ‘formal’ workers are unionised (Harriss-White and Gooptu 2000, 89). Besides, there are organised workers. According to the Census (2001) 91% of workers among the so called slum population belong to the Census category of ‘Other workers’ and 5% to the’ Household Industry workers’, also in the informal sector, also within informal sectors. Cognisant of the definitional problems,

I find Hensman’s (2000, 257) definition of informal workers as “all workers, both urban and rural, who are not covered by basic labour legislation, including informal workers in large-scale production”
sufficiently descriptive for my purposes. By contrast to them, ‘organised’ or ‘formal’ sector workers receive regular wages, are in registered firms, and have access to the state social security system and its framework of labour law’ (Harriss-White and Gooptu 2000, 89). One conceptualisation to understand the nature of paid domestic work in India would be to explore the term ‘decent work’ which the International Labour Organisation (1999, 15) formulates as “productive work under conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity, in which rights are protected and adequate remuneration and social coverage are provided”. The main elements considered necessary for achieving decent work are: the promotion of labour rights, the promotion of employment, social protection for vulnerable situations, and the promotion of social dialogues (ibid). However, the concept of ‘decent work’ does not provide an adequate framework for domestic work in India where lack of regulation makes the labour relations insecure as a point of departure, and workers vulnerable. The workers lack basic legal rights such as the right to time off, the right to a minimum wage and the right to regulation of working hours. One must note here, though, that the implementation of even existing labour laws in regulated sectors in India is notoriously weak (Palriwala and Neetha, 2009, 15).

Urban workers have also been categorised as self-employed, regular salaried and casual labour, of which those in casual labour have the lowest bargaining power, and among them, women less bargaining power than
men (Banerjee and Raju 2009, 117–118). In this grouping, domestic workers can be seen broadly as regular salaried workers, however, bearing in mind the diversity among them, and the fact that not all domestic workers receive regular, or any, salaries.

The ILO Director General’s Report to the 87th Session of the International Labour Conference in 1999 appears the first official establishment of the term within the ILO. For these reasons, I find the concept of ‘vulnerability’ suitable. The structural vulnerability of domestic workers around the world has been well documented. In a synthesis of their conditions, Moors (2003, 390) notes that employers’ ways of dealing with domestic workers range from harsh domination to more subtle forms of discipline, and various forms may coexist and compete. In transnational contexts, women’s immigration status and whether or not they live with their employers have a major impact with undocumented live-in domestic workers in a particularly vulnerable position (Moors 2003, 389). Romero (2002, 8) explains: Paid domestic labour is not only structured around gender but also is stratified by race and citizenship status, relegating the most vulnerable workers to the least favourable working conditions and placing the most privileged workers in the best positions (Romero, 2002, 8).

Globally, domestic workers have been perceived as particularly vulnerable since the profession differs from other occupations because of its individualised relationships, its unorganised labour force, the fact that it is
based on more personal relationships, and because work is geographically scattered amongst private homes. (Neetha 2003, 125; Rollins 1985; Zimmerman et al. 2006, 104). But how should vulnerability be defined? Since most studies on domestic work in India have not explicitly focused on the question of workers’ vulnerability, I lean on a broader reading of labour studies for my conceptualisation of it. At the same time, I agree that workers’ lives should be understood within specific historical, cultural and social contexts (see Mohanty 1984; Tenhunen 1997, 5), and in relation to other social constructs such as gendered ideologies (Beechey and Perkins 1987, 9).

As a notable exception Neetha (2003) makes an effort to conceptualise the vulnerability of migrant domestic workers in Delhi. In recent years labour researchers as well as labour organisations, particularly in Europe or North America, have attempted to define worker vulnerability and vulnerability at work (cf. Bolton 2007; Pollert and Charlwood 2009; Saunders 2003). It has been suggested that labour market vulnerability includes issues such as lack of appropriate employment legislation, difficulties in accessing labour rights even on legislated work situations, lack of access to non-statutory benefits, lack of pension schemes, very low salaries, and lack of stable employment (Saunders 2003, 7–8). In addition, Bolton (2007) argues that vulnerability should be seen in the light of the core issues of pay, equity, security and dignity, and how they impact upon the lives of workers.
The British Trade Union Congress defines vulnerable employment as “precarious work that places people at risk of continuing poverty and injustice resulting from an imbalance of power in the employer-worker relationship” (Pollert & Charlwood 2009, 345). However, it is argued that when vulnerability is defined in narrow terms, the tendency is to look only at symptoms and characteristics associated with ‘risks’ of vulnerability, bypassing the underlying causes of the risks. Such an approach may narrow vulnerability to a condition which pertains only after exploitation has already taken place. This would imply that to be vulnerable a worker is already a victim of abuse, and unlimited managerial power is only problematic if it amounts to exploitation.

Instead, Pollert & Charlwood (354), who studied the unorganised workers in the United Kingdom, suggest that a definition of vulnerability should be based on a diagnosis of the power imbalance inherent in the employment relationship, which means that “the basis of vulnerability is in the fundamental asymmetry of the capitalist employment relationship between the individual worker and the employer”. Recently, the discussion on vulnerability in labour studies has been extended to the concept of dignity (Bolton 2007; Sayer 2000b), suggesting that dignity should be looked at from two different dimensions: dignity in and at work.

Moreover, they note that because of the differences among them, workers are not equally vulnerable. The chief differentiator is labour market
power which those lacking financially and socially rewarded skills in poor quality jobs do not possess. Hence, they are low paid, one indicator of vulnerability. There is a ‘spectrum of vulnerability’, migrant workers without legal immigration and employee status and thus outside employment law protection being among the most vulnerable. In addition, workers who move between unpaid work (mainly within home and family) and paid employment are particularly vulnerable because they are more likely to have ‘non-standard’ jobs, which lack official employment contracts and hence leave them outside employment protection. What becomes clear from previous studies on paid domestic work is that one must take into account the specificity of each situation, as well as hierarchical dimensions of gender, race, citizenship status and so on (see also Bakan and Stasiulis 1995, 304). In Europe, the domestic workers’ immigration status and whether or not they live with their employers have a major impact, and undocumented live-in domestic workers are in a particularly vulnerable position (Anderson 2000).

Critics argue that the rather uncritical approach of labour researchers and organisations to vulnerability discourse may do little more than to victimise the “vulnerable”, instead of empowering them (Ho 2008 10–11; Åsman 2008, 18–21). Ho (2008, 11), for example, argues that the discourse on gendered vulnerability is blatantly applied to women in the sex industry in Asia. In Nepal, the discourse on gendered vulnerability within the anti-trafficking programmes However, what is considered as low pay varies
depending on the context. In their study in the UK, Pollert and Charlwood (344) take low pay as half of UK employees earning below median hourly earnings. In Ho’s (2008, 11) view, the concept and narrative of vulnerability best serves to create social/sexual panic through the increasingly sensationalised media in Asia, as it portrays helpless and vulnerable subjects who easily fall prey to depraved criminals. Portrays rural women as a homogenous, powerless and victimised group, repeatedly defined as poor, illiterate, uneducated, ignorant and naïve, and because of all this – easy victims of trafficking (Åsman 2008, 18–19). Similarly, the media have portrayed domestic workers, for example in the Middle East, mainly through horror stories of abuse and harsh working conditions. This has affected the experiences of many other domestic workers, not only the individuals who actually have been abused, as well as the way other people perceive them (Moors 2003, 388). Most conceptualisations of ‘vulnerable work’ have been developed in the context of European or North American labour markets which are highly organised in spite of the increasing trend toward informal work. What do such conceptualisations offer to an analysis of Indian domestic labour relations which are fully informal and outside national legislation? What are the specific questions one needs to look at in order to discuss vulnerability of domestic workers in India? Can the concept of vulnerability provide a concept for approaching and understanding workers’ situations in a fruitful, non-victimising manner? In trying to answer these questions, I build upon Pollert and Charlwood’s (2009, 344–
notion of ‘spectrum of vulnerability’ which in my view allows for capturing the diversity in domestic labour relations. The way I propose to approach vulnerability within the overall context of precarious work is two-fold: 1) to take into account of the diversity of work arrangements (e.g. live-in or part-time work) and the consequent influence on working conditions, and 2) to perceive working conditions as a ‘continuum of vulnerability’, in which each workers’ vulnerability depends on several structural factors such as age or gender. Most studies on domestic work emphasise that workers are, The Nepalese and international organisations that propagate the victimising trafficking discourse, have carved out an economic sphere for themselves in what Åsman (2008, 18) calls the ‘rescue industry’. Neither passive victims nor active agents but, to some extent, both (Moors 2003, 391; see also Camacho, 1999, 64; Raghuram 1999, 11). Structural restrictions and opportunities have an impact on each worker’s situation. It is my task to find out how these structural positions in labour relations operate and in which ways they influence worker vulnerability.

4.12 APPROACHING CHILDREN’S WORK

Questions of vulnerability become particularly challenging when studying children in paid domestic work. Two questions have dominated scholarly debates on how to study working children in developing countries. The first is whether childhood in developing countries should be treated similarly to or differently from Western childhood. Embracing the idea of childhood as a social construction (see Ariès 1962, 125), some
researchers have criticised existing research and international advocacy work on behalf of children for its’ Eurocentrism (see Boyden 1997; Niewenhuys 1994; 2009). Jo Boyden (1997) called for the recognition of the specificity of each particular childhood. She argued that during the 20th century a specifically European conception of childhood with its essentially white, urban middle class values was exported to the Third World. Kristoffel Lieten (2005, 3–4), instead, argues that the post-modernist claims that childhood is a culture-specific and, essentially, Western concept are misguided. In his view such approaches have led some to argue that child labour is not repugnant but is actually embedded in local cultures, and should be respected. He argues that Philippe Ariès is often cited as the founder of ‘childhood’ on the basis of his book L’Enfant et la Vie Familiale sous l’Ancien Regime (1960), translated into English as Centuries of Childhood (1962) Although philosophers such as Rousseau had discussed the specificity of childhood in life much earlier, became a standard reference in most studies on childhood. Despite criticism basic notion that childhood is a social construction rather than a biological fact remains central in many childhood studies.

Among the more critical stances towards child labour are those which empha Ariès’ (1962) study on the historical evolution of childhood in Europe was not culture-specific, but rather class-specific, and emerged in the midst of wider economic changes. Lieten (2005, 2) reminds us that there is a diversity of childhoods within the developing world itself, not just
between the West and the rest. Families in today’s developing countries have also made a transition from the ‘collective’ to the private: today children are looked after within households with the future of individuals in mind (ibid). In a similar vein, Sarada Balagopalan (2002, 20) reminds us of the importance of incorporating historical processes affecting non-western childhoods into culturalist attempts to understand multiple childhoods. She asks whether the fixity we assign to childhood among the poor in the Third World ignores the disjunctions that the history of colonialism has produced in these lives. The second question relates to the call to study children as subjects and worth of study in their own right (James and Prout 1997), a widely accepted paradigm in most childhood research in the Western context. It has been argued that children’s agency has not been recognised in the study of children in developing countries (Boyden 1997; Nieuwenhuys 1994; 2009). Despite some efforts in research and development policy to perceive children as subjects, Niewenhuys (2009, 148) argues that child research in the Indian context has generally had an overly negative tone, and is mainly issue-oriented, thus submerging and marginalising the everyday life of the vast majority.

It has been dominated by indignation and a feeling of compassion rather than a feeling of sympathy and solidarity (Nieuwenhuys 1994, 4). Such an attitude ultimately betrays a lack of empathy since it leads too easily to a denial of the working children’s self-esteem and sense of accomplishment. This does not help to undermine the colonial imisise
children as active workers who should have a right to work under regulated conditions, and not denied the possibility to earn a living (see Liebel 2004).

Simultaneously, the international child rights agenda, largely based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), has established the idea of children as subjects and as active holders of rights, contrary to the previous views of children as passive objects (Lieten 2005, 14). Age of India as a country which lacks a proper notion of childhood (ibid 1994, 4; 2009, 148).

These discussions have two-fold implications for this study. First, I consider children as subjects, and childhood as a social institution that exists beyond the activity of any particular child or adult (James and Prout 1997, 27–28). Second, while norms that govern childhoods vary and are socially constructed, I consider childhood as a biological phase, not merely a social construction. Qvortrup (1999) urges childhood researchers to deal with macro-societal forces and not merely with children’s experiences or their reactions in different circumstances. I perceive children as agents who act within and upon the structures, taking into account that the location of the child’s family within the socio-economic structure determines the contours of childhood and the practice of agency (Lieten 2005, 17). Acknowledging the diversity in childhoods, I approach children’s work as part of their broader life-worlds (Niewenhuys 1994). Moreover, I find it necessary to locate children’s work within the whole sector of paid
domestic work, and treat children as workers who form part of the overall labour force, not in isolation. I aim to be as specific as possible in my reference to individual working children by taking into account their age, to the extent possible, and sex, since age hierarchies, as a rule, are only valid for specific gender roles (Niewenhuys 1994, 24). There have also been lengthy debates on terminology: whether work performed by children should be called ‘child labour’ or ‘child work’, in which numerous researchers and advocacy agencies such as the International Labour Organisation and Unicef have participated.

Considerable efforts were made in the 1990s to establish a common, international framework to define what kind of work is harmful to children and what forms of work, at minimum, should be abolished (Mattila 2001). One of the distinctions made then was to consider One result of the heightened attention was a new international Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour in 1998, which complemented the previous international standards, the ILO Convention on the Minimum Age ‘child labour’ as harmful and exploitative and ‘child work’ as work that is not detrimental to children. Certain criteria were developed to distinguish between these two, for example, based on the number of working hours, the nature of the work and so on. Liebel (2004, 15) argues that “in contrast to the expression ‘child labour’, the expression ‘children’s work’ avoids a hasty evaluation and renders possible the necessary openness”. Nieuwenhuys (1994, 27) acknowledges the difficulties in attempting to
change a firmly rooted concept of ‘child labour’, yet suggests the use of the
term ‘children’s work’ rather than ‘child labour’. For her, ‘child labour’ is
problematic and too restricted, since it conveys the idea of an abstract and
sexually neutral child doing economically valued but undesirable work.

Ten years ago, I also made the distinction between ‘child work’ and
‘child labour’, making an effort to translate these two terms into my native
Finnish (see Mattila 1998; 2001. Today, I no longer wish to make this
distinction but would prefer to emphasise the need to contextualise
children’s work and working conditions. For the purpose of my analysis, I
adopt Schildkrout’s (1981, 95 in Nieuwenhuys 1994, 27) definition of child
work as ‘any activity done by children which either contributes to
production, gives adults free time, facilitates the work of others, or
substitutes for the employment of others’.

SERVANTS OR DOMESTIC WORKERS: A NOTE ON CONCEPTS

There is no conceptual unity in the extensive literature on paid
domestic work. The first question is whether to talk about ‘domestic work’,
as earlier literature has done, or about ‘care work’ or ‘domestic and care
work’, as more recent studies suggest. Zimmerman et al (2006, 3–4) talk
about ‘care work’ when referring to the multifaceted labour of home
management, housekeeping and care (of the of Work (1973) and the UN
Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), deemed ineffective in ending
childrens’ work. The widely ratified convention calls for the immediate
abolition of child participation in certain forms of work such as prostitution, involuntary participation in armed forces, illegal work, and hazardous work (the most disputable category), elderly, children and ill) that produces the daily living conditions that make basic human health and well-being possible. By so doing they wish to draw attention to the protective and restorative aspects of care work and to the emotional dimensions involved in it. I prefer to use the term ‘domestic work’ to refer to the work performed in Jaipur households. In this my choice is similar to most others who have studied paid domestic work in India. This term is sufficiently broad and reflects the empirical reality more accurately since elements of care work are not as commonly included in domestic workers’ tasks in my data as in other contexts.

Those who have studied paid domestic work in India, however, differ more in whether to use the term ‘servant’ or ‘worker’. In India, the English word ‘servant’ or the equivalent Hindi word naukar/naukarani refers generally to all those who work in different tasks in others’ homes on a full- or part-time basis. Several researchers (Ray 2000b; Ray and Qayum 2009; Tolen 2000; Froystad 2003) use the term servant, thus giving priority to using the primarily indigenous terms of each country or their English-language equivalents as suggested by Adams and Dickey (2000, 9). While acknowledging the negative connotations that may be associated with the term servant, in their view other terms rarely reflect adequately the circumstances of the people whom they portray. draw attention to the
popular usage of the term ‘servant’ in India, even if some educated, English-speaking Indians consider the term ‘servant’ politically incorrect and use increasingly the term ‘domestic help’ when speaking of these workers.

Bridget Anderson (2006, 229) argues that the central difficulty around whether care should be seen as labour or as emotion, or both, has not been resolved. For her (228) ‘it is widely accepted that there are two meanings conflated in the term ‘care’: care as labour and care as emotion, and it can be very difficult to disentangle the two’.

In Finland, by the 1970s the term domestic helpers or assistants had gradually replaced the terms ‘maid’ (piika) and ‘servant’ (palvelija) which were commonly used earlier (Kilkki 2006, 11). While I appreciate these notions, it seems that using the term ‘servant’ could overemphasise the employers’ views: it is a popular term both in English and Hindi (naukar) among the employer class, but not among the workers, who increasingly consider it degrading.

Indian organisations such as the National Domestic Workers Movement also prefer the term ‘domestic workers’. The use of both ‘servant’ and ‘domestic help’ also tends to undermine the perception of domestic work as a form of employment, and may instead re-affirm the distinction between domestic work and other occupations. In order to be methodologically consistent, therefore, I prefer to use the term ‘domestic
worker’, similarly to Neetha (2003, 123). However, I occasionally use the term ‘servant’, when explicitly referring to employers’ views. Regarding the basic division into ‘live-ins’ and into ‘live-outs’, I use the term ‘live-in worker’ for the generic, all-around workers who live with their employers (see Neetha 2003; Dickey 2000a). The employers in India also talk about “24-hour workers” which effectively captures the nature of their work, as illustrated by my thesis. However, if a live-in worker is hired for one particular purpose, for cooking or driving, for example, I use their occupational titles, and specify their working arrangement, for example, I refer to ‘a live-in cook’.

It is more challenging to find an appropriate term for the diverse group of ‘live-out workers’. The term ‘live-out worker’ usually implies that the worker, residing in his or her own home, works only for one employer. However, in India, most ‘live-out’ workers work for several houses, carrying out one or several tasks in each house. The term ‘self-employed worker’ might be accurate for the situation of a clean-

In the context of Turkey, Keklik (2006, 191) talks about paid and unpaid workers to distinguish between salaried domestic workers and those who only receive in-kind compensation such as accommodation or food. While I take serious note of the point that some workers only receive food and accomodation as compensation, I include these workers within the broad category of paid domestic workers to avoid confusion with people who perform unpaid domestic work in their own households working person who manages her
or his own, established business in my own country, Finland, but it would not appropriately reflect the acute dependency of the Indian domestic part-time workers on their employers (see Baruah 2004).

The term that I find most suitable is ‘part-time worker’ (see also Raghuram 1999; Dickey 2000a; Ray and Qayum 2009) which allows me to emphasise the relatively short stay in each employers’ house. The problem with this term, though, is that despite this short stay, many works from dawn till dusk seven days a week, which hardly makes it a part-time job. So, whenever possible I refer to the parttime workers by their occupational titles such as maids, gardeners or washer-men/women and use the term ‘part-time worker’, when referring generally to workers who live in their homes. However, there is a notable exception to this rule: in India, the largest number of parttime workers is the women and girls who clean the floors and wash the dishes. They are not called by their respective task of cleaning and washing dishes but are referred to in English as maids, domestic help, or maid-servants or in Hindi with bais (maids) or kamwali bais.84 I will also refer to these workers, who are the majority in my data of workers, as maids. By comparison with discussion on worker terminology, there has been very little discussion on how to refer to employers. When talking about them, those who studied paid domestic work in India have used the term ‘master’ and ‘mistress’ (Ray 2000b; Srinivas 1995) or ‘employers’, often interchangeably. Following my logic with the worker terminology, I use the more neutral term ‘employer’ in preference to
‘master’, except when particularly focusing on the patron-client-like A word of caution is due here: the terms ‘maid’ and ‘maidservant’ are sometimes used to refer to generic workers with multiple tasks, or to refer to female live-in workers.

The Hindi word bai is widely used to refer to maid-servants, especially in the Hindi speaking regions, but can also be used as a respectful term when speaking to women in high status positions, e.g. in royal families. In the rural Rajasthan, bai jhi can be used to address elder women to show respect. features of the relationships. It is at this point that my theoretical approach links up with another important concept, the life course, and that my focus moves from the theoretical approach to labour relations to the approach to workers’ lives and the relations between wage work and other aspects of their lives.

4.13 WORK AND THE LIFE COURSE

From the early phases of this study something that kept emerging from the worker interviews was a broad set of issues related to the female workers’ lives not only as workers, but as daughters, wives and mothers. It became important to understand, on the one hand, how paid work influences other aspects of their lives and on the other hand, how the family life influenced all decisions related to work. As I aim to show, the idea of interweave of female life course and participation in paid employment is helpful in understanding the workers’ labour market decisions and
participation. The concept of ‘life course’ encapsulates well some of the central threads that emerged from our conversations, such as the impact of marriage and reproduction on wage work, and offers a (loose) theoretical lens through which to analyse workers’ work-life trajectories. First developed within sociology in the 1960s (see Cain 1964), I find Elder’s definition of life course as “a multilevel phenomenon, ranging from structural pathways through social institutions and organisations to the social trajectories of individuals and their developmental pathways” apt for my work.

Earlier studies on life course and work were criticised for their tendency to perceive life course as a sequential path where certain phases such as a first employment phase, a family phase, and a second employment phase follow each other in a linear order, and for not questioning the sexual division of labour within the family (Beechey and Perkins 1987, 122). More recently, the ‘life course’ has made it possible to analyse the way in which personal life intersects with social institutions such as education, family, and labour market and the other way around (Krüger & Baldus 1999, 356–359). The perspective has theoretical relevance also for the structure-agency-debate since tracking multiple dimensions of life course development over an extended period of time makes it “very clear that structure and personal action determine the life course”. In my study, it allows for analysis of the interface between work at home and paid work,
between life stages and work, and for the analysis of continuities and discontinuities in (women’s) work trajectories.

In the context of India, a life course perspective has been adopted, for example, in studies of women’s health and reproduction (Das Gupta 1996). Most studies exploring life courses in India focus exclusively, or mostly, on girls and women, and this study is no exception. Despite the gradually increasing interest in men as gendered subjects and in men’s lives in South Asia within gender studies, the range has so far been limited to topics such as male sexuality and violence (Osella et. al. 2004, 2; de Neve 2004, 94). Next, I contextualise the question of work and life course by first discussing general features of women’s life courses in India, and then by focusing on the conceptualisations related to work and life course.

The concept of ‘life-cycle’ has also been used in relation to different stages in human life. However, the concept of ‘life course’ has gained popularity over ‘life cycle’ since the concept of life-cycle is perceived to imply multiple turns and a relatively fixed or inevitable series of biological stages and ages (Hapke & Ayyankeril 2004, 252).

See Giddens (1984) for his theory of structuration which calls for understanding of the interplay between human agency and social structure. Italics in the original text. Compared to the multiplicities of femininities in South Asian studies, men appear in fewer studies and often in a two-
dimensional range, either as householders (patrons) or as landless labourers (clients) (Osella et. al. 2004, 2).

FEMALE LIFE COURSE AND WORK IN INDIA

While acknowledging the regional and other diversities in the lives of men and women across South Asia, some features emerge in most studies on the life cycle of women, encapsulated by Mines & Lamb (2002, 81) as follows: In general, a woman can expect to progress over her life from being a daughter in her natal home, to a wife and daughter-in-law in her husbands’s and in-law’s home, to a mother of young children, to a mother-in-law, and finally to an older woman and, frequently, widow. In spite of girls’ structurally weaker position compared to boys (Das Gupta, 1996, 217), girls enjoy more personal freedom and autonomy in their natal homes than they do after getting married (Mines & Lamb 2002, 81). While a daughter-in-law is at the bottom of the household hierarchy and controlled by both women and men in the groom’s house, a young married woman is still cherished as a potential child-bearer. Women gain more freedom upon getting older, so that the mother-in-law generation has more freedom in life, is less dominated by males, and has more authority than in earlier life phases. It has been argued that men, by contrast, do not experience as many marked transformations in their lives as women, although they too are expected to marry, to have children, to be economically productive, and finally, as the senior male in a household, to assume the role of a central authority (Mines & Lamb 2002, 82). Thus the argument that men
experience fewer transformations may reflect the lack of research on male
life courses rather than the actual situation. Since there is a tendency to
approach different phases of life in the Indian 89 Lamb (2002, 57)
emphasises that ageing in India is not defined so much in terms of
chronological years but rather through one’s place in a family cycle.
Context as static, it is important to take into account the notion that
divisions based on the position in the life cycle are subject to change and
transformation. While a rich literature exists on how gender influences the
work situations of women and men in India bringing together work and life
course has not been common. Yet different phases and institutions of life
such as marriage or parenthood have a central influence on working life.
Among the few who combined analyses of work and life course, Hapke and
Ayyankeril (2004) explored the gendered livelihood strategies of fishermen
and –women in South India through their lives. They introduced the concept
of ‘work-life course’. Usefully for my purpose, they define this as “patterns
of engagement of men and women in remunerative work throughout their
life course” (ibid, 230). In another contribution to the discussion on work
and life course, the life cycle approach is central, namely Arjan de Haan’s
(2003) analysis of gendered experiences of male and female labour
migrants in Kolkata. He showed how young men have a relatively long
period when they can move around without (adult) supervision (ghumna)
and try out jobs here and there. But no such option existed for young
women, whose experience was confined to the household, and women
migrating on their own usually had to establish some form of conjugal relationship for their security (de Haan 2003, 202–203).

In this context, one notes that studies of European and North American history have perceived domestic work as a ‘bridging occupation’, a way to enter the labour market and move to better jobs in other sectors (Kilkki 2006, 20; Rahikainen 2006, 30; Romero 2002, 57). While some studies have questioned the idea of contemporary domestic work as a bridging occupation (Gregson & Lowe 1994, 67; 90 The age categories, meanings and relations are always shaped both institutionally and through everyday interactions. For example, the transition from ‘child’ to ‘teen’ is negotiated through both institutions and everyday interactions. (Thorne 2004, 404). See, for example, Burra 1995; Kapadia 1995; Mies 1982; Nieuwenhuys 1993; Tenhunen 2006). Romero 2002), others have documented both upward and downward class mobility of migrant workers. For example, educated middle class Filipina women (see Moors 2003, 390; Parreñas 2008, 93) and Latin American women (see Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001, 198) working as domestic workers in Europe and the United States, and Russian women within Russia (Rotkirch 2008, 286) have experienced downward class mobility. Other migrant workers have managed to ‘bridge’ to other jobs, or at least to improve their own and their children’s lives. (Lutz 2002; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001).
As the forthcoming chapters show, however, paid domestic work in India is not about bridging into other occupations. Instead, it relates in many ways to the specific life stages of the workers, and thus resonates more with the term ‘life-cycle service’, which historians have used to refer to a practice where unmarried young women and men worked temporarily as rural servants before getting married in 16th to 18th century North and Central Europe (Rahikainen 2006, 28, 255). Today, the engagement of Western university students in care work such as au-pairing is clearly temporary work, related to a particular phase in their work-life trajectories.

4.14 INTERGENERATIONALITY IN WORKERS’ TRAJECTORIES

At this point, one more concept is important for understanding the interrelations between life course and work in Jaipur. Not only age, but the interaction between different generations is important. The ideal for Indian families continues to be a system of long-term intergenerational reciprocity, although the ideal does not always reflect reality (Lamb, 2002, 58). Age systems can be viewed as systems of structured inequality, which means that people in differing age cohorts have different and unequal access to valued social status (Foner 1984, 212 quoted in Säävälä 2006, 149). Today, there are indications Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001, 188) shows how a daughter of a working class family in the US rose to a higher class, adapting quickly to her new role as an authoritarian employer of a domestic worker of increasing tensions between the generations, for example, due to daughter-
in-laws being more educated than their mother-in-laws and closer ties between daughter-in-laws and their husbands (Wadley 2002; Aura 2008).

The concept of generational order as “a social order which organises, constrains and coordinates relations in the social world in a systematic way” can be exploited here (Alanen 1992, 65). Bringing the idea of the generational order into the context of South Asia, Kabeer (2000, 465) refers to ‘implicit intergenerational contract’ as “a shared understanding between family members as to what each owes and can expect from others in the family”. This relates to how relationships between parents and children play out in different phases of life, particularly to how parents view their obligations to their children and what they expect in return. Such an approach has been used, for example, to look at the intergenerational transmission of poverty (Kabeer and Mahmud 2009). In the context of Bangladesh, where poor people rely primarily on the sale of their labour power to meet survival needs, the failure to invest in the human capital of successive generations is likely to be a common route through which the intergenerational transmission of poverty occurs (ibid, 10). Thus, Kabeer and Mahmud (2009,19) suggest a certain degree of path dependence in life trajectories across generations. Drawing on the ideas of Kabeer and Mahmud, I propose to view mother-daughter continuity at work as ‘intergenerational transmission of work’, as part of a broader concept of intergenerational contracts. These concepts enable the capture of some of the intra-familial processes which are central in domestic workers lives and,
especially, in mother-daughter continuity at work. In the following chapters I explore the interlacing of work with other institutions of life and place it into a broader context of the workers’ life course.

In this chapter I have introduced the main theoretical discussions to which this dissertation contributes, and the main concepts that guide me in the next chapters. Before discussing my data, however, I will introduce my methodological approaches.

4.15 CONCLUSION

New efforts at legislating or regulating the domestic work sector have generated greater debate and a more careful study of the sector. The ILO initiative to have a discussion on Decent Work for Domestic Workers in 2010 at the International Labour Conference with the possibility of adopting a Convention or Recommendation on the subject, provides an opportunity for organizations of domestic workers and their supporters in India, who have been lobbying for a law, to step up their campaign. This will trigger a more intense debate both within government and the movement for domestic workers. A concerted effort at enabling a comprehensive legislation for domestic workers is crucial to protect workers in this sector.