

May-2003

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## Recommended Citation

Arnado, Janet M. (2003). Maternalism in Mistress-Maid Relations: The Philippine Experience. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 4(3), 154-177.

Available at: <http://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol4/iss3/12>

## Maternalism in Mistress-Maid Relations: The Philippine Experience

By Janet M. Arnado<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

One powerful, yet often hidden, phenomenon depicting the class inequality among women is the employment relationship between a mistress and her maid. Numerous studies have explored the asymmetrical power relations between women in this employment contract (Cock 1980; Tellis-Nayak 1983; Rollins 1985; Kaplan 1987; Romero 1988c; Hansen 1989; Gill 1990; Barnes 1993; Dumont 1995; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001).<sup>1</sup> Most of these works describe mistress-maid relations as maternalistic. A derivative of paternalism, maternalism is a system of power relations wherein the maid is under the mistress' protective custody, control, and authority. Structurally, it is characterized by mistress benevolence, which is a "false generosity" (Freire 1970), or an "ideological camouflage" (Patterson 1982) that conceals the exploitive nature of the relationship.<sup>2</sup> This relationship is structurally exploitive in two ways. First, domestics' labor power is appropriated to enrich the mistress' class. Second, the mistress deprives the maid control over her body, time, space, and relationships. In maternalistic relations, the mistress camouflages the controlling aspect of maternalism by emphasizing benevolence and "charity".

On the other hand, the maid often establishes or participates in a maternalistic relationship with her mistress because of her own feelings of isolation within the household where she works (Cock 1980; Rollins 1985; Romero 1988b; Gill 1990; Cohen 1991; Constable 1997). Maternalism, as embodied in the mistress-maid relations, reproduces the inequitable class-gender structure, in which middle-class women, subordinated by their gender, delegate the unglamorous domestic work to poor women for low wages.

Maternalism, however, is marked with ambiguities, contradictions, conflict, resistance, and accommodation, as social actors or in this case *social actresses*, also exercise agency as they work within the system. Thus, the nature of the relationship is not totally determined by the structure; it is also negotiated by the actresses.

This paper veers away from the objectivist notion that domestic workers are helpless victims of the structure, as well as the subjectivist orientation that they are in control of their destiny. Rather, it supports Giddens' (1984) structuration theory that views social action as neither explained by "the constraining forces of the structure" nor by the individual's "freely chosen activities" (Munch 1994). Social action, for Giddens, is explained by the duality of structure and agency. Munch (1994) elucidates Giddens' theory as follows: "The core meaning of this concept is that neither structures nor actions exist per se but are closely intertwined. There is no structure without action, and there is no action without structure."

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<sup>1</sup> I use maid, domestic worker, domestic, and helper interchangeably. I also interchange mistress and female employer.

<sup>2</sup> Orlando Patterson defines such ideological camouflage as cultural and social myths used by employers to shroud their exploitive labor practices behind claims of decency and morality.

In this paper, I examine how maternalism is formed, sustained, reproduced or transformed in the mistress-maid relationship in the context of Third World, medium-sized city, without racial difference between employers and domestic workers. Previous studies had emphasized racial difference and inequality as playing significant factor in mistress-maid relationship (Cock 1980; Dill 1983; Rollins 1985; Glenn 1992). In a way, this study is unique in that it is situated in the Third World and there is racial homogeneity among the key informants. Because the idea of race is flattened, other salient issues emerge. In addition, while the difficult working conditions of the Filipino women abroad have been widely researched, not much is known about domestic laborers within the Philippines. While there are a few published studies about the working conditions of domestic workers (Dumont 2000; Palabrica-Costello 1984), scholars have often ignored the employment relationship, particularly with the mistress.<sup>3</sup> Inside the Philippines, poor domestics have been left voiceless and invisible in the confines of their middle-class workplaces. By focusing on the employment relationship between the domestic helper and the female employer, this study pinpoints the class inequality between two hierarchical strata of wage-earning women in a Third World setting.

Given the racial homogeneity of this social group, I explore the various definitions of maids and mistresses about their situations. While the structure of their relationship is basically exploitative, the circumstances under which this relationship is played out are particularistic and negotiated in their day-to-day interaction. I describe the various forms of maternalism, showing how mistresses use beneficence to camouflage their oppressive practices, and demonstrate the circumstances for maternalism to be beneficial or destructive to the helper. I discuss three types of dependency and analyze the co-relation between dependency and maternalistic styles. Finally, I layout several patterns of mistress-maid interaction, and relate them to dependency and maternalism. It is hoped that the structuration theory would help us depart from a dichotomous analysis (i.e., structure versus agency) of mistress-maid maternalistic relations.

## Methods

The data from this paper were collected from my in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with ten wage-earning mistresses and thirty-one domestic workers in a medium-sized city in the Philippines, with the help of gatekeepers and through snowball sampling.<sup>4</sup> The interviews and focus groups were conducted in Filipino languages (i.e., Tagalog and Cebuano), with the exception of some employers who preferred English. Employers were interviewed in their workplaces or in their homes, while the focus groups and interviews with domestic workers were held on Sundays in neutral settings, such as multi-purpose halls, parks, and when requested by the informant, in my home. All interviews and focus groups were tape-recorded, transcribed, and entered into a qualitative data analysis software called QSR NUD\*IST (Gahan and Hannibal 1998;

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<sup>3</sup> Dumont (1995) has given a conception of the helper's position in the household, including a generalized characterization of the mistress-maid relationship. Palabrica-Costello (1984), on the other hand, had different goals in her study.

<sup>4</sup> One of the helper key informants, however, was interviewed in another medium-sized city.

Richards 1998).<sup>5</sup>

While the interviews and focus groups required only three months, between May and August 2000, my situated knowledge and experience about domestic work in the Philippines is based on my being a member of this society. As an employer's daughter, I have associated with domestic workers all my life in the household of my family of orientation, as well as in my friends' households. I have lived in the Philippines for most of my life, and have observed the lives of domestic workers as an outsider, as I have not been a paid domestic worker myself. In this paper, I draw heavily from my informants' narratives. This paper reflects an intercalation of three voices: the maids', the mistresses', and mine.

### **Setting: The Philippines**

Like many developing nations, the Philippines is a highly polarized society, where class, ethnic, and gender disparities are intertwined. A very small elite group controls most of the wealth and resources while a majority of the people lives in desperate poverty. The elites are mostly descendants of the landed Spanish families during colonization period and the enterprising Chinese migrants who rose from rags to riches. The country has a small middle class composed of professionals and small-scale business entrepreneurs; the rest of the population is wallowing in poverty. Additionally, economic and social development efforts are largely concentrated in the capital region, and least likely in the South where the Muslim ethnic minority groups reside. While there is a popular discourse that women occupy a high status in the Philippines, statistical data prove otherwise. Women are subordinate to men within their class and ethnic groupings.

As a result of the economic polarization, a significant number of the Filipinos – both men and women - seek employment in other countries. The majority of the women are employed as domestic workers, nurses or caregivers. International migration, however, is limited to those capable of paying the migration expenses. Oftentimes, these are college-educated women with some economic assets. Low-skilled, poorly educated young women, on the other hand, restrict their movement from rural to urban areas in the Philippines, where they find paid domestic work (Costello 1987; Lauby 1987). Filipino middle-class, wage-earning women hire much of this labor supply. By passing on to domestic helpers the "dirty work" (Anderson 2000) of reproductive labor, these upwardly mobile women are freed to fill higher-paying jobs outside their households. A typical middle-class household in the Philippines employs one or two live-in domestic workers with monthly wage ranging from US\$20-\$40, depending on the geographical location and financial capability of the employing household. In sharp contrast, the typical employed female employer earns nine times (or more) the wage of her helper.

### **Forms of Maternalism**

Some feminists analyze maternalism as the mistress' guise to exploit her maid's labor power (Glenn 1980; Rollins 1985; Romero 1988c), while other researchers interpret maternalism in a more neutral if not a positive perspective of patronage (Tellis-Nayak 1983; Ozyegin 2001). I examine maternalism as a continuum of support and control,

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<sup>5</sup> Richards (1998, 10) introduces QSR NUD\*IST as "a computer package designed to aid users in handling Non-numerical and Unstructured Data in qualitative analysis, by supporting processes of coding data in an Index System, Searching text or patterns of coding and Theorizing about the data."

ranging from “part of the family” ideology, emotional labor, *utang na loob* system of obligation, to control and exploitation of the maid’s body, time, space, and relationships. This analysis extends from previous studies by contextualizing this continuum of support and control within the Filipino culture.

### “Part of the Family” Ideology

In this study, the mistress demonstrates maternalism toward her helper by integrating her into the family, using kin terms, treating her like a child, giving gifts, and providing financial, educational, and emotional support. Additionally, the mistress controls the domestic helper’s body, time, space, and relationships. In other words, maternalism functions as an ideological camouflage, a strategy that seems to be helpful for the helper and hides exploitation under the guise of “part of the family” idiom. As Anderson aptly states, “[b]eing told that you are ‘part of a family’ often conceals the real power relationships at work, and this leads to confusion and exploitation” (Anderson 2000). Kin terms are often used between domestics and their employers. For instance, employers describe their relationship with their helpers as similar to mother-daughter connections, that is, they regard the helpers as their own children needing guidance, direction, and/or punishment. Likewise, the maids’ initial responses also correspond to the mother-child bonding, which the employers portrayed. This is particularly evident to helpers who are a lot younger compared to their employers, such as those whose ages range from fourteen to twenty. In general, the helpers’ responses towards maternalism focus on the positive side, an indication of absorbed loyalty toward their mistresses. Many liken their mistresses to their own mothers with whom they feel emotionally and financially attached, especially when kin terminology is applied to dissociate them from the servant role. However, as the narrative below illustrates, the label “daughter” does not really dissociate the helper from the servant role. In fact, it compels her to obey and to give her full loyalty to her mistress.

Researcher: How did your master and mistress treat you?

Jennifer: They were kind.

Researcher: Did you not have any problems with them?

Jennifer: No. They were very kind. They even called me daughter.

Researcher: They called you daughter?

Jennifer: (Nods head. Imitating her employer) “Daughter, bring me that thing. Please.

The use of kin terms is very common in Third World countries, like in India (Tellis-Nayak 1983; Dickey 2000), Nepal (Shah 2000), Indonesia (Adams 2000), the Philippines (Dumont 1995), and Peru (Young 1987), among other countries. Instead of the formal name-calling like ma’am or Mrs. Rodriguez, many employers suggest to be called *manang*, *ate*, or auntie.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, a one-way gift giving initiated by the mistress is related to the whole notion of being part of the family. For example, when

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<sup>6</sup> *Manang* and *ate* are Cebuano and Tagalog terms, respectively, used by a younger sibling to address an older female sibling in lieu of the elder sibling’s name to show respect. Younger individuals also use *Manang* or *Ate* to address older women.

Giselle was asked why she likened her mistress to her own mother, she associated it with her mistress' giving her gifts. In addition to the use of kin terms, the mistress' one-way gift giving has a symbolic power over the domestic worker in terms of obligation and gratitude. These are the mistress' psychological and material investments on the helper. Once loyalty and sense of obligation are instilled in the helper's psychological framework, the helper is least likely to resist domination.

Besides one-way gift giving, a number of mistresses extend educational support to their helpers and are concerned about their helpers' progress in school. Some mistresses, who send their helpers to specialized Sunday schools, personally register their helpers, attend parent-teacher meetings, buy clothes for them, and follow up on their assignments. Educational support is probably the biggest contribution a mistress can ever extend to her helper, as it has a long-term impact, and can enable the helper to leave paid domestic work and enter into a more prestigious job. Some employers do include the helper in their plans, like hiring the helper on a non-domestic work position when the helper completes her education. Mistress Brenda, who is currently in law school and is supporting Carmen through college, promised Carmen that she would hire her as a secretary when she starts her private practice. Employers who provide educational support to their helpers hope that, through hard work and determination, these helpers will abandon the domestic servant role and have a better future.

In addition to material incentives, many mistresses offer advanced payment to their helpers whose meager income is barely adequate for their families' needs. While the helpers obtain free board, they need cash to send to their parents, siblings, and/or children. Whenever the helpers go home for a weekend visit, some mistresses pack food or used clothing for the helpers' family, and drive them to the bus terminal.

Enriquita: They would also send me off at the terminal, and Ate would give me a loaf of bread, so that I can bring some kind of gift to my younger siblings.

This is reminiscent of Ozyegin's (2001) research in Turkey wherein the mistress would fill a bag of food every night for her live-out domestic worker's family. The difference lies in the manner domestic workers perceive their mistresses' act: while Turkish domestics take it as their mistresses' obligation to them, many Filipina workers in my study view it as a performance of kindness and generosity. In general, my maid-informants accept their employers' small acts of benevolence that indicate that they are family members too. They do not only interpret their employers buying them clothes as benefiting them economically, but also as an act of caring and concern.

Carmen: What I like is she [mistress] shows to me that she is kind. She is taking care of me. Whenever it's my birthday, we would eat out, and she has a gift for me.

Likewise, when Enriquita was asked why she has remained with her current employer for several years, she responds, "why? . . . because they are kind, they are kind."

My employer informants admit that they treat their helpers as part of the family, and their gift giving is part of that familial treatment. However, many of them acknowledge that the primary reason for their buying their helpers deodorant and other personal hygiene needs is to keep their helpers clean, especially when these helpers handle their babies. It is imperative for them that the one caring for their baby is clean according to middle-class standards.

When the helper interprets that she is part of the family and not merely a helper, the mistress then, is in a position to control her helper's life. For instance, it enables the mistress to ask for additional tasks including emotional labor, thus reaping more of her helper's labor power.

### *Emotional Labor and Maternalism*

“Emotional labor,” a term popularized by Hochschild (1983), involves the creation or suppression of feelings to make others feel good. It is one unavoidable consequence and complication of maternalistic relations. Various literatures often report about the emotional labor performed by the helpers for their mistresses, such as listening to their stories and problems (for example, see Rollins 1985). In Rollins' study, African American women in the United States avoid maternalistic relationship with their employers to minimize emotional labor.

Perhaps partly due to the live-in arrangement, domestic workers in this study perform massive emotional labor for their mistresses and other household members. For example, some domestic workers are obligated to sleep together with their mistresses, when the latter's husbands are out of town. Since majority of the Filipinos are not used to sleeping alone in a bedroom, they often feel lonely to sleep alone. Asking for the helper's company is the easiest recourse, leading towards the helper's deprivation of her own private space and time.

In addition, when mistresses “request” their helpers to join in family meals, the helpers perform additional tasks of serving emotional labor tied to family members' conversations where they are usually excluded. Other examples of emotional labor include pulling their mistresses' white hair and armpit hair, and giving body massage where telling stories is part of the ritual. In this situation, helpers listen to their employers' problems. Furthermore, some helpers are obligated to join in the nightly family prayer. In times when they are not in prayerful mood, they have no option but to hide such negative feeling, and join in the prayer.

In this maternalistic relationship, the maids are not the only ones who perform emotional labor but also the mistresses. For example, domestic workers report that their female employers provide listening ears and encourage them to work hard to obtain college diplomas, despite the difficult circumstances. In some cases, female employers not only listen, but also extend material support. Clearly, there are different interpretations for similar behavior. When the domestic helper listens to her mistress' problems, it is perceived as an emotional labor expended by the domestic worker. When the mistress, however, is the one who listens to her domestic worker's problems, it is viewed as a maternalistic behavior. Such difference in interpretation can be explained by the fact that emotional labor is an intrinsic part of paid work. While the mistress' act of listening is voluntary, the helper's is obligatory.

Most of the helpers, whose mistresses show interest in their lives, express considerable satisfaction about their work. This is because their relationship with their mistresses is a very important aspect of their job satisfaction. The primary determinant of the helpers' duration in a single employment is their relationship with their mistresses; relationship with other members of the family is only a secondary factor. Because building a good relationship shapes job satisfaction, helpers in this study are open to

maternalistic relationship and rarely resist emotional labor manifested by domestic workers in the US, for instance.

The following is Jennifer's account on how her employers demonstrate concern in her studies.

Jennifer: Sometimes, they [male and female employers] would advise me to study hard, especially that I am poor [laughs], that I should continue my studies, so that I would not remain a helper. I should take a course that can really help me improve my life situation.

### *Social Network and Maternalism*

Many studies depict the helpers as isolated from many social networks (Gill 1990; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001). In this study, however, some helpers fulfill their non-domestic-related interests; a few actively participate in church and social activities, while other talented helpers join in singing and beauty competitions. The mistress usually facilitates the helper's social/community involvement. For example, when the mistress and the maid share the same religion, and when the mistress is active in church activities, chance are, the maid will also be involved, giving her more time out of the house.

Social involvement is another venue where domestic workers can help other domestic helpers, especially the child laborers and the victims of domestic and sexual abuse. Yolanda's employer, who was then heading a non-government organization which aims at protecting child laborers, asked her if she would be willing to do advocacy work. Presented with an opportunity to embark on more challenging work, to continue her studies, and to help other domestic workers, Yolanda ventured into a different world: working in an office, providing a listening ear to young women who come for help, and speaking on radio programs about her experience when she was still a domestic worker. The shift into a socially-oriented occupation expanded Yolanda's perspective about the grim reality faced by child domestic workers like her. Likewise, she learned that there are good employers and bad employers.

Beauty competition is a popular culture in the Philippines. Apart from the national competitions, beauty pageants highlight village fiesta celebrations, city festivals, and university foundation days. There are also different categories: children, adolescent and young women, married, gays, and elderly. Beauty competitions pose yet another challenge where helpers demonstrate their intellect, talents, and skills, and debunk the helper-stereotypes. While some mistresses are threatened by pretty helpers, others enthusiastically support their helpers to join in beauty pageants. Employer Babsie encouraged her helper to join in a domestic helpers' beauty pageant, promised to buy her clothes, and everything that she needed to win. Class distinction, however, is at play in this context. While Babsie recognized her helper's beauty, the kind of beauty pageant that she suggested to her helper was a class-based beauty pageant – a beauty contest for the domestic helpers. This indicates that in her opinion, her helper only has a chance to win in a “domestic workers beauty pageant.” Thus, material and psycho-emotional support is given as long as it does not threaten her middle-class position.

The “part of the family” ideology, material support, and control of the helper's life are reinforced by the Filipino system of obligation, *utang na loob*, which sustains the



maternalistic relationship between mistress and maid. This cultural system is a keystone of the ideological camouflage of employers.

### *Utang na Loob*

One of the very powerful Filipino value systems in the Philippines is *utang na loob*, or debt of gratitude.<sup>7</sup> *Utang na loob*, which literally means inner debt, is a “system of obligation” in which “one favor demands another” (Andrews 1998), thereby creating a “circle of Filipino relationships” (Tanner 2001). Hollnsteiner (1973) described it as contractual reciprocity. *Utang na loob* functions in a way that certain favors can never be repaid with any amount of money, i.e., saving one’s life, recommending someone to an important position, and raising children. In many instances, those who have acquired *utang na loob* from someone pay back the debt or favor in other forms and with interest (Hollnsteiner 1973). It can happen that the former lender of *utang na loob* will become the receiver in a different occasion, and so the relationship based on debt of gratitude may continue and form a solid bond between individuals.

*Utang na loob* reinforces maternalism. It works to produce an intergenerational system of obligation between mistress and maid, as well as their daughters, thereby sustaining their asymmetrical bond. Several cases demonstrate how a maid is tied to a family for life due to *utang na loob*. For example, Carmen’s former co-worker, Poling who had been working for one family for ten years could not leave because she felt indebted towards her mistress who sent her to college.

A mistress-maid relationship based on *utang na loob* is characterized by extended period of time, and sometimes, it is inherited from a mother to her daughter, as admitted by three out of ten employer informants. Below are two cases shared by the mistresses, demonstrating an *utang na loob* pattern, which has been passed on to another generation.

Back in the 1930s, a young, penniless woman sought medical help from a doctor. As she did not have money to pay, she offered her domestic services to the doctor. This poor woman was separated from her husband and had one daughter who stayed with her in the doctor’s house. When this doctor got married, the woman continued her services to the family. She and her daughter attended to the doctor’s eight children; one of them was Babsie, my informant. When the woman’s estranged husband retired and could not receive his veteran pension without his family with him, he took back the woman and her daughter. After the woman’s husband died, the woman and her daughter returned to Babsie’s family. Years later, the woman died from cancer. The daughter remained, got married, built a house at the back of the house of Babsie’s mother, and died at seventy. This daughter also took care of Babsie’s children.

Like in the above story, Geraldine’s helpers are the children of her mother’s helper. Geraldine’s mother employed her helper Narcisa, who was a distant relative, when the latter was only ten years old. Narcisa remained employed until she got married. She then moved into a different house with her husband, and delivered her six children. When her husband left her, she moved back to the house of Geraldine’s mother and brought her six children with her. Eventually, Geraldine’s mother donated a small house

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<sup>7</sup> For a discussion on the relation between slavery in the Philippines and *utang na loob*, see Scott (1991).

for them, located very close to her own. Geraldine saw Narcisa's children grow up, and when it was Geraldine's time to marry, she took two of the six children in her own house and supported them through college, gave them a monthly salary, and let them budget for their expenses. The other children were spread to relatives who could send them to school. Through such maternalism, the employing class keeps dependent servants locked into intergenerational poverty.

### *Maternalism and Control*

Control, an indication of power, is an important component in the mistress-maid employment relationship. In this study, the forms of control range from mild to extreme. In live-in arrangement, the mistress' control over her helper is greater, as it "severely curtails both factually and symbolically, [the] servant's privacy and freedom of movement" (Coser 1973). The restrictions discussed below are indications of mistress' control of the maid's body, space, and relationships. Because the helper is working full-time, day and night in the household, every waking hour is subject to the employer's regulation. The only exception is the weekly half-day off. Yet, even during the helper's day off, some employers would give "suggestions" on the kind of clothing the helper should wear. The employers have their own ideologies to justify these control measures, claiming the restrictions are for the helper's own good, or for what they perceive to be "for the helper's safety."

#### Body

To the extent that the helper's hygienic practices impact her work, employers impose certain regulations, such as requiring her to take a bath before handling the baby, asking her to brush her teeth regularly, and making it mandatory for her to use a deodorant.

Lolit: The first thing that I will buy my house helper is a deodorant.

Researcher: Uh-huh

Lolit: and a toothbrush.

Gloria: If you have helpers with underarm odor, your children are most likely to get bad odor too. That's why I like those helpers who are neat. Like Libby -- before, I would really include a deodorant for her in my grocery list.

At times, the mistress' "involvement" in her maid's body can really get intimate, and can cost the employer a few pesos. Aileen buys panties, brassieres, and sanitary napkins for her helpers, and justifies it as follows:

Aileen: Yes, toiletries -- I buy those for them, because one time, when I came home, I caught one of them using the baby diaper as sanitary napkin.

The helpers in this study approve of their employers buying them personal necessities, as these are free.

Sylvia: Sometimes, she [mistress] gives me some of her clothes and she buys me panties. And I am free to use everything, even the lotion and body powder. My employers are kind; they are like my siblings.

In contrast, many domestic workers in the U.S. interpret such gift giving negatively, viewing it as “degrading and dehumanizing,” as the mistress’ benevolence is a ploy to demand additional work and deference from the domestics (Romero 1987, 212). Furthermore, these domestic workers complain that, what they receive are cheap brands, while those of their employers have popular brands (Rollins 1985).

Sometimes, the issue is not about hygiene, but utility bills. In cases where the mistress is concerned about the rising cost of water and electricity, she will ask the helper to save on water, and therefore refrain from bathing too often.

Luisita: I can only take a shower once a day. Sometimes, she [mistress] would instruct me to take a bath less frequently, as I might catch “panuhot” [an illness characterized by having cold air inside the body], but I understand that it is the rising water bill that she is worried about.

Luisita, however, copes by taking a shower when her mistress is at work; thus, the mistress never knows the frequency of her taking shower. The maid’s choice of clothing is also under the mistress’ scrutiny. Some helpers are prohibited from wearing mini-skirts or sleeveless shirts when they go out of the house, especially when they are asked to do errands for their employers.

Aileen: [My husband] and I would call the attention of our helpers when they get too sexy, like wearing mini skirts. They like to wear whatever is in fashion.

This finding is consistent with a study in Madras, India, where employers restrict their servants from wearing “showy” clothing, and instead, advise them to put on a “plain white dress shirt and dark pants” (Tolen 2000). However, the helpers in this study are not asked to dress in uniform, which goes with the ideology that they are “part of the family.” As long as their clothes are not too revealing, it is acceptable to the employers.

A rather extreme form of control of the body is physical abuse. Although exploitation of the body is not common to every helper interviewed, such abuse occurs frequently. In her first employment, Yolanda experienced mistress battering that included being dragged by the hair, hit with burning firewood, slapped and verbally assaulted. At the age of nine, Yolanda was beaten and forbidden to eat whenever the clothes that she washed were not clean enough, when the food that she cooked was burned, or when she would play with friends in the street. When asked why her mistress treated her this way, her response captures the degree to which her mistress dehumanized and depersonalized her helper.

Yolanda: There are employers who do not understand what the helpers feel or how painful the treatment is. They cannot feel it because they come from well-to-do families. The way they look at you is that you are a helper; they pay you, so they can treat you like a pig. For a little mistake: kicking there, slapping here, and pulling of hair.

Researcher: Oh my God!

Yolanda: Yes, it was terrible; I was still nine years old. My experience was intense. My head hit the cement floor. She [mistress] held my hair, and pushed me down.

Researcher: Just a moment. How did you react to all this abuse?

Yolanda: I could not do anything about it. I would just cry. I would just ask myself why it's like that. Why is it that some people would treat other people that way when we are all human beings? But for them, they cannot feel it.

One time, Yolanda's employers had guests, and she was asked to roast peanuts, wash the dishes, and cook rice, all at the same time.

Yolanda: It was fiesta . . . then, it was like – I was going crazy because I was exhausted. I could not understand myself, and I did not know what to do first. The peanuts got burned. When she [mistress] saw what happened, she took the hot pan — I got wounds here [shows the scars on her arms].

Researcher: Oh, my God!

Yolanda: The peanuts were sticky and so hot. She was not contented with that, she took the burning firewood and hit my back with it.

Cases of domestic worker abuse are reported on national televisions and newspapers regularly, and a number of employers have already been convicted. However, it is hard to even estimate the rate of abuse as most helpers maintain a culture of silence. Majority of the abused helpers have not filed a complaint. While numerous non-government organizations provide shelters and services for victims of domestic violence, very few, probably, just one organization is specialized on domestic workers within the country.

### Space

The control of maid's space include the prohibition to visit (*manumbalay*) the neighbor's house or to go outside the house (*dili makagawas*), being locked inside the bedroom or the house (*prisohon*), being deprived from certain spaces in the house, or simply not having any privacy. Many live-in helpers, especially in peripheral countries (Tellis-Nayak 1983) experience lack of privacy.

Mistresses present three ideological rationales for this type of control: (1) the helpers can focus on their work, (2) the helpers will get punished for their mistakes, (3) the house will be secure from thieves (if it is locked), and (4) the helpers will know where they stand in relation to their employers. To what extent can the mistress impose her regulation and how do the helpers respond to such restriction? Exercising agency, some helpers still hang out at their neighbor's house and devise ways so they will not be caught. For example, they make sure that they are back in the house before their employers arrive from paid work. Others do not violate the rule at all. Some employers are shrewd – they know if their helpers disobey their rules. Employer Merly would know if her helper went out to visit the neighbor's house, as her children or her neighbors would eventually tell her. To be certain that their helpers stay inside, a number of employers lock the house every time they leave. In Yolanda's first employment experience, she would be locked in the bedroom, whenever she made any mistake, which happened very often, considering her very young age, and she would only be let out to do the dishes.

Two helpers explain how the leisure-time behavior of servants is expected to protect the class position and reputation of the employers. Socially, mistresses can be "blamed" for "public misbehavior" of their workers, another extension of the

maternalistic system.

Esmi: Now is our rest day, so we can go out, but on other days, never. It's not like when you are at your parents'. On the other hand, our mistress are responsible for us; if something bad will happen to us, our mistress will be blamed. That's why our mistress is not careless, and we should not abuse.

Researcher: Okay, how about the others? Enriquita?

Enriquita: It's just the same. We have to behave well; we should not go out so often or we will be subject to suspicion, especially if our employer does not know us. Like now, I am not yet at home. I have bad feelings. My mistress told me a while ago, "Take care, Enriquita. Watch out, don't fool around." I said, "No, Ate" [Everybody laughs].

### Time

Live-in domestic helpers lack self-dependence and freedom (Palabrica-Costello 1984). By comparison, part-time domestic helpers have greater independence, but have greater economic insecurity, since employers are less likely to provide medical and financial assistance, if their families need extra support (Dickey 2000). In the live-in arrangement, the mistress provides the maid's basic needs, in return for the right to regulate the maid's twenty-four hour cycle, including the waking, sleeping, and free hours. Critiquing the myth that "domestic work in other people's house is just like living in one's own household," one helper pointed out that, unlike in her own home, the helper cannot wake up anytime she chooses. Even if her employer does not categorically stipulate the waking time, the helper is expected to complete early morning duties to get household members off for their days outside the home. When she does not feel well or when she would rather rest, the helper still has to rise and do her work, unlike live-out helpers who can simply telephone their employers to be excused from work.

Esmi: For us, this is a demanding job, and it is not like we are in our own home. If we want to rest, we cannot rest whenever we want to – not even when our body is exhausted, or when we feel ill – because we are only waged laborers.

Nelda: Our own house is a lot different compared to our workplace, because in our own house, we are not obliged to work, or we can work at our own pace, we can work slowly, and no one will get angry. In our employer's house, we are reluctant to do as we please, because we are paid. Even if our employers are kind, we watch our every move, and we are ashamed if we are not doing anything, because we are paid for our actions. We should not wait to be given orders. In our own home, no one orders us around.

The helper's Sunday day off is still under the mistress' control. If the employing family schedules an activity that day, the mistress can easily cancel her helper's day off. Since helpers are permitted only a mere four-hour break, I felt guilty to ask the helpers to allocate their time for focus group. One of them was uncomfortable, saying she must go home very soon to avoid being reprimanded. Ivy gives us a view of how the mistress controls the helper's time:

Ivy: There are times when you want to be alone during your private time, but it is not possible, because almost your whole time is used to serve your employers. On the occasion that you want to go out, like during your day off, your time is limited, and you know that you have an employer, even if you have your day off. You cannot express your thoughts – like what you want to do with your parents – because you always think that you are only a waged laborer. They have all the rights on you – they can even dictate how you dress up, and if possible, they will control how your mind works. You are lucky if you can find an employer like what I have now. But it's still the same; we have to be meticulous with our actions. We should be careful that they would not notice anything wrong about us. It's really hard to be a helper . . . but what can we do? This is the only job that accepts low-educated people (laughs).

### *Relationships, Sexuality and Reproductive Choices*

The mistress' control of her maid's relationships includes prohibiting her maid from chatting with other helpers in the neighborhood and screening her maid's boyfriends. Many employers order their helpers to inform them if the latter have boyfriends, a few specifically disallow boyfriends. For instance, Merly restricts boyfriend visitation, and she makes this clear with her helper right from the beginning of employment. Upon the job interview, she would ask about the marital status of the applicant, and if single, Merly would explain her "no boyfriend visitation" policy. For some employers, a boyfriend is okay, as long as the helper informs them and schedules the visiting time when the employers are around. Mistresses are uncomfortable to have boyfriends visit their maids without anyone at home.

Geraldine: My second helper left because I scolded her for not telling that the man that she was seeing was already her boyfriend. "I did not tell you not to have a boyfriend. What I am concerned about is that he is a real man and that he would visit here at home. What will happen if, God forbid, you will get pregnant? Who will be the man that I should run after, when I do not know him?"

Lolit: My helper told me that there is a guy who likes to visit her. I said, "You are alone in the house. Just let him come in the afternoon when we are around. Don't let him come when I am not here."

Rosalinda: I have only one policy. If I do not know the person, or if there is someone that they would invite to come inside the house, they should introduce this person to us. If we are not around, they should not invite anyone to come in, unless they know that person.

Employer Aileen instructed her helper that if she would get pregnant, she would have to go home, because the employer would not accept additional person in her house.<sup>8</sup> Aileen employed domestic workers to care for her children. If the domestic worker was pregnant or if she brought her child in the house, then, she would not be able to concentrate on the needs of Aileen's children. In addition, there would be a high likelihood that the children would fight, prompting the domestic worker to reprimand her

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<sup>8</sup> At present, there is no specific law protecting paid domestic workers.

own child regardless of fault before the mistress would find out. As a rule, the child of the domestic worker would have to absorb the identity of a domestic worker's child, and therefore, play a subservient role in relation to the mistress' children.

When probed, if she would really ask her helper to go home in case of pregnancy, Aileen responds, "Yes, because for me it's not – especially if she got pregnant out of carelessness, I would not be responsible for that [laughs]. I would not even hire a helper who brings her child in my house. It is not ideal."

In Aileen's case, the extent to which an employer is willing to help out the domestic helper becomes quite apparent. Aileen did not have the willingness to assist a pregnant helper, as it conflicted with her own interest to have someone work for her family. Instead, Aileen would be called on to care for this pregnant helper who would be an "added burden." Gloria's stand is different from Aileen's. When a tricycle driver impregnated her first helper, Nelle, she would have wanted to let Nelle stay. However, the employer was rarely at home, so she never noticed the change in her helper's body. On the sixth month of her pregnancy, Nelle asked to go home, promising that she would be back. She never returned.

Gloria: People were gossiping that there was a pregnant helper in our subdivision, but I did not know! My helper asked to go home for a short time, but after three days, I was wondering why she has not returned yet. Then, my neighbor, who was also my officemate, told me, "Glo, I will just tell you, because perhaps you are still expecting that Nelle would come back. Do you know that she is pregnant?" I said, "What? I didn't know!" Then, I found out that Nelle's father beat her up – so she came back and stayed at Bibet's. I would have wanted to adopt her, because I was so sorry for her – and the guy would not admit that it's his baby; the usual story . . . he said that there were many men in her life.

That experience urged Gloria to set the policy about not letting boyfriends visit in the house when she is not around. "I told my helpers that – if they want to have a boyfriend, they should let this man come to the house to visit, so I will get to know him. I don't want them to meet somewhere else because 'we already had a bad experience'." Notice that the mistress is extending her maternalistic practice to act as a parent, in order to avoid another future "bad experience" for her household.

Helpers, on the other hand, do not inform their employers that they have intimate relationships. They meet their boyfriends somewhere on Sundays during their day off. When caught by their employers, they often resort to lying, like in the case of Mary Jane. When her employer saw her talking to her boyfriend in the street, she introduced the man to her employer as her cousin.

### **Dependency and Maternalistic Styles**

The mistress' maternalistic styles toward her domestic worker range from positive reinforcement to exploitative control. I argue that maternalism involves the use of *incentives* when the mistress' dependency on the helper's services is greater. On the other hand, maternalism leans toward the negative side of the continuum when the mistress is less dependent on her helper. I have observed three types of *maternalistic styles* based on dependency among mistresses and maids: the maid-dependent mistress, the mistress-

dependent maid, and the mutually dependent mistress and helper. Each type is grounded in a different repertoire of maternalist practices and ideologies.

### *Maid-Dependent Mistress*

Young children are primarily the reasons for the reliance of wage-earning women on their helpers. The relative influence, which the helper holds over her mistress, is therefore determined by the availability of immediate replacement. Mistresses only get too dependent with their current helpers when there is a lack of supply. In situations like this, the mistress frequently uses positive reinforcement, maternalistic style in which the employer tries to appear more benevolent than other employers by offering incentives such as a salary increase, a paid vacation leave, a bonus, or gifts. In such situations, the maid can negotiate for more incentives and improved working conditions.

Rosita: Oh, I was really dependent on the helpers when I gave birth. I was very much dependent. I almost – to the point that I almost cried whenever they would ask permission to go home, especially [that] the babies could not still [sic] walk, and they were then very dependent on the helper also. So I was very much dependent on them because I could not [report to] work [without them].

Being left without a helper is a major crisis for some employers. For example, Leah de Velez (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 31 October 2000) thought that she might lose her sanity if she could not locate an immediate replacement. She remarked that her helper's, "departure left [her] with a lot of things to wash and clean, including feeding bottles and baby clothes.

Many working mothers only notice the unmanageable mess in the house, when the helpers are gone. In my conversation with Rosita, I asked whether she still needs the services of domestic workers now that her children are grown up.

Rosita: I'm not so dependent on the helpers anymore because all the children can now take care of themselves. But then – I still – I really need – I still need the assistance of the helper. Just to [take care of] the house, the preparation of the food, and to see to it that all household tasks are done, because I cannot do them myself . . . I see to it that when we're all at home, I can delegate the [housework, so I can] be ready for the tasks in school the following day.

Most of the world's wage-earning women do not employ domestic servants while raising children. So there is another factor at work here. The employer's claim "I cannot do them myself" is ideological camouflage, which conceals her class-protecting behavior and her unwillingness to engage in conflict with male household members by asking or demanding that they share some of the workload. On the other hand, doing the work herself would lower her status among her class peers and would reflect negatively on her class position as a wage-earning woman. Employing female domestic workers is an easy solution to the problem. Yet, it would deter the employer from resisting the paternalistic system, which victimizes both mistress and maid. A middle-class woman's utilization of another woman's cheap labor is viewed as her failure to solve the gender issue in household division of labor. Her chosen means of freeing herself from housework, and be like her husband, is a perpetuation of the paternalistic system. Thus, by deciding she cannot do the work herself and must hire help, she maintains the paternalistic system.



### *Mistress-Dependent Maid*

In this study, helpers can be mistress-dependent when they are confronted with extreme need for survival, such as being in a strange city without a place to sleep and food to eat. Many young women try their luck to find a job in the city without any money to sustain them during the job-seeking period. They are most likely to accept any job for any payment, so long as they can find a place to sleep. This situation confronts the helpers at some point in their lives. Carmen, Merly, and Yolanda experienced this circumstance. Due to extreme need to be employed, some helpers accept very low wages. Carmen's first domestic work paid her only half of what the other helpers in the household were receiving, while Merly and Yolanda approached prospective women employers in public markets, begging to be taken in. This is how Merly played upon the maternalism of a middle-class woman when she desperately needed employment.

Merly: I did not have any place to stay. I came to the city, but I did not go to my aunt's, because it's all the same, if I went there, she would stop me from doing what I wanted. And then, where would I look for food to eat? How would I get resources to buy for my personal needs, such as soap, toothpaste . . . where would I get those? And then, I did not have a lodging house. I thought about these things while I was riding the bus to the city, and I prayed, "Lord, help me. I will just apply to become a helper!" If you are a helper, everything is free: you have a place to stay. Everything is free. You have no expenses; food is also free. The salary that you receive is intact. So, what I did? The bus terminal was located in the wet market. I sat at the terminal area for a while. Then, for every taxi that would stop close by, and whenever there is a *Doña* [rich-looking woman] who would get out from the taxi, I would approach and ask her, "Ma'am, do you need a helper?" Then one of them responded, "Why girl?" And so, I found an employer, Mrs. Enriquez – she used to be a radio announcer, and now she is already a TV host, and her husband is a businessman.

Due to lack of better options, young migrant women from rural areas become domestic helpers as they arrive in the city (Costello 1987), and they stay with their employers until they have adjusted to city life and have established a network with other helpers. Once acculturated, they move to a different employment if they are dissatisfied with their current employers.

As expected, none of the mistress informants admitted to have exploited their helpers' dependency toward them. Protection is the term used. When employers perceive that their helpers are highly dependent on them, they are likely to be more protective on these women. For example, Aileen justifies that when she advised her teenager helper to refrain from wearing mini-skirt and sleeveless shirt, she is actually protecting her helper from possible sexual assault. Aileen, however, admits that she pays a very low starting wage, but justifies that she gives a raise after six months of good performance.

### *Interdependence*

There are certain conditions that interdependence between mistress and maid develop, and when this occurs, the level of asymmetry decreases, but is not eliminated.

Interdependence is most likely to occur when both women have no other support system within their own social networks. An example would be Brenda and Carmen's mutually dependent relationship, a solidarity that grew out of the experience of violence against women despite class differences. Brenda is a battered mistress who separated from her spouse and has children to support, while Carmen, the maid, ran away from her family due to domestic violence and seeks for a "new family." While this type of relationship is still primarily mistress and maid, the circumstances affecting their lives – the shared experience of domestic abuse – transforms the nature of the relationship, making it supportive for both and less exploitive for the maid.

Absent from previous studies on paid domestic work is the reality that poor women enter into domestic work to escape family conflict or domestic violence. Petra, Virginia, Carmen, and Yolanda fall into this category. Not all of them landed with a mistress who shared the same field of experience, only Carmen did. Carmen witnessed her male employer abusing her mistress, Brenda who eventually broke up with her spouse. Carmen stayed on while Brenda struggled to support her children financially and emotionally. Carmen and Brenda's relationship is an ideal case for mutual dependency. Brenda needs Carmen to care for her children while she works in Manila. Carmen needs Brenda to support her college education. Brenda is concerned about Carmen's ambitions, and Carmen wants to obtain a scholarship, so as not to become an additional burden on Brenda's depleting resources. Brenda, however, does not like Carmen to have too much pressure on her studies, as this would influence the way Carmen handles her children. They worked it out that Brenda would shoulder all of Carmen's school expenses, while Carmen assured Brenda that she would take charge of the house and the children. While Carmen is not earning any wage, she receives and budgets the money that Brenda sends for the children's tuition and allowance, utility bills, house amortization, and Carmen's own needs. This mutually dependent relationship shifts the relationship into a different level. It is no longer an employment relationship, as wage, which is the basis of an employment contract, was already removed from their arrangement. Indeed, it has transformed into an alternative family structure, led by two women who are not engaged in sexual relationship. This relationship can be best described as a form of sisterhood. It works because Carmen now finds the family that she has been seeking for.

Interdependency between mistress and maid due to family breakup is not an isolated case. One separated employer informant, who used to be an abused wife, has maintained her helper's services for eight years now, much longer than period that she lived with her spouse.

### **Mistress-Maid Interaction Patterns**

The nature of mistress-maid interaction is reflective of maternalist power relations. In my interviews, I asked the helpers and employers about the ways they interact with each other. Part of the question was whether they think it possible for the helpers and mistresses to become friends. I categorized the responses as follows: mutual interaction, mistress-initiated interaction, maid-initiated interaction, and mutual distance (see Table 1). Mutual interaction means that both the mistress and the maid are open to share their lives to each other. Mistress-initiated refers to a more active disclosure on the

part of the mistress, but passive response by the maid. Maid-initiated interaction is the opposite of the mistress-initiated pattern, and mutual distance refers to a minimal interaction on both sides and is mostly work-related conversations.

**Table 1. Types of Mistress-Maid Interaction Patterns**

	<b>Mistress Interacts (+)</b>	<b>Mistress Withdraws (-)</b>
Maid Interacts (+)	Mutual Interaction (++)	Maid-Initiated Interaction (+-)
Maid Withdraws (-)	Mistress-Initiated Interaction (-+)	Mutual distance (- -)

*Mutual Interaction*

In terms of compatibility, the mutual interaction pattern is perhaps the ideal type of interaction between the mistress and the maid. Both willingly open themselves to each other, giving much room for friendship to develop. Their day-to-day interaction not only deals with the maid’s to-do list and evaluation of the maid’s work performance, but much more. They share each other’s past and present life experiences, and each one shows concern for the other. This type of interaction happens when 1) class, age and ethnic differentials are minimal, 2) the mistress is a believer of egalitarianism, and 3) the mistress and the maid have established trust and mutual assistance through extended period of employment. It is most likely that those in mutually dependent relationship will also have a mutual interaction pattern.

I have observed a case in which the mistress and the maid seem to have an easy and open relationship. A self-proclaimed advocate for women, Gloria provides her maids, who have remained in her employ for six years, the work autonomy, provided that her children are well cared. The maids cook whatever they please, rearrange the furniture however they like, and interact quite often with Gloria. In this situation, the maids have gotten so comfortable with their employers such that they can refuse an employer’s order. One time, Gloria ordered one of her helpers to buy snacks for them at a nearby variety store, and the maid simply told her, “Do it yourself. I am still working on something.” Outrightly refusing to do what the employer has asked the maid is a very rare scenario, and is often frowned upon by the employers. Maids do not usually behave this way because they know their role. In the event that they cannot execute their employer’s order, they would usually reason out respectfully. When I probed Gloria about it, she said that she and her spouse had established a kind of egalitarian relations with the maids, whom they had grown to know quite well over the years.

*Mistress-Initiated Interaction*

Not surprisingly, the mistress-initiated maternalist interaction is a common pattern. The mistress, holding a more privileged and powerful position compared to the maid, is least likely to have any inhibition in starting any form of interaction with the maid. As Glenn (1986) states, “[t]he supposed inferiority and differentness of the

domestic made it easy for the employer to be generous and to confide in her. The domestic is not in a position to harm her or make excessive demands, and secrets were safe with someone from a completely different social world". The mistress can use the maid's time anyway she pleases; she can ask the maid to stop working and listen to her stories or her problems, and most often, the maid cannot protest, but succumbs to her mistress' requests.

While Bella's mistress would tell Bella about her personal issues, Bella cannot behave in the same way due to inhibitions associated to the domestic servant role. No amount of encouraging from Bella's mistress can change this attitude. Below, Bella explains why:

Bella: Because she is not my mother. Sometimes, she would tell us [helpers] not to hesitate to talk to her, but we are really shy. When it comes to money, however, I would tell her that I needed to advance money to send to my family for birthday or fiesta celebration. She would give me money, but she would not deduct it from my wage. It's like giving me money.

The shyness that helpers display toward their employers is part of the rituals of subordination. It indicates a learned repertoire of deferential behavior they have acquired in their subservient role within the power structure. Aware of their subordinate position in the imbalanced power relations, the maids behave and communicate by displaying the expected respectful rituals. Aside from the maid's ritual of subordination, the mistress-initiated interaction is reinforced by another Filipino value of *pakikisama*, which means to get along with someone or a group to obtain acceptance, if not approval. Lynch (1973, 10) describes *pakikisama* as "'giving in,' 'following the lead or suggestion of another'; in a word, concession. It refers especially to the lauded practice of yielding to the will of the leader or majority so as to make the group decision unanimous." Part of the reason why the helper continues to engage in chats with her mistress is *pakikisama*, that despite her unwillingness, she still participates in the interaction process to get along with her employer whose benevolence she needs. For example, young Merly's employer shared family issues with her and sought her advice. Merly, however, would refrain from doing that and instead, just kept a listening ear. Her mistress would also ask her to watch out for her male employer that he would not play around with other women. On young Merly's part, she would not share her personal issues with her mistress, because for her, it was not part of her job to talk about her life. She considered it a private matter. Besides, according to her, "*maulaw man ko*" (I was shy) and so she would only talk whenever her mistress would ask her anything, but she would not volunteer to divulge her life story. Her silence and unwillingness to share can also be interpreted as a source of power, while her emphasis on guarding her privacy as autonomy.

Withdrawal from this type of maternalist interaction can be considered a form of professionalism (for example, see Romero 1988). By keeping such distance, the maid prevents the mistress from asking "more" from the domestic. Social distance also helps the domestic maintain psychological privacy, which is extremely important especially when physical privacy is already deprived from her. Many Filipino domestics in Taiwan prefer to maintain this certain level of social distance with their employers, so they are "more able to separate their work and their private space, [and] thus minimizing the interventions of employers into their private lives" (Lan 2000). Consequently, the helpers

are engaging in a form of resistance, which will prevent employers from expanding their intrusion into – and eventual control over – their personal lives.

### *Maid-Initiated Interaction*

There are conditions in which the mistress does not like to “talk” to her helper, other than discussions related to work, while her helper seeks constant dialogue with her. The helper’s need to interact is highest, when her social isolation level is high, that is, if she is alone the whole day in the house and does not have any chance to chat with neighbors. Most often, however, the helper cannot initiate to build interaction with her mistress since the maid and the mistress are under well-structured power relations. Because the maid is the subordinate, she lacks control over the interaction process. Taking the initiative implies power and exceeds the limits of the helper’s class position. Although company-seeking maids want to constantly interact with their mistresses, their position in the power relations prevents them from doing so.

Petra is an extroverted person who loves to have company after being isolated in the house all day. Yet her employer remains silent and aloof. Exhausting work is the mistress’ explanation for not interacting with her helpers more frequently. Employer Rosalinda claims that she wants to, but she is always tired when she arrives home. Her maids would tell her stories every time she returns from her job, but she would just go to her bedroom to rest.

Rosalinda: I know about their activities, they do tell me about their life. It’s just that, sometimes . . . in the past, when I first hired helpers, what I would do every time I arrived home was to go directly to my bedroom, and locked up myself. That was when I was pregnant. And I was quiet. I would not talk to them. It was not my intention to ignore them (helpers). It’s just that I just came from work.

Rosalinda’s helpers noticed that she would always withdraw from them, but they did not confront her directly. Instead, they channeled their feedback through Rosalinda’s aunt who informed Rosalinda about their concern. After the intervention from the relative, Rosalinda made an extra effort to spend more time with her maids.

When company-seeking helpers fail to obtain sufficient attention from their employers, their job-satisfaction level decreases, and this prompts them to seek for other employment. Some helpers expressed that part of the reason why they are more likely to leave their employer is when they are alone and bored in the house. Maria, for instance, disliked the arrangement in her previous employment where she would only see her mistress at night because she did not have anyone to talk.

### *Mutual Distance*

Keeping mutual distance is also a common interaction pattern, wherein the mistress and the maid keep their relationship at a professional level by not interacting. Likewise, they maintain their personal spaces within the house. They eat separately, and they only talk about business matters.

Employer Jary reports that her interaction with her helpers is not sufficient. “They

don't always speak with me. It seems that they perceive that there is a gap between us. It's not like in other relationships that --" she pauses. ". . . and then, when they address my children, they do so in a soft tone. It's like, they have – what'd you call that . . . inhibition." Jary articulated it so well, observing that the reason why her maids are not interacting freely with her or her children is their inhibition and the knowledge that there is a gap between them and their employers. The social gap must not have come initially from the maids, but from their mistresses who conveyed social distance to them in many forms through their previous interactions. This pattern is two-way, as it is not only Jary's helpers who hesitate to interact casually with her, but also Jary towards her helpers. Whenever Jary asked something from her helpers, she would always use properly worded requests with a "please" in it. Taking her cue, her maids responded appropriately. Jary also admitted that she would proceed immediately to her bedroom as soon as she arrived from work and rarely spent time with her helpers. She opts for delineating an employer-employee boundary, particularly on the issue of whether the mistress should share marital conflicts with her helper.

## Summary

This paper has examined inequality among women as embodied in the system of maternalism in a Third World context, where women are often sweepingly generalized in the West as "Third World women." Three forms of maternalism were analyzed: 1) "part of the family" ideology, 2) "*utang na loob*" as a system of obligation, and 3) mistress' control over the maid's body, time, space, and relationships. The "part of the family" ideology is a very strong force that draws the helper toward the mistress and the employing family. In general, Filipinos belong to close-knit families, and they tend to create fictive kinship outside their own families. When the helper is considered a family member, she obtains a high job satisfaction, and sometimes, even "forgetting" her marginal position within the household. At the same time, the "part of the family" ideology is a strategy that masks exploitation of the helper's labor power, a potent tool that creates and reproduces maternalism. Responses from both helpers and employers are important in this analysis, as both view maternalism acceptable and functional. Although maternalism is exploitive, the maids participate in the reproduction of maternalism because of the economic benefits they derive from such arrangement. Except in isolated case of domestic violence, mistresses and maids in this study found maternalism beneficial in their employment relationship. In maternalist relations, they obtain employment-related incentives that are not available in the absence of maternalism. This explains their aspiration to find employers who would consider them as family members, since these employers will pay for their medical bills when they are sick, give them gifts, support their education, and bring them to social/religious gatherings. Without maternalistic relations, the above-incentives are missing. In exchange for the incentives derived from a maternalistic employer, domestic workers perform additional tasks, and to a relative extent, do not resist their mistresses' intrusions to control their relationships and bodies.

This paper has also examined three maternalistic styles. While the mistress is structurally in a position of power over the domestic worker, her level of helper dependency affects the level of authority she imposes on the helper. The maid-dependent

mistress is more likely to use incentives and positive reinforcement maternalism. She structures the helper's working conditions, wage, and other incentives so that the maid remains in her employ. In the second maternalistic style, the mistress-dependent maid seeks out maternal benevolence and refrains from negotiating for improved conditions.

Four patterns of mistress-maid interaction were discussed, including mutual interaction, mistress-initiated interaction, maid-initiated interaction, and mutual distance interaction. Maternalism appears to be most apparent mistress-initiated interaction. It also operates in the other three interaction patterns, but the maternalistic styles vary because some factors like age, ethnicity, and education come into play in mistress-maid dynamics.

Transcending the structure-agency dichotomy common to previous studies, this paper has applied Giddens' structuration theory in the mistress-maid maternalistic relations, demonstrating the interrelationship between structure and agency. It has shown how the structure of employment contract governs the relationship, as well as how women utilize their agency to either perpetuate the structure or transform it into something beyond the mistress-maid relationship. Further studies on the interplay of structure and agency in maternalistic relations between upper-class Filipinas and their maids would provide an interesting comparison as far as class position is concerned. Another way to proceed would be a comparative analysis, based on literature review, of maternalistic styles in mistress-maid relations in Third World and First World settings, as marked differences have been observed in this study compared to First-World based studies.

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